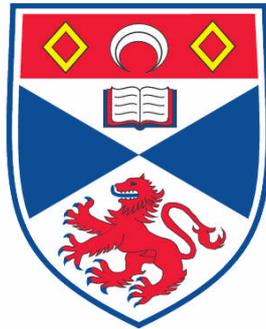


THE REFORMATION IN FIFE, 1560-1640

John McCallum

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St. Andrews**



2008

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ABSTRACT

This thesis traces the establishment and development of a functioning reformed church in the parishes of Fife after the official Reformation of 1560. Based principally on archival sources, especially the records of the kirk sessions which governed the church at parish level, it examines how ecclesiastical institutions developed and interacted with laypeople, and evaluates the progress made in the challenging task of inculcating Protestant values and identity in Fife's parishioners.

The first section examines the development of the reformed church in three chapters on the parish ministry, church discipline, and reformed worship respectively. The progress made in providing parish ministers and establishing kirk sessions was hesitant, and it took several decades before the church's institutions were functioning healthily across Fife. This gradual process of reformation was not what the original reformers wanted, but it may have in fact eased the transition to the more firmly Protestant parish culture that emerged around the turn of the century.

The second section looks more thematically at three key aspects of the church, focusing mainly on this latter period. The fourth chapter analyses the ministry as a profession, while the fifth chapter goes on to discuss the efforts made to instruct the laity in more detailed Protestant understandings from the 1590s onwards. The sixth and final chapter returns to the subject of discipline, describing the main targets of the disciplinary regime and evaluating the effectiveness of discipline. The church that emerged in the seventeenth century was relatively healthy, staffed by a stable and well-educated ministry, and was starting to make much stronger efforts to educate and discipline the laypeople of Fife.

The thesis concludes that while the Scottish Reformation still emerges as an ultimately successful transformation, the path to religious change was more complicated than has been appreciated by historians.

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More practically, I am grateful for the assistance of many librarians and archivists, at the National Library of Scotland, National Archives of Scotland, Fife Council Archives and the General Register Office for Scotland, and particularly in the Special Collections department at St Andrews University Library. I must acknowledge the financial assistance of the Arts and Humanities Research Council, which funded this research, as well as the generous support of the St Andrews Local History Foundation, administered by the Burnwynd trustees.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Adv. MS.:	Advocates' Manuscript
BCO:	Sprott, George W., and Leishman, Thomas (eds.), <i>The Book of Common Order of the Church of Scotland, commonly known as Knox's Liturgy And The Directory for the Public Worship of God Agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster</i> (Edinburgh and London, 1868)
BUK:	<i>Acts and Proceedings of the General Assemblies of the Kirk of Scotland from the year MDLX</i> (3 vols., Edinburgh, 1839-45)
Calderwood, <i>History</i> :	Calderwood, David, <i>The History of the Kirk of Scotland</i> (8 vols., Edinburgh, 1842-9)
DNB:	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> , Oxford University Press, 2004 (www.oxforddnb.com)
DSL:	<i>Dictionary of the Scottish Language</i> (http://www.dsl.ac.uk)
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
FBD:	Cameron, James K., (ed.) <i>The First Book of Discipline</i> (Edinburgh, 1972)
FES:	<i>Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae: the succession of ministers in the Church of Scotland from the Reformation</i> (8 vols., Edinburgh 1915-50)
<i>Fife Synod Selections</i> :	<i>Ecclesiastical Records: Selections from the Minutes of the Synod of Fife, 1611-1687</i> (Edinburgh, 1837)
GRO	General Register Office for Scotland, Edinburgh
IR:	<i>Innes Review</i>
JMD:	<i>The Autobiography and Diary of James Melville</i> (Edinburgh, 1842)
JEH:	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
NAS:	National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh
NLS:	National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh
OPR:	Old Parochial Records

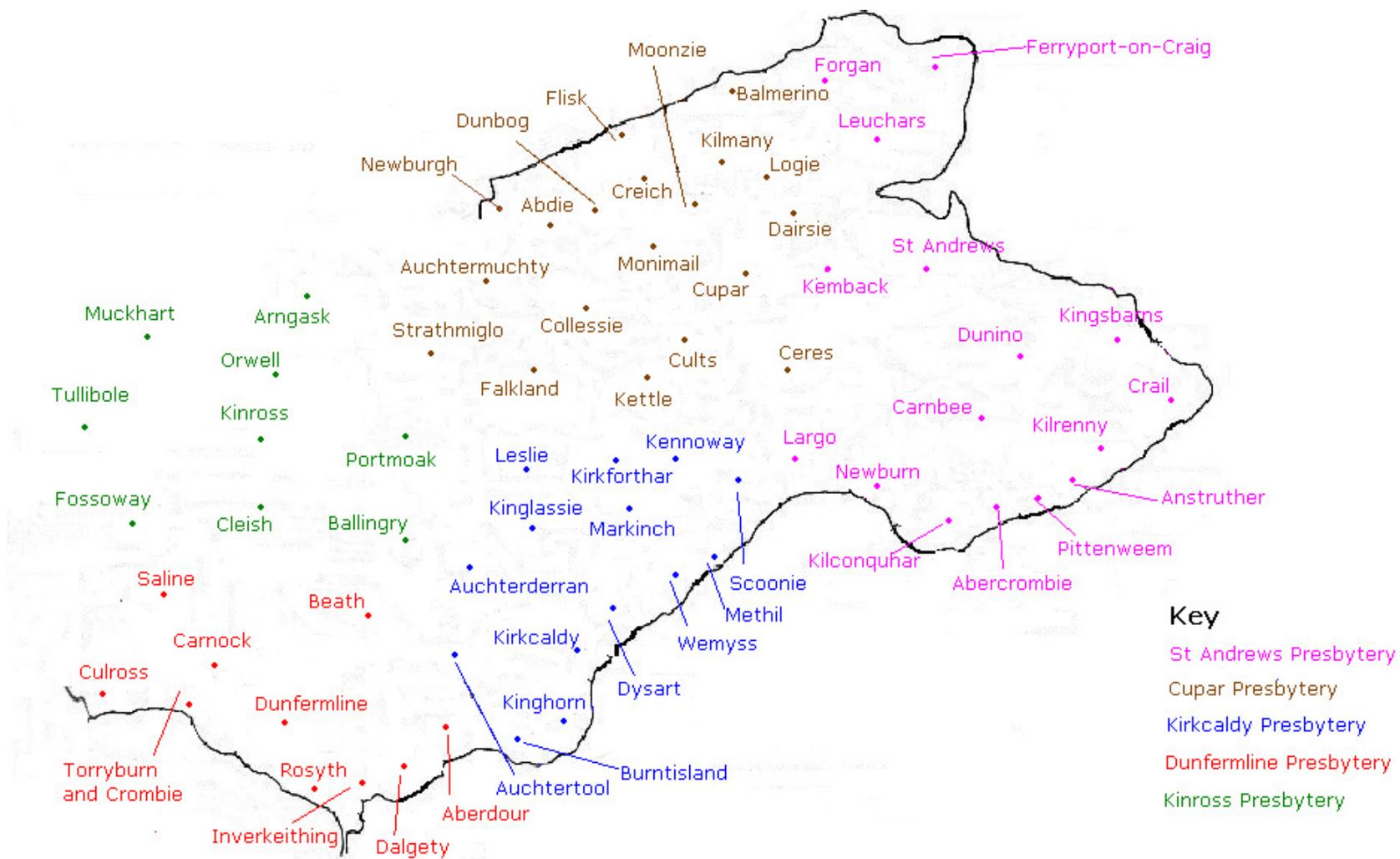
<i>Privy Seal:</i>	<i>Register of the Privy Seal of Scotland</i> (ed. M. Livingstone and others) (Edinburgh, 1908-82)
<i>RPC:</i>	<i>Register of the Privy Council of Scotland</i> (ed. J. H. Burton and others) (Edinburgh, 1877-1970)
<i>RPS:</i>	Brown, K.M. et al (eds.), <i>The Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707</i> , (St Andrews, 2007) (www.rps.ac.uk)
<i>RSCHS:</i>	<i>Records of the Scottish Church History Society</i>
<i>RStAKS:</i>	Hay Fleming, D. (ed.), <i>Register of the Minister, Elders and Deacons of the Christian Congregation of St Andrews, 1559-1600</i> (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1889-90)
<i>SBD:</i>	Kirk, James (ed.), <i>The Second Book of Discipline</i> (Edinburgh, 1980)
<i>SCJ:</i>	<i>Sixteenth Century Journal</i>
<i>SHR:</i>	<i>Scottish Historical Review</i>
Smart, Register:	Smart, R. N., 'Draft Biographical Register of St Andrews University students, 1579-1747'
<i>StAP:</i>	Smith, Mark, 'The Presbytery of St Andrews 1586-1605: A Study and Annotated Edition of the Register of the Minutes of the Presbytery of St Andrews' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of St Andrews, 1985)
StAUL:	St Andrews University Library Special Collections

Conventions

All dates have been given assuming the new year to begin on 1 January. Unless indicated otherwise, all sums of money are given in £ Scots. For the map, and throughout the thesis, the definition of Fife parishes and presbyteries has followed that given in *FES*, vol. v. except when specific reference is made to contemporary presbytery divisions.

All quotations from primary sources have retained original spellings, while silently expanding contractions and abbreviations.

MAP OF FIFE PARISHES, 1560-1640



- Key**
- St Andrews Presbytery
 - Cupar Presbytery
 - Kirkcaldy Presbytery
 - Dunfermline Presbytery
 - Kinross Presbytery

LIST OF PARISHES IN FIFE, 1560-1640

Dunfermline Presbytery

Aberdour
 Beath
 Carnock
 Culross
 Dalgety
 Dunfermline
 Inverkeithing
 Rosyth (formally united with Inverkeithing in 1618)
 Saline
 Torryburn and Crombie

Kinross Presbytery

Angask
 Ballingry
 Cleish
 Fossoway
 Kinross
 Muckhart
 Orwell
 Portmoak
 Tullibole (united with Fossoway in 1614)

Kircaldy Presbytery

Auchterderran
 Auchtertool
 Burntisland (sometimes designated 'Kinghorn Wester')
 Dysart
 Kennoway
 Kinghorn
 Kinglassie
 Kirkcaldy
 Kirkforthar
 Leslie
 Markinch
 Methil
 Scoonie
 Wemyss

Cupar Presbytery

Abdie
 Auchtermuchty
 Balmerino
 Ceres
 Collessie
 Creich
 Cults
 Cupar

Dairsie
Dunbog
Falkland (sometimes designated Kilgour)
Flisk
Kettle (sometimes designated Lathrisk)
Kilmany
Logie
Monimail
Moonzie
Newburgh (formally separated from Abdie in 1632)
Strathmiglo

St Andrews Presbytery

Abercrombie (latterly St Monans)
Anstruther
Carnbee
Crail
Dunino
Ferryport-on-Craig (separated from Leuchars in 1602)
Forgan
Kemback
Kilconquhar
Kilrenny
Kingsbarns (separated from Crail in 1631)
Largo
Leuchars
Newburn
Pittenweem
St Andrews

Introduction

The Reformation Parliament of 1560 created a Protestant Scotland, but it did not necessarily create a nation of Protestant Scots, to adapt Christopher Haigh's well-known phrase.¹ In some senses, this was the beginning, rather than the end, of the process of reformation. The task facing the reformers in 1560 was one of inculcating acceptance and understanding of Protestantism in what was effectively a largely Catholic population, and building a reformed church to replace the old one.² Although the Scottish Reformation is hardly a neglected topic, the emphasis has often been on the rise of dissent, the state of the pre-Reformation Church, and the events leading up to the rebellion of 1559-1560. Where the focus is on the post-1560 period, matters of ecclesiastical polity have often been in the foreground. Despite the recent groundbreaking work of Margo Todd and Michael Graham, we still lack a detailed and contextual account of how the reformed church developed and functioned in the parishes of lowland Scotland.³ This is a fundamental issue, as it is only in this light that we can examine the impact that the Reformation had on Scottish congregations, and ultimately the success of the Scottish Reformation. Thus this study traces the development of the church in the county of Fife from 1560 to 1640, taking the establishment of Protestantism as its starting-point, rather than its conclusion. This development can only be fully appreciated and evaluated by extending the period under consideration well into the seventeenth century, and by focusing attention specifically on the situation in the parishes. The terminal date is a loose one, but it is beyond the scope of this study to address the events of the covenanting rebellion in Fife parishes, and the 'second reformation' seems to be a reasonable place to bring to a halt a study of the aftermath and progress of the first one.

¹ 'A Protestant nation, but not a nation of Protestants'. Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford, 1993), 280.

² The extent of conversions before 1560 has been vigorously debated, but most would seem to accept that although often highly influential in society, Protestants were very much in the minority before 1560. While numbers were not relevant to the outcome of the Reformation Rebellion in a pre-democratic age, for our purposes the key fact is that Protestants were few in number among the general population. For the most recent comments on this, and the point about the socially influential nature of the early Protestants, see Alec Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation* (Manchester, 2006), 117-121; also Jenny Wormald, *Court, Kirk and Community: Scotland 1470-1625* (Edinburgh, 1981), 108; Michael Lynch, *Scotland: A New History* (London, 1991), 186-91.

³ Margo Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (New Haven, 2002); Michael Graham, *The Uses of Reform: Godly Discipline and Popular Behaviour in Scotland and Beyond, 1560-1610* (Leiden, 1996).

In addressing the progress made in establishing a reformed church in the parishes, both the institutional church and the laity should fall within the analysis. Of course, the evidence that we have tends to be rather focused on church institutions and personnel, and so it is almost always necessary to look at the laity through the eyes of ministers and elders. Although many lay voices can be heard in the kirk session minutes, these manuscripts are ultimately records of the church, and many more lay voices leave no trace whatsoever. This is not to suggest that institutions are unimportant, indeed the story of the development of the church in the localities is one of interaction between church and laity, between preacher and auditor, between kirk session elder and sinner. It was only through the parochial institutions of the ministry and the kirk session that the leaders of the Scottish church could hope to bring about reformation in the people, and so it is on these institutions that the emphasis falls in this thesis. They are studied not just for their own sake, but for the light that they shed on how the people of Fife were confronted with Protestant ideas and values, and how they responded to them. Several areas of the church which have been the subject of debate among historians recently, such as ecclesiastical politics and theology, have been left out except where they affected the religious life of the parish.⁴

The last three decades have seen a series of local histories of the Scottish Reformation, some of which have been published as full-length monographs and articles, while others remain in thesis form.⁵ There are two book-length county studies, of Angus and Ayrshire by Frank Bardgett and Margaret Sanderson respectively, as well as two books on the Reformation in the key burghs of Edinburgh and Perth, by Michael Lynch and Mary Verschuur.⁶ The two other principal burghs of the realm, Aberdeen and Dundee, have been tackled in theses, and various studies

⁴ Alan R. Macdonald, *The Jacobean Kirk, 1567-1625: Sovereignty, Polity and Liturgy* (Aldershot, 1998); David Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism 1590-1638* (Oxford, 2000).

⁵ This output is tiny when compared with the vast field of local English Reformation history. There is insufficient room here to list even the monographs alone, but see for example Patrick Collinson and John Craig (eds.), *The Reformation in English Towns 1500-1640* (Basingstoke, 1998). The footnotes to the introduction give some hint of the volume of work produced.

⁶ Frank Bardgett, *Scotland Reformed: The Reformation in Angus and the Mearns* (Edinburgh, 1989); Margaret Sanderson, *Ayrshire and the Reformation: People and Change 1490-1600* (East Linton, 1997); Michael Lynch, *Edinburgh and the Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1981); Mary Verschuur, *Politics or Religion? The Reformation in Perth, 1540-1570* (Edinburgh, 2006). More germane to the themes of this thesis than her book, which is focused on burgh community relations in the build up to 1560, is Verschuur's earlier chapter 'Enforcing the Discipline of the Kirk: Mr Patrick Galloway's Early Years as Minister of Perth', in W. Fred Graham (ed.), *Later Calvinism: International Perspectives* (Kirksville, Missouri, 1994).

have dealt with other localities.⁷ What most of these studies have in common is an emphasis on the rise of dissent and the events of 1559-1560; rarely is the focus on the process of building a reformed church once the national Reformation had been established.⁸ In general, the emphasis has been on Reformation as event, or series of events, rather than reformation as process. The studies of burghs have understandably focused on the most prominent Scottish towns: Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen, Perth, St Andrews. There has been little serious study of the intermediate and rural settlements, whose parish records form much of the basis for this study.⁹ And those studies dealing with areas rather than towns have tended to focus as much on local men's involvement in the Reformation as on ordinary men and women's experiences of reformation. For all the local studies, little real parish history has been written.

The most important work on the post-Reformation church in the parishes has been done on the national, rather than local scale, an approach which has both advantages and disadvantages. Margo Todd's outstanding *Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* has shed considerable light on the ways in which early modern parishioners understood their religion, and the ways in which reformed ideas were adapted in local communities. However, the book draws on evidence from across Scotland's diverse regions and types of parish, raising serious questions about the

⁷ The three main studies remaining in thesis form are Allan White, 'Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen, 1543-1593' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Edinburgh University, 1985); Iain Flett, 'The conflict of the Reformation and Democracy in the Geneva of Scotland 1443-1610: an Introduction to edited texts of documents relating to the Burgh of Dundee' (Unpublished M.Phil Thesis, St Andrews University, 1981); John Todd, 'The Reformation in the Diocese of Dunblane' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Edinburgh University, 1973). Jane Dawson has tackled the rather different case of the highlands in her 'Calvinism and the Gaidhealtachd in Scotland', in Andrew Pettegree, Alastair Duke, and Gillian Lewis (eds.) *Calvinism in Europe, 1540-1620* (Cambridge, 1994), and the town of St Andrews in her '“The Face of Ane Perfytt Reformed Kyrk”: St Andrews and the Early Scottish Reformation' in Kirk, James (ed.), *Humanism and Reform: The Church in Europe, England and Scotland 1400-1643* (Oxford, 1991). Despite its title, Linda Dunbar, *Reforming the Scottish Church: John Winram (c.1492-1582) and the Example of Fife* (Aldershot, 2002), is very much focused on Winram in St Andrews, although there is some material on other Fife parishes. There is some local Reformation material in Maureen Meikle, *A British Frontier? Lairds and Gentlemen in the Eastern Borders, 1540-1603* (East Linton, 2004). Articles dealing with localities in relation to specific topics, as opposed to general Reformation studies, are cited where relevant elsewhere in the thesis.

⁸ In Sanderson, *Ayrshire and the Reformation*, 7 of the 9 chapters deal with the period up to and including 1559-1560, while in Verschuur, *Politics or Religion?*, only 1 of the 7 chapters deals with the post-1560 period. In Bardgett, *Scotland Reformed*, 3 of the 7 chapters address the post-1560 period, although one of these deals exclusively with family factions in Angus. A notable exception to this trend is Lynch, *Edinburgh and the Reformation*.

⁹ The focus of local studies in continental Reformation historiography has also been on the towns and cities, although see C. Scott Dixon, *The Reformation and Rural Society: The parishes of Brandenburg-Ansbach-Kulmbach, 1528-1603* (Cambridge, 1996), 2-4.

applicability of some of the conclusions reached.¹⁰ It also takes an entirely thematic rather than chronological approach, and the greater survival of source material from the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries means that it is unclear how far the conclusions are applicable to the first decades after 1560. In any case, Todd's real concern, the nature of Protestant culture, viewed from anthropological perspectives, is covered very well, and this ground will not be retread in this thesis, nor will her central thesis, that reformed Scottish culture was very far from uniformly internal, cognitive and logo-centric.¹¹ Michael Graham's *Uses of Reform* is much more firmly rooted in time and place, drawing evidence from a number of specific settlements, but its subject is limited to discipline and popular behaviour. Although Graham's interpretations are sound, and for the most part confirmed in parts of this thesis, his focus on the period up to the end of the sixteenth century leads him to emphasise the evidence from a few key parishes, especially St Andrews, Edinburgh and Aberdeen, particularly when amalgamating his overall data. Once again, substantial questions remain about the development of the church in the smaller burghs and rural parishes, where about nine in ten sixteenth-century Scots lived. This thesis provides a sustained case-study, using a wide variety of parishes within one locality, in an attempt to trace in detail the establishment and development of the reformed church in Scottish parishes.

Why choose Fife for such a study? Apart from the obvious point that it is one of the most significant parts of Scotland not to have been studied in any detail, Fife makes for an interesting case-study for a number of reasons. It contains a good variety of parishes ranging from St Andrews, the ecclesiastical headquarters of medieval Scotland, through the prosperous coastal burghs of the south coast and East Neuk and the inland seat of the sheriff court, Cupar, to the more rural inland parishes to the north and west of the county.¹² Although these inland parishes were relatively isolated and at some remove from commercial and trading centres, they were by no means backwards or impoverished: Fife was made up of mostly good agricultural

¹⁰ For a concise summary of these problems, see Julian Goodare, 'Review of Margo Todd's Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland', *Albion* 36 (2004), 376.

¹¹ Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 5-7, 21, 105-110, 149-155, 181-2.

¹² Some useful guides to the county have recently appeared, most importantly D. Omand (ed.), *The Fife Book* (Edinburgh, 2000), but also Raymond Lamont-Brown, *Villages of Fife* (Edinburgh, 2002); and the same author's *Fife in History and Legend* (Edinburgh, 2002).

land, with fine land for sheep farming in the central belt.¹³ The land supported an impressive population, probably in the region of 60,000 or 70,000 for most of our period, and Blaeu's Atlas of 1654 recorded that 'There is no province of the Kingdom, which has more resident nobles'.¹⁴ Despite this, no single magnate dominated the life of the county. Similarly, although St Andrews was the ecclesiastical hub, and the largest settlement, it was not large enough to dominate its hinterland in the same way that towns like Edinburgh and Aberdeen did. In Fife, it is possible to compare a variety of parishes which are relatively close together. Fife is also large enough to make the trends found significant, while remaining a reasonably well-defined and manageable area, especially since its main border was not with other counties but with the North Sea and the Rivers Tay and Forth.

Also of crucial importance is the fact that Fife has a good set of surviving records, especially kirk session minutes. Apart from the voluminous published minutes of St Andrews Kirk Session, many unpublished parish records survive from this period, including some from before 1600.¹⁵ Although Margo Todd has used most of these sources, they still await detailed analysis in their local context. In fact, the bulk of the minutes has made it necessary to resort to sampling for some of the more detailed analysis, though all of the pre-1640 session minute books have been examined. Kirk session minutes form the basis of Chapters Two and Six, and are used substantially in Chapters Three and Five. But Chapters One and Four, which deal with the ministry, required a different set of sources. The various manuscript sources which provide the basis of the list and database of ministers used are discussed at some length in Chapter One, and it has also been necessary to delve into university records, miscellaneous church papers and the financial records of central government. For Chapter Five, a

¹³ In Robert Gordon's new description of Fife in Blaeu's Atlas of Scotland, the middle section of Fife is described as 'blessed with most joyous pastures and number of flocks, of sheep especially which bear wool praised by outsiders, as the hills rise gently and frequent clear streams cut through valleys rich in grass'. Joan Blaeu, *Atlas novus*, vol. v. (1654), 75. In quoting from this work I have followed the translation of Ian Cunningham, available on the National Library of Scotland's webpages for the Blaeu Atlas: <http://www.nls.uk/maps/early/blaeu/index.html>.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 77. The population statistics are necessarily rough for this period, but we do know that by the later seventeenth century the population of Fife stood at 80,000 to 90,000, about 10% of the national population, a high proportion when we consider its share of the landmass and that it only had about 6% of the parishes. However, in 1755, Fife only had about 6% of the population. Assuming a ratio somewhere between these two for our period gives figures probably not much lower than an absolute minimum of 50,000, and not much higher than 75,000, although this figure may have been exceeded by the middle third of the seventeenth century. M. Flinn (ed.), *Scottish Population History from the Seventeenth Century to the 1930s* (Cambridge, 1977), 198-99; James Kyd (ed.), *Scottish Population Statistics including Webster's Analysis of Population 1755* (Edinburgh, 1975), 41.

¹⁵ Table 2.1 below lists surviving session minutes with their starting date.

range of printed material as well as manuscript sermons and ministers' writings were used. Thus the emphasis has been away from the traditional narrative histories of Knox, Calderwood and others, and national records like the Register of the Privy Council, though in places these have yielded vital information. Rather the aim has been to use all the sources which might shed direct light on the religious situation in Fife's parishes. More practically, the fact that the research has been undertaken in Fife has made it possible to explore the area over a number of years, and get a good understanding of its geography and the relationships between its settlements. Nevertheless, the interest is not so much in Fife in itself, but as a case-study, as a way of asking broader questions about the nature of the Scottish post-Reformation Church, and so wherever possible, comparisons with other areas have been raised, and the wider context kept in mind.

One particular challenge facing any local study is the problem of typicality: to what extent can the trends discerned here be applied to Scotland as a whole? While no region can ever be typical, and some particular distinctions are discussed in parts of the thesis, there is reason to suppose that Fife may be fairly representative of the early-modern Scottish lowlands. Although perhaps unusually prosperous, if compared for example with the more upland diocese of Dunblane to the west, Fife consisted mainly of the same types of agricultural communities as the rest of the lowlands. Its preponderance of burghs make it slightly unusual, and sets it apart from other parts of the lowlands like Stirlingshire or Clydesdale, but in being dominated by trading ports and coastal burghs it was akin to much of the rest of the east coast of Scotland.¹⁶ Furthermore, one consequence of the kirk session system and the emphasis on the parish after the Reformation was that wholesale regional differences in religious life are unlikely.¹⁷ Because the church was primarily governed at the level of the parish and the presbytery (typically containing ten to fifteen parishes), local variations would have been at the micro-level rather than applying to whole counties or dioceses. Probably social and economic differences would have been more important, meaning that in many ways a parish like Burntisland would have had more in common with the other east coast burghs of Scotland than with nearby rural

¹⁶ Blaeu, *Atlas novus*, 76: 'The whole south coast [of Fife] is girt with frequent small towns, which today have grown into towns'.

¹⁷ Even the long-standing idea of the Aberdeen area's innate conservatism has been challenged, albeit for a later period, in Gordon DesBrisay, 'Authority and Discipline in Aberdeen, 1650-1700' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of St Andrews, 1989).

parishes like Ballingry. It is to be hoped that although the portion of Scotland examined here may not be perfectly representative of the nation as a whole, it should at least give a fairly good impression of the overall flavour.

For the purposes of this study, the definition of Fife parishes has followed the order given in Hew Scott's *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae*, which reflects nineteenth-century groupings.¹⁸ This means that some parishes within the modern county of Perth and Kinross have been included. The *Fasti* has also been followed for regional groupings within Fife, meaning that the presbytery boundaries of the 1580s onwards have been somewhat anachronistically imposed on the 1560s and 1570s for the sake of clarity.¹⁹ But at the parish level, contemporary definitions have been used: thus the separate burghs of Anstruther Wester and Easter have been regarded, as they were at the time, as one parish until the erection of Anstruther Easter into a separate parish in 1641.²⁰ Similarly, the contemporary name of Abercrombie is used for the parish now known as St Monans, since until 1646 the parish was centred on the small inland settlement of Abercrombie, and the baronial burgh of St Monans was in fact within the neighbouring parish of Kilconquhar.²¹ There were a few other changes during this period, such as the erection of Kingsbarns and Ferryport-on-Craig (now Tayport) into separate parishes, but on the whole the parochial structure of Fife was little changed after the Reformation.

This thesis is divided into two parts, the first of which traces the establishment and development of the church in Fife's parishes. The approach here is mostly chronological, and the emphasis is for the most part on the period up to 1600, since it is argued that the 1580s and 1590s were the crucial period for the establishment of a well-functioning church in the parishes, although in some areas development was even slower. The first chapter deals with the most essential component of a parochial church, the minister, and the focus is on the provision of preachers to parishes. Although the provision of ministers was gradual, progress was too complicated to be

¹⁸ *FES*, v, viii. All references are to this revised edition rather than the original edition.

¹⁹ This has also involved imposing the much more modern Presbytery of Kinross on the parishes, alongside the contemporary Presbyteries of Dunfermline, Kirkcaldy, Cupar and St Andrews. Interestingly, there was relatively little overlap between the ministries of the various areas even before presbyteries, suggesting that they were a formalisation of pre-existing perceived boundaries. For a similar approach see Alison Muir, 'The Covenanters in Fife, c. 1610-1689: Religious Dissent in the Local Community' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of St Andrews, 2001), 25-6.

²⁰ *FES*, viii, 453.

²¹ *FES*, v, 177. This is confirmed in a roll of parishes in St Andrews Presbytery in 1617: NLS, Adv. Ms. 29.2.8, ff. 21v-22r.

described as 'rapid' or 'slow', and the main problem was not that of vacant parishes, but of parishes having to share a minister for most of the first few decades after 1560. Similarly, in the second chapter we see that kirk session discipline, the third mark of the true church (alongside preaching and the sacraments) was also rolled out relatively gradually across Fife. Even in St Andrews, the comprehensive discipline that we recognise from later records was not immediately imposed in the 1560s. But although its development was gradual, the system of discipline in place by the seventeenth century was for the most part healthy, if variable from parish to parish, and was sustained throughout the years up to 1640 with little evidence of serious backsliding. With the two main institutions of the parish church covered, the third chapter looks at the crucial issue of worship, which was the main context in which most parishioners encountered the church. Both a parish minister and a reasonably effective kirk session were necessary for a full programme of worship, and so getting parish worship to the desired level was again a gradual task. But this may not have been such a hindrance to the development of Protestantism as we might intuitively assume. Although the gradual development of reformed religion in the parishes was a failure in terms of the immediate desires of the reformers, it may not have been such a failure for the course of the Reformation. Possibly it even unintentionally aided the eventual success of the reformers, as it allowed for a more gradual transition to the strict Protestant worship and discipline of the 1590s onwards.

The second part of the thesis deals more thematically with the institutions and functions of the reformed church in Fife. Here, partly as a result of the gradual establishment of reformed structures traced in the first part, the emphasis is slightly more on the period after 1590. The fourth chapter examines the careers and lives of Fife's ministers. Despite the initial problems with providing ministers to parishes, the profession was from the outset a stable, coherent and well-trained group. From the 1590s onwards, there were increased efforts by these ministers to instruct and exhort congregations to a better understanding of, and identification with, reformed Protestantism. This is the subject of the fifth chapter, which examines the various intertwined ways in which Fife's ministers attempted this mission, in print, in manuscript, and in person. Such instruction was always multi-layered, and the ignorant continued to be a target, but there are also signs of a more sophisticated audience for religious education. The final chapter deals with the disciplinary mission, both in terms of the offences targeted, which constituted a comprehensive

range of offences beyond the sexual sins which are often assumed to have been the obsession of kirk sessions, and the types of offender appearing before the sessions. Although gender and social distinctions were reflected in some aspects of discipline, the kirk sessions' over-riding aim was to punish sin wherever they found it. Finally, the effectiveness of discipline is evaluated positively. The punishments certainly did not lack 'teeth', and the sessions seem to have had reasonably broad public sympathy, although, unsurprisingly, communities free from sin had not been created by the end of the 1630s.

The narrative emerging from this thesis is not one of simple 'success' or 'failure', of 'rapid' or 'slow' reformation. The development of Protestantism in one of its apparent heartlands before 1560 was hesitant, to a degree that may undermine traditional views of the Scottish Reformation as unusually swift and successful once it arrived. The first few decades in Fife were difficult, and our modern perspective should not be allowed to fore-shorten these years in our understanding, as they constituted the first generation of the Reformation. But despite, and perhaps partly because of this gradual genesis, the church that the Reformation created in Fife was ultimately a healthy and vibrant one. Although the case of Scotland must ultimately still be seen as a 'Reformed success', the consolidation of its reformed religious settlement was every bit as gradual, complex, and dependent on local circumstances as elsewhere in Europe.²²

²² The phrase 'Reformed success' is from the title of Diarmaid MacCulloch's section on Scotland in his *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490-1700* (London, 2003), 378-382.

PART I
ESTABLISHING A REFORMED CHURCH IN FIFE

Chapter 1

The Reformation of the Ministry

One of the first, and most important, tasks facing the newly reformed church in 1560 was establishing a preaching ministry in the parishes. The three marks of the true church were considered to be the preaching of the Word, the sacraments rightly administered and discipline.¹ All three of these marks were dependent on the presence in each parish of a minister, and so the progress made in planting such a ministry is a crucial issue for any examination of the success of the early church. This question has not been entirely neglected by historians, but research so far has focused on two particular aspects of the early ministry: its financial basis and patterns of conformity among the pre-Reformation clergy. Thus the actual provision of ministers to parishes has not been at the forefront of most analyses. There has also been a distinct bias towards the early period from 1560 until 1574, the terminal date of Charles Haws' biographical survey of Scottish ministers.² Coupled with the knowledge that a preaching ministry was well established in most areas by the early seventeenth century, this has left something of a gap in our understanding of the early establishment of the reformed ministry in Scotland. We know that eventually a complete ministry was successfully established in areas like Fife, but our knowledge of the process itself is altogether patchier.

In an attempt to redress this imbalance, and provide a firm basis for the rest of this thesis, this chapter traces the provision of ministers to Fife parishes. It begins in 1560 with the official establishment of the reformed church, and continues through to around 1600, the date by which a full parish ministry had been more or less established.³ The terminal date is loose, however, and it has sometimes been necessary to examine the early years of the seventeenth century. The focus is 'bottom-up' insofar as the key theme is the success and speed with which parishioners in Fife were provided with an adequate ministry, not on the financial underpinnings or pre-Reformation background of that ministry, although such matters obviously affected the provision of ministers. The initial plan had been to use the published

¹ *The Scots Confession, 1560* (Edinburgh, 1960), 44-5.

² Charles Haws, *The Scottish Parish Clergy at the Reformation 1540-1574* (Edinburgh, 1972).

³ Indeed, the Synod of Fife noted in 1611 that it now faced the opposite (and much more pleasant) problem of men who were able to enter the ministry 'and yet ar not employed'. NAS, Fife Synod Minutes, CH2/154/1, p. 89.

Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanæ as the source of information on ministers, but it soon became apparent that, although it provides useful biographical information on some ministers, the *Fasti* is not sufficiently comprehensive in its listing of ministers, especially in the early years after 1560.⁴ Charles Haws' work on the pre-1574 ministry is more reliable, but in order to trace the establishment of the ministry beyond that point it became necessary to produce a fresh list of Fife ministers, based on a variety of sources, to provide the basic data for this chapter.⁵ This list, although it is based on incomplete sources and so still imperfect, contains ministers missing from other lists and has corrected many dates, providing a much firmer base for analysis.⁶ The list also forms the starting-point for the database used for analysis of the ministry as a profession in Chapter Four.

As a result of this investigation, a clearer picture has emerged of the process by which a full ministry was established in Fife. Although some parishes were provided with ministers very early on, and in some cases earlier than hitherto realised, the path to a complete ministry in Fife was a gradual and complicated one. Many of these early ministers had to serve between two and four parishes, a situation that began well before Regent Morton's scheme for grouping parishes together, and continued until the 1590s.⁷ This meant that for most of Fife parish provision was sketchy and based on the sharing of ministers for at least the first three decades after the Reformation, raising a number of questions about the reformed church. Many parishes relied on the services of a reader, who could read prayers and passages from scripture but could not expound the Word from the pulpit.⁸ This may force us to reconsider our appraisal of the primacy of preaching in the Scottish kirk, at least in the early years.⁹ And we may have to re-evaluate how far it is possible to generalise about religious culture in areas

⁴ *FES*. See also Todd, 'The Reformation in the Diocese of Dunblane', 6.

⁵ Haws, *Scottish Parish Clergy*.

⁶ The only comparable list is that given for Ayrshire in Sanderson, *Ayrshire and the Reformation*, 158-76.

⁷ Cf. James Kirk (ed.), *Visitation of the Diocese of Dunblane and other churches, 1586-1589* (Edinburgh, 1984), xxv. See Frank Bardgett, 'Four Parishes Kirks to Ane Preicher', *RSCHS*, 22 (1986), 195-207, for Morton's policy and opposition to it.

⁸ This has not prevented historians from including readers in their estimations of the size of the reformed ministry. For example, Charles Haws, 'The Parish Clergy in the Dioceses of Dunblane and Dunkeld' *Proceedings of the Conference on Scottish Studies*, 2 (1974), 6-17; J. Todd, 'Changeover at the Reformation: What Happened in Dunblane Diocese', *Journal of the Society of Friends of Dunblane Cathedral*, 11 (1972), 91-95; Donaldson, 'Bishop Adam Bothwell and the Reformation in Orkney' *RSCHS*, 13 (1959), 85-100. See Michael Lynch, 'Calvinism in Scotland, 1559-1638', in Menna Prestwich (ed.), *International Calvinism 1541-1715* (Oxford, 1985), 229 for a more negative appraisal of the status of readers.

⁹ This theme is developed in ch. 3.

which may have had inadequate provision of preaching, sacraments and discipline. On the reformers' own definition, they were struggling to sustain a 'true' church. The findings of this chapter also inform the rest of this thesis, since any examination of a newly reformed church in a particular area must rest on an awareness of the processes and speed with which the institutions of that church were established.

Historiography and Methodology

The modern historiography of the post-Reformation Scottish clergy begins with the work of Gordon Donaldson, which uncovered many of the relevant sources and established key trends. In two important articles he outlined the sources for study of the early ministry and called for local studies using these sources to examine the financial provision for ministers, and the pre-Reformation antecedents of these ministers.¹⁰ Such local studies did follow, many written by Donaldson himself and Charles Haws, and focused on the proportion of clergy who conformed and served in the new church.¹¹ This approach was entirely understandable and enabled Donaldson to address the question of the conversion of pre-Reformation clerics, an important issue for the traditional historiography of the Reformation with its focus on counting converts. But the focus was very much on the first few years of the reformed church, and although some attempt was made to list the numbers of serving ministers and readers in each area, there was little attempt to relate the total numbers to actual parish service. The work of Charles Haws was similarly focused on the conformity of pre-Reformation clerics: half of his biographical study of the parish clergy was devoted to a list of post-1560 clergy with their pre-Reformation antecedents. For the purposes of the questions asked here, he only went so far as to say that the Dioceses of St

¹⁰ Gordon Donaldson, 'Sources for the Study of Scottish Ecclesiastical Organisation and Personnel, 1560-1600', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 19 (1942-3), 188-203; Gordon Donaldson, 'The Parish Clergy and the Reformation', *IR*, 10 (1959), 5-20.

¹¹ See for example Gordon Donaldson, 'Bishop Adam Bothwell and the Reformation in Orkney'; Gordon Donaldson, 'The Galloway Clergy at the Reformation', *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society*, 30 (1951-2); Mark Dilworth, 'Monks and Ministers after 1560', *RSCHS*, 18 (1974), 201-221; Charles Haws, 'The Diocese of St Andrews at the Reformation', *RSCHS*, 18 (1974), 115-132; Charles Haws, 'The Parish Clergy in the Dioceses of Dunblane and Dunkeld at the Reformation'; Margaret Sanderson, 'Some Aspects of the Church in Scottish Society in the Era of the Reformation', *RSCHS*, 17 (1972), 81-98; Charles Haws, 'Continuity and Change: The Clergy of the Diocese of Moray, 1560-74', *Northern Scotland*, 5 (1982), 91-98. One of the more useful and analytical of these works is a thesis supervised by Gordon Donaldson: Todd, 'Reformation in the Diocese of Dunblane', esp. ch. 6.

Andrews and Glasgow had ‘some kind of service in many churches by 1567’.¹² Similarly, Donaldson’s work on the financial provision for the ministry illustrated some of the problems facing the church in the 1560s, but did not really relate these difficulties to the grass-roots problems of providing ministers to parishes.¹³ Providing ministers to parishes required not merely a set of stipends, but also a supply of adequate and willing men, so tracing the establishment of the ministry involves more than tracing the fluctuations in the church’s financial resources.¹⁴

It is unfortunate that since these early studies, there has not been a serious attempt to address this problem on the national or local scale. This is not to say that there has been no discussion of the state of the parish ministry. The main debate has been between James Kirk’s optimistic view of the early establishment of the ministry, and Michael Lynch’s more negative view.¹⁵ Kirk pointed out that some parishes had ministers in the early 1560s (like Aberdour and Collessie in Fife) and argued for a quick and successful establishment of ministers.¹⁶ Lynch responded that while there were some notable early successes, these were hampered by the deaths of the pre-Reformation clerics and that the situation as late as the 1590s was far from perfect.¹⁷ There is some truth in both these positions, but the question of establishment is not one which can be answered by a simple date at which ministers were in place. This quick-slow continuum is not necessarily the most helpful way to try to appraise the success of the church in providing ministers. This is partly because it is not based on a detailed analysis of parish provision, but also because the complexities of the evidence do not lend themselves to simplistic conclusions. Like other recent

¹² Haws, *Scottish Parish Clergy*, x.

¹³ Gordon Donaldson (ed.), *Accounts of the Collectors of Thirds of Benefices 1561-1572* (Edinburgh, 1949).

¹⁴ There are also technical problems in tracing financial provision: for example some clerics were funded by lay sources as well as from the thirds of benefices. See James Kirk, *Patterns of Reform: Continuity and Change in the Post-Reformation Church* (Edinburgh, 1989), 121, 129.

¹⁵ Kirk, *Patterns of Reform*, ch. 4; Michael Lynch, ‘Preaching to the Converted: Perspectives on the Scottish Reformation’ in A. Macdonald, M. Lynch and I. Cowan (eds.), *The Renaissance in Scotland* (Leiden, 1994), 301-343. See also Michael Lynch, ‘In Search of the Scottish Reformation’, in E. Cowan and R. Finlay (eds.), *Scottish History: The Power of the Past* (Edinburgh, 2002), 80-91 for Lynch’s view of a slow reformation in Scotland.

¹⁶ See below for a discussion of his example parishes. Although aware of the difficulties faced with ministerial provision, Margo Todd more recently argued that ‘the sessions achieved remarkably quick progress on those fronts that really mattered to the reformers – doctrinal conversion and instruction by means of sermons’. So the traditional view still retains considerable weight. Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 185.

¹⁷ A view recently echoed in Margaret Sanderson, ‘Service and Survival: The clergy in late sixteenth-century Scotland’, *RSCHS*, 36 (2006), 75, where she claims that provision by 1600 was only ‘something like adequate’.

historians who debate this question, Lynch refers to national statistics such as the 400 benefices which were still unfilled in the early 1590s.¹⁸ Often historians compare the number of parishes in Scotland or a particular region with the number of ministers, quite understandably since no detailed study exists from which to work. But this sort of analysis misses the problem of parishes which shared ministers, and often includes readers in the total number of clerics.¹⁹ Kirk picks out a few parishes which had some early provision, but without a sustained local analysis of provision, parish by parish, it is impossible to be certain how typical these parishes were, or how accurate are either his, or Lynch's conclusions.

For the local analysis in this chapter a list was compiled of ministers, readers and exhorters in Fife from 1560 to 1600.²⁰ The starting-point for the compilation of this list was the two published lists of ministers, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae* and Haws' *Scottish Parish Clergy*. The *Fasti* is missing some clerics entirely, and does not always have the complete dates of some clerics. Although the latter is more reliable, some alterations have been made where primary sources diverged from Haws' material. These lists have been supplemented by some published sources which have supplied additional information. Some of these provide as much detail as a list of ministers in an individual year, but most simply yield occasional references to named ministers and confirm suspected ministers from other sources.²¹ The main body of additional material, however, was provided by manuscript sources, of which the most important were the records of the 'Assignment and Modification of Stipends'.²² These provided a great deal of additional information for the more difficult period

¹⁸ Lynch, 'Preaching to the Converted', 302-3. See also Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 8; Felicity Heal, *Reformation in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2003), 432-3.

¹⁹ See above, n. 8, and Kirk, *Patterns of Reform*, 152-53.

²⁰ The compilation of such a list is a complicated matter, and there are some important conventions to note. The criterion for inclusion in the list is that we have positive evidence of a particular cleric's service in the reformed church. *FES* sometimes includes men who held the parsonage or vicarage, but this is no guarantee of reformed service (See Donaldson, 'Sources', 197). Dates have only been included for which we have evidence that the cleric was serving the relevant parish, although where possible dates have been interpolated in between the dates for which we have evidence. For example if we have evidence of service in 1563, 1566, 1567 and 1570, the cleric is recorded as serving 1563-70.

²¹ *Register of Ministers, Exhorters and Readers, and their Stipends, after the period of the Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1830); Donaldson, *Accounts of the Collectors of Thirds of Benefices*; James Kirk (ed.), *The Books of Assumption of the Thirds of Benefices: Scottish ecclesiastical rentals at the Reformation* (Oxford, 1995); *RStAKS; Fife Synod Selections*, Appendix; *RPC; Privy Seal; BUK*.

²² NAS, E47/1-8, Exchequer Records: Assignment and Modification of Stipends. See also NAS, CH4/1, Register of Presentations to Benefices; NAS, E46/3/6, Sub-Collectors of Thirds of Benefices: Fife, Fothrik and Kinross 1565 (missing from Donaldson's *Accounts*, only found in 1956); NAS, E48/3, Superplus of the Thirds of Benefices; NLS, Adv. MS. 17.1.4, Ministers' Stipends; NLS Adv. Ms. 32.6.4, Ministers and Stipends 1568-72 (eighteenth-century (?) transcript).

after 1574, added clerics for which we previously had no record, and significantly altered the dates of some clerics. The 'Assignment' records are also fortunately arranged by minister rather than by parish, making strikingly obvious the fact that so many parishes had to share ministers. The *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae* often states that a minister from a neighbouring parish had 'oversight' of a particular charge, but in practice such ministers seem to have been fully minister of both charges.²³ This has perhaps been concealed by the fact that when ministers are named, for example in General Assembly records, they are usually only mentioned as minister of one parish, even if they in fact had several in their charge. James Kirk rightly points out that some of the evidence for ministers is incomplete, and that any list of ministers must always be a minimum since there may have been ministers who went unrecorded.²⁴ While this list remains a minimum estimate, the increasing numbers of sources used means that the likelihood of a significant quantity of unrecorded clerics is now slim.

The provision of ministers

As we have seen, estimates of the early ministry in Fife have varied, the most positive assessment being that made by James Kirk.²⁵ Kirk picks out some Fife parishes in particular as showing signs of a healthy early ministry. For example, Kilconquhar had Alexander Spens as minister as early as 1559-60. But a closer examination reveals that he only served in 1559-60 and from 1563-7, and served some other charges during this latter spell. By the 1570s the parish was sharing a minister with three others and did not have its own minister until the 1590s. Similarly, although Aberdour had a minister in 1560, this was followed by a gap with no apparent minister in the parish until 1567. And while Collessie had an early exhorter and minister, there were gaps in the parish's provision throughout the 1560s. Finally, Abdie, where as Kirk says there was an early ministry, had to share its ministers with other parishes until 1585.²⁶ These few examples illustrate the problems with focusing on the very early years of the reformed church, and with relying on stray references which name a minister but not necessarily with a list of all his charges. The fact that a

²³ Sometimes the parish within the group in which the minister was settled might change: Sanderson, 'Service and Survival', 78.

²⁴ Kirk, *Patterns of Reform*, 131-2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, ch. 4; Ian Cowan, *The Scottish Reformation: Church and Society in Sixteenth Century Scotland* (London, 1982), 161 (also based on some early examples of parish ministers).

²⁶ Kirk, *Patterns of Reform*, 107.

minister was installed in 1560 does not guarantee an unbroken succession of ministers for the rest of the century. The long term goals of the reformers could not be met without a more lasting ministerial provision than the initial radical Protestant ministries established in major burghs in 1559.²⁷ The practice of naming a few individual parishes with early service may also give a false impression of typicality, since in most parishes there was no immediate dedicated ministry after the Reformation.

Nevertheless, the results emerging from the list of Fife ministers are not wholly negative. As Kirk says, there were many early ministers in Fife, and the research for this chapter has uncovered some who were previously unknown.²⁸ Furthermore, the discovery that more parishes were sharing ministers, even in the 1560s, means that our estimate of the number of parishes with no access at all to a minister has decreased significantly. And an analysis of the dates at which parishes first enjoyed the services of a parish minister would superficially seem to support the idea that a ministry was established in Fife with relative success and speed. Around four-fifths of parishes first acquired at least shared access to a minister (as opposed to a reader or exhorter) in the 1560s, and of these more than half had done so by 1564, although of course continued service was not guaranteed. Whatever problems the reformed church faced in establishing a ministry, the problem of totally vacant parishes was not a major one, in contrast to some suggestions.²⁹ The more serious problem was achieving a transition from an initial interim system whereby parishes shared access to ministers (and sometimes even to readers³⁰) to the ideal system, where every parish would have a preaching minister. To examine this problem we need a more detailed and chronological approach, and so the following discussion is based on an analysis of the progress made in the various regions of Fife at five year intervals.³¹

²⁷ For details of these see Kirk, *Patterns of Reform*, 102-3.

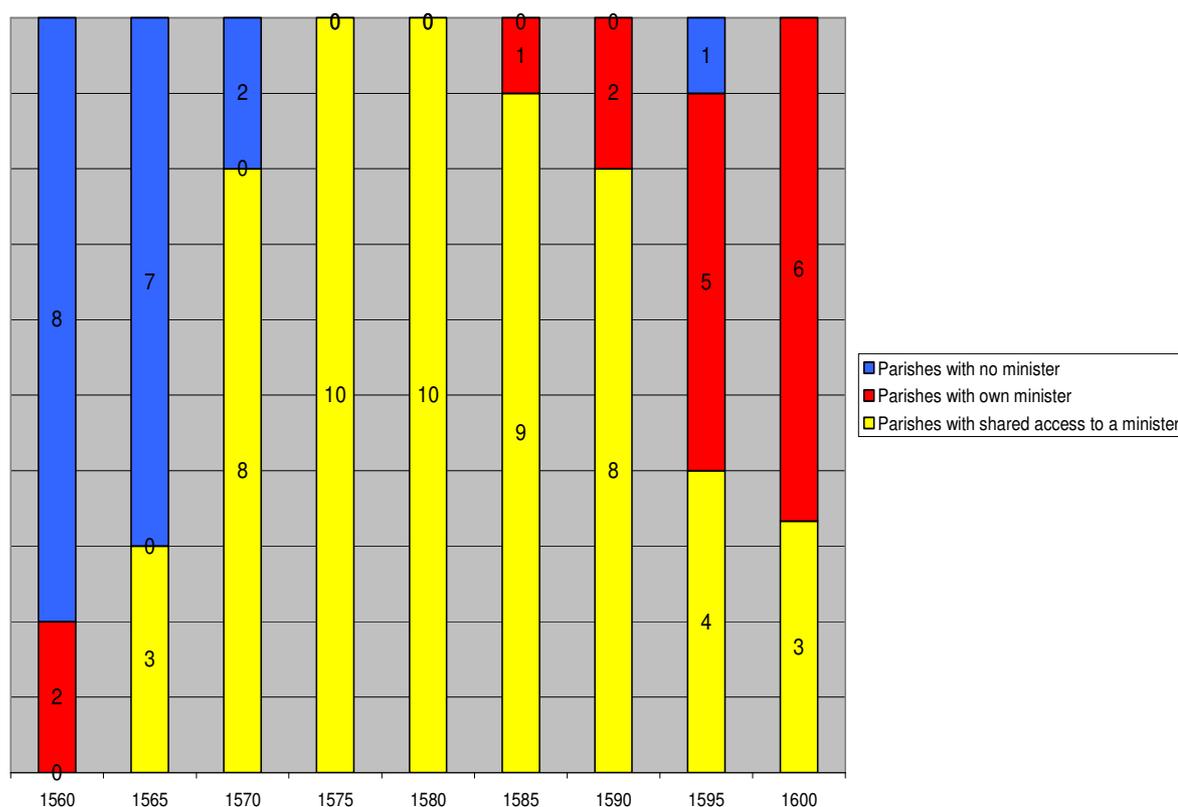
²⁸ Mostly in E47, 1-8. Since the research for the chapter was undertaken, Margaret Sanderson has echoed James Kirk, pointing out that 'the wonder is not that so few but that so many [ministers] were found in the early years'. Sanderson, 'Service and Survival', 73.

²⁹ See Lynch, 'Preaching to the Converted', 302-09; Philip Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven, 2002), 443.

³⁰ For example Aberdour and Dalgety (John Paterson) and Anstruther and Kilrenny (John Forman).

³¹ It should be noted that the 5-yearly sample may totally omit a minister who served, for example, from 1562-64.

Chart 1.1: Parish Provision in Dunfermline ‘Presbytery’³²



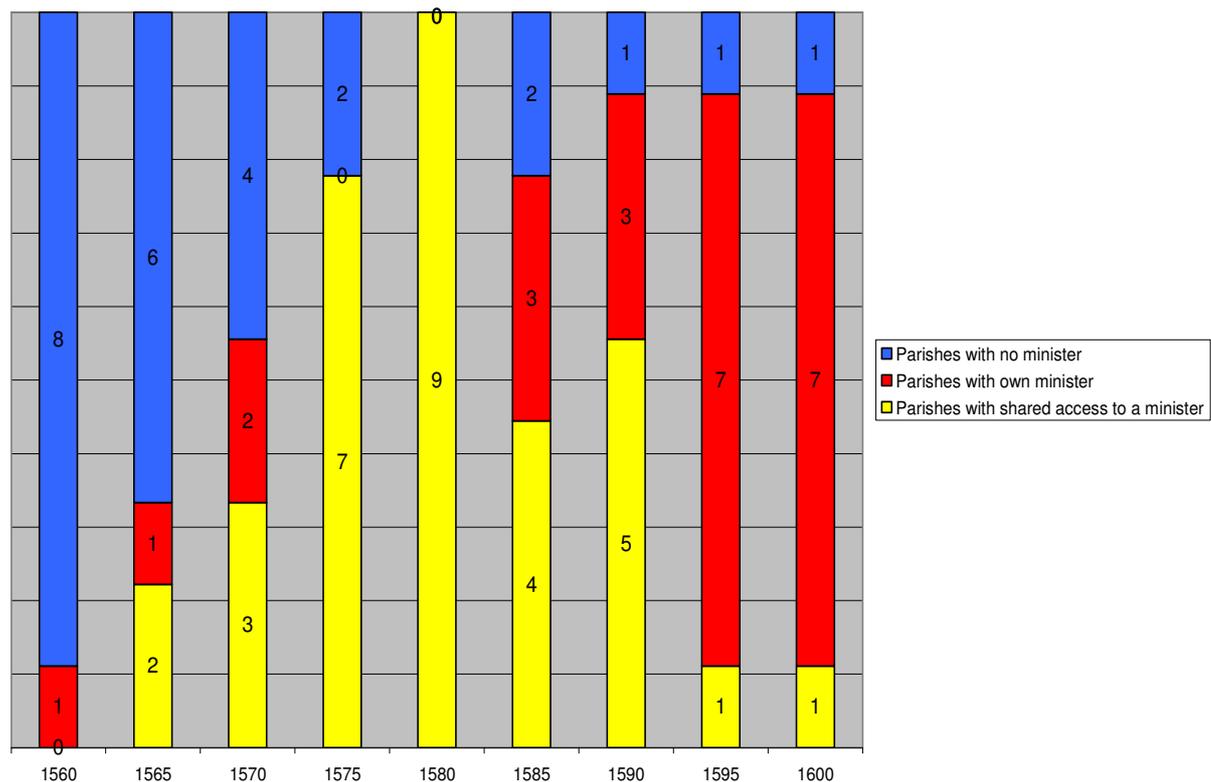
The development of a ministry in the Dunfermline area was not a straightforward progression, and the existence of parishes with ministers in the early 1560s masks a much more complicated picture. Although the number of totally vacant parishes decreased rapidly throughout the 1560s, meaning that by 1570 all but two parishes had shared access to a minister, the two which had had their own ministers as early as 1560 had to share them by 1565.³³ Whatever the successes in the first few years, throughout the 1570s Dunfermline parishes either shared a minister or had none at all. In 1575 just four ministers served the entire presbytery's ten parishes. Even the 1580s saw only minimal improvements to this pattern. In fact, the 1590s were the critical decade for the establishment of a parish ministry in the Dunfermline area: by 1595 half of the parishes in the area had their own minister, and by 1600 the only ones sharing ministers were Dalgety and Beath (which were in any case united in 1611)

³² There are only 9 parishes in the 1600 figures because Rosyth was by then subsumed within Inverkeithing.

³³ Cf. Kirk, *Patterns of Reform*, 107.

and Aberdour (very close to Dalgety) which got its own minister in 1602.³⁴ So by the early seventeenth century a parish ministry was well in place. But the path to that eventual success was slow and intermittent, not because of totally vacant parishes, but because of the manpower problems which forced ministers to serve the needs of several parishes.

Chart 1.2: Parish Provision in Kinross ‘Presbytery’³⁵



Like Dunfermline, the Kinross area (Chart 1.2) saw slow progress towards a successful establishment of ministers. The number of totally unserved parishes fell until there were none left in 1580, but again this was at the expense of parishes with their own ministers. And, as with Dunfermline, it was only in the 1590s that a majority of parishes came to have their own minister. The importance of the 1590s is apparent not just in terms of the sharing of parishes, but also in the service provided by ministers who took their charges in the 1590s. Unlike previous ministers, these second-generation Protestants, often educated at St Andrews University, tended to

³⁴ There were, however, ongoing problems in these parishes well into the seventeenth century: although this was unusual. W. Ross, *Aberdour and Inchcolm* (Edinburgh, 1885), 225-227.

³⁵ The apparent anomaly, seen in this chart and elsewhere, of there being just one parish with a shared minister, arises where a parish was shared with another parish outside the ‘Presbytery’ being discussed, or in a few cases, outside Fife.

serve for long stretches, well into the seventeenth century.³⁶ And it was also around the turn of the century that the larger parishes started to be provided with a second minister to cater to their larger populations, something that was only possible with a significantly improved supply of ministers (Table 1.3).

Table 1.3: Dates of Creation of Second Charges, 1589-1641³⁷

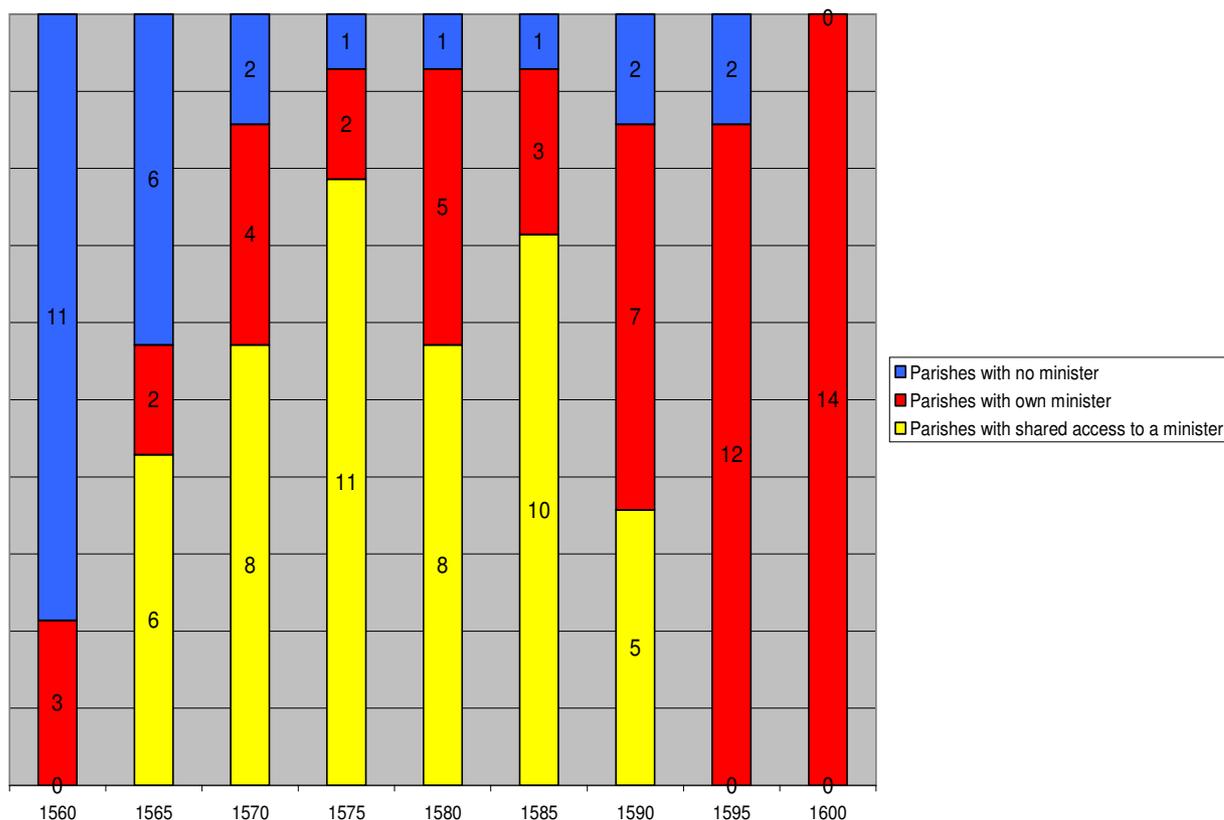
<u>Parish</u>	<u>Creation of Second Charge</u>	<u>Creation of Third Charge</u>
St Andrews	1589	1593
Cupar	1590	
Dunfermline	1598	
Crail	1600	1601 ³⁸
Inverkeithing	1601	
Dysart	1604	
Kirkcaldy	1612	
Culross	1641	

³⁶ For examples in Kinross ‘Presbytery’, see David Anderson (Ballingry, 1594-c. 1631), John Colden (Kinross, 1593-1640), and Patrick Davidson (Muckhart, 1594-1621).

³⁷ Information on second charges derived from *FES*.

³⁸ Subsequently erected into the parish of Kingsbarns.

Chart 1.4: Parish Provision in St Andrews 'Presbytery'

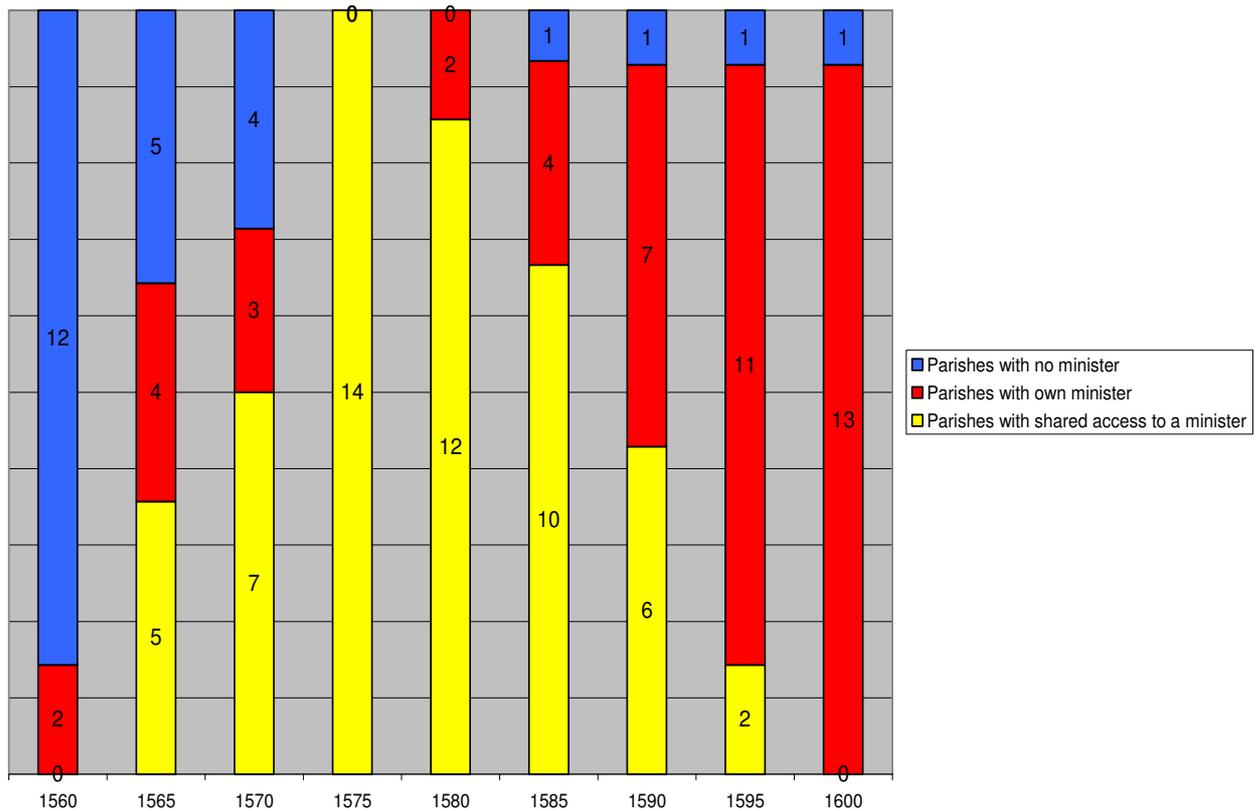


Kinross, Dunfermline, and their hinterlands were not at the ecclesiastical centre of Fife, and the hesitant progress displayed there might at first seem to be a result of their distance from North-East Fife, the ecclesiastical hub, with its university, major religious house at St Andrews, and concentration of burghs. However, a similar pattern emerges from the St Andrews area (Chart 1.4.) Although St Andrews itself was never destitute of ministry apart from a brief interlude in the early 1580s, its hinterland developed a parish ministry with a similar rate of progress to the rest of Fife. At least two parishes had their own minister at any given date (normally St Andrews and Crail), and the number of totally vacant parishes fell faster than in Kinross, but the majority of the fourteen parishes still had to share ministers in the 1570s and 1580s. Contrary to some assumptions, it was not only rural parishes that had to share ministers, but also parishes like Anstruther and Pittenweem in St Andrews Presbytery, and elsewhere in Fife the burghs of Kirkcaldy, Cupar and Dunfermline sometimes had to share their minister with outlying parishes.³⁹ More

³⁹ Cf. Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 67.

progress had been made by 1590 than elsewhere, but the 1590s were still the critical decade. Only in 1595 were a clear majority of the parishes enjoying their own minister, and by 1600 this was the case in every parish. St Andrews' hinterland, perhaps surprisingly, did not achieve significantly more success than the more peripheral (in ecclesiastical terms) south-west area in establishing a parish ministry.

Chart 1.5: Parish Provision in Kirkcaldy 'Presbytery'



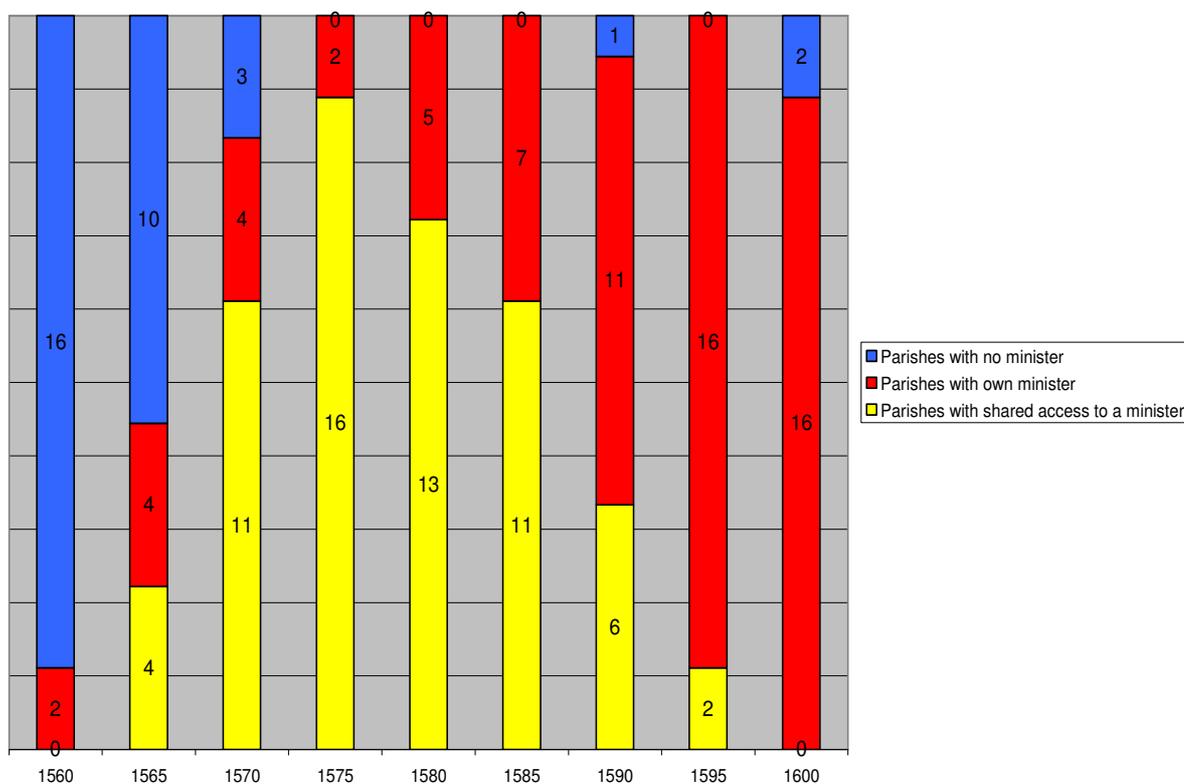
Similar patterns emerge in the Kirkcaldy area, which like St Andrews' hinterland contained a healthy number of sizeable coastal burghs such as Burntisland, Dysart, and Kirkcaldy itself (Chart 1.5).⁴⁰ The sharing of parishes increased until 1575, at which point all fourteen parishes were held in conjunction. Furthermore, in that year thirteen of the fourteen parishes had to share the same four ministers, George Boswell, John Simson, Thomas Biggar and George Scott.⁴¹ From then on some progress was made, and again it was in the 1590s that the majority of parishes got their own minister. And unsurprisingly, the Cupar area (Chart 1.6) displays a similar pattern to the previous four areas. If anything, this region saw the most success: there

⁴⁰ Lynch, *Scotland*, 173, 177.

⁴¹ The fourteenth parish, Kirkforthar, shared with Strathmiglo in Cupar Presbytery.

were always some parishes with their own minister, partly thanks to the status of Cults which was at least nominally well furnished with graduates as a result of its links with St Salvator's College dating back to the fifteenth century. In fact, of the total of eight parishes throughout Fife not sharing their minister in 1576, four were parishes which had been linked to the College since its foundation in 1450, although having a University man as minister might present its own problems with non-residence.⁴² In Cupar's hinterland, more than a third of parishes had their own minister as early as 1585, with all but two achieving this by 1595.

Chart 1.6 Parish Provision in Cupar 'Presbytery'⁴³

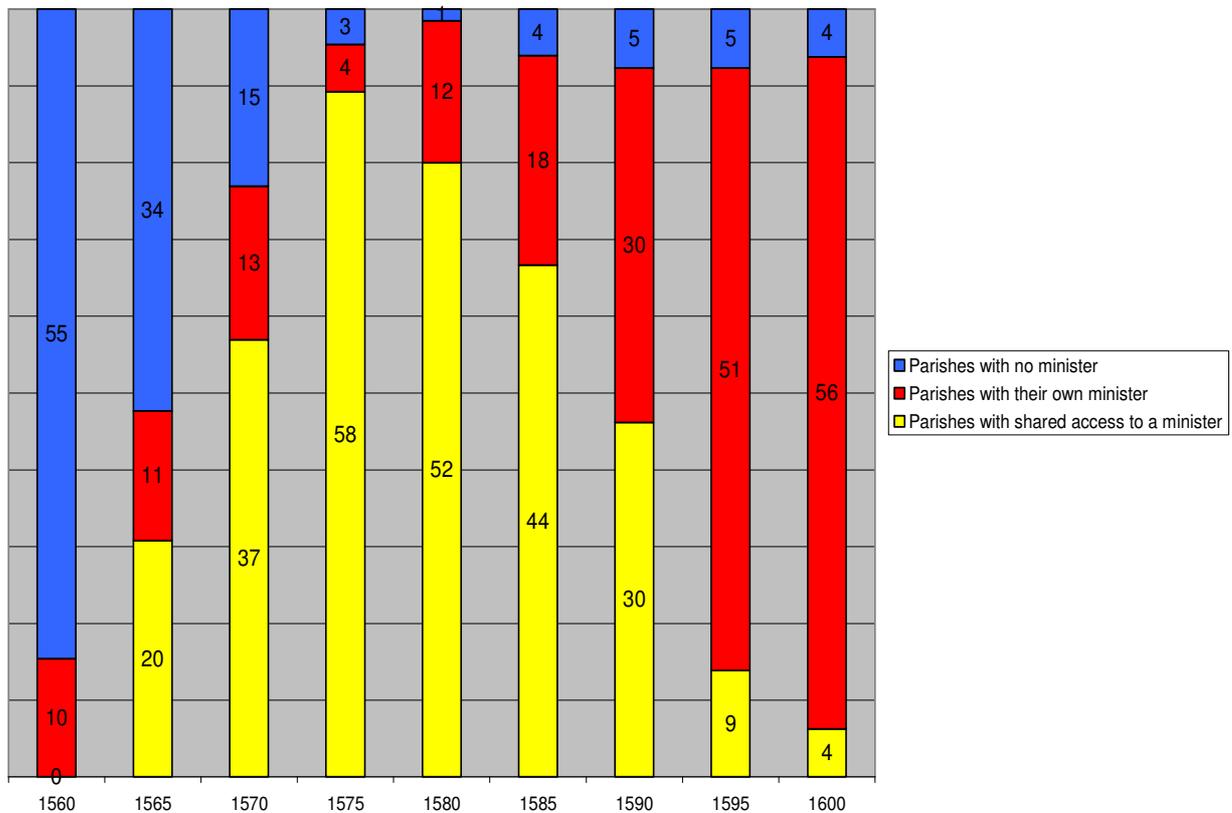


The pattern which has emerged from this analysis of these five presbyteries is all the more compelling for the fact that it is found in individual areas rather than an amalgamation of the whole of Fife. The areas of Fife, with their different social and economic characteristics, developed a parish ministry in broadly similar ways. Chart 1.7 draws the various data together.

⁴² The Cults ministers were John Rutherford (1563-77) and James Martin (1578-1620). Both were principals of the College. On St Salvator's College and its Fife parishes (Dunino, Kemback, Cults and Kilmarny), see Ronald Cant, *The College of St Salvator* (Edinburgh, 1950), 13, 168.

⁴³ Tarvit, technically separate from Cupar but effectively subsumed within it, has been excluded from this analysis, as has Newburgh which was only separated from Abdie in 1622.

Chart 1.7: Parish Provision Across Fife



Naturally, the same pattern emerges from this chart, confirming that the late 1580s and early 1590s were the critical period, 1590 being the year in which the parishes with their own minister began to outnumber those which had to share. Indeed, St Andrews Presbytery explicitly recorded in 1589 that several ministers had ‘tane thaim to be ministeris at ane kirk only and hes demittit the rest’. This was followed by immediate action to replace the newly vacant parishes which resulted.⁴⁴ This was the only Fife presbytery for which sixteenth-century minutes survive, and the other presbyteries may have taken similar action. Certainly, by 1600 the great majority of Fife parishes were properly served with their own ministers.⁴⁵ So perhaps Sanderson’s comment that it took ‘until the end of the century to produce something like adequate provision’ is even a little too negative if applied to Fife, since the

⁴⁴ *StAP*, 33-39.

⁴⁵ This places Scotland broadly in line with Calvinist congregations in the Netherlands and France. Karin Maag, ‘Called to be a Pastor: Issues of Vocation in the Early Modern Period’, *SCJ*, 35 (2004), 71.

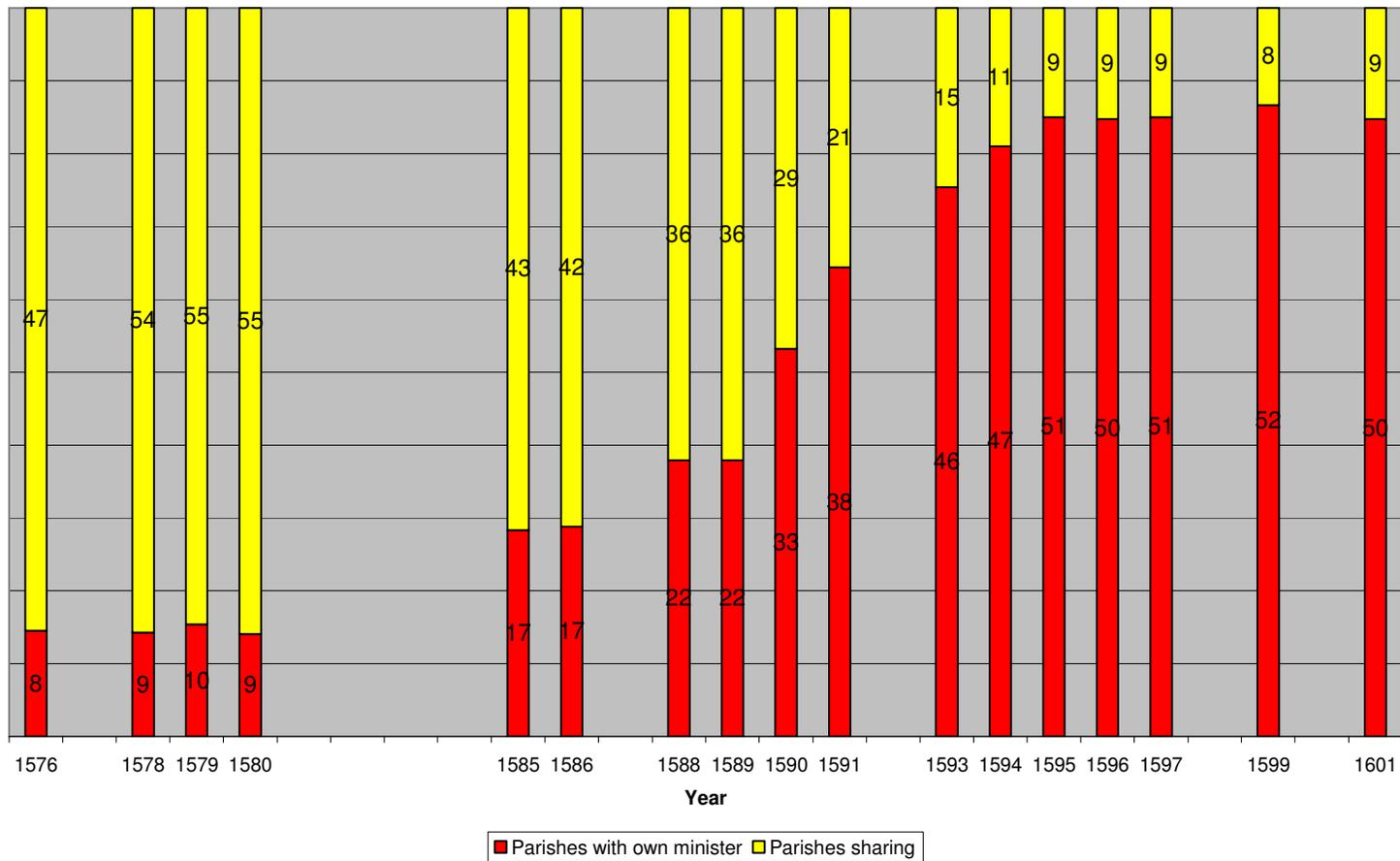
situation in 1600 was perfectly adequate.⁴⁶ How far Fife was typical will be considered later. But it is worth considering in more detail the evolution and eventual replacement of the system of sharing ministers.

The Sharing of Ministers: Patterns and Implications

The sharing of ministers was the standard practice in most Fife parishes for much of the period from 1560 to 1600. We are able to trace the overall pattern of the practice of sharing ministers as a result of the layout of the records of the 'Assignation and Modification of Stipends'. These show each minister arranged with all the parishes under his charge in that year, from 1576 onwards. This is particularly convenient since most other records refer to a parish and then to its minister, concealing the fact that he also had other charges. Although there are some gaps in the run of these records, Chart 1.8 confirms the impression from the previous data that until the late 1580s most of the parishes in Fife which did have access to a minister shared that minister with at least one other parish. Progress began to be made in the late 1580s, and by the mid-1590s the bulk of Fife parishes no longer had to share.

⁴⁶ Sanderson, 'Service and Survival', 75.

Chart 1.8: Proportion of Fife Parishes sharing Ministers, 1576-1601⁶⁹

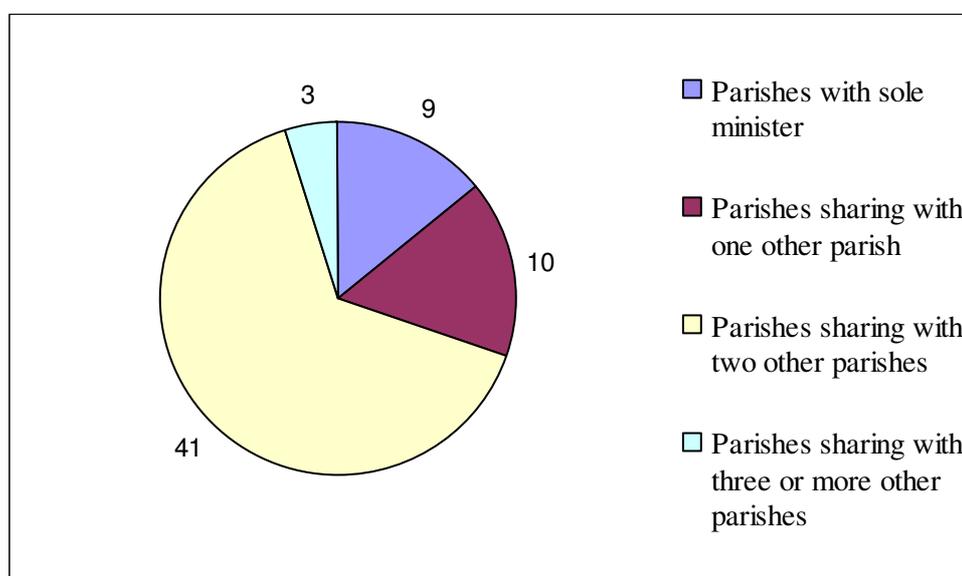


⁶⁹ Compiled from NAS, E47/1-8. This chart excludes parishes with no access to a minister, hence the slight variations in the total number of parishes in each year. Also, the records do not always have every parish listed for every year. Those parishes which shared with parishes outside Fife have been counted as sharing, but the non-Fife parishes have been excluded from the totals.

The transformation achieved between 1585 and 1593 is striking: in those eight years twenty-nine more parishes acquired their own minister, leaving fewer than a quarter sharing. But it is also striking that as late as 1585, fewer than a third of the parishes had their own minister. This pattern has significant implications for the state of religion at the parish level, but before turning to these we need to establish how many parishes a minister had to cater for prior to the successes of the late 1580s and 1590s.

The ‘Assignment’ records also allow us to analyse the different sizes of the groups of parishes served by ministers. In 1578, most parishes were sharing a minister with two other parishes, i.e. in groups of three (Chart 1.9).

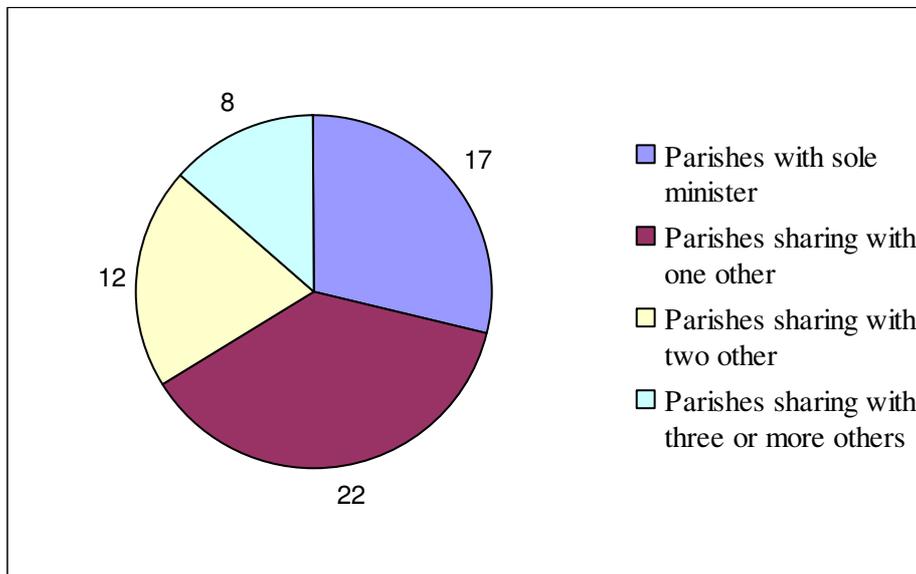
Chart 1.9: The Sharing of Ministers in 1578⁷⁰



By 1586, however, significant progress had been made to the extent that more parishes now only shared their minister with one other parish. This progress is missed if we only look at the proportion of parishes vacant, sharing, or with their own minister. Two-thirds of the non-vacant parishes now had either a minister of their own or shared with only one other parish (Chart 1.10).

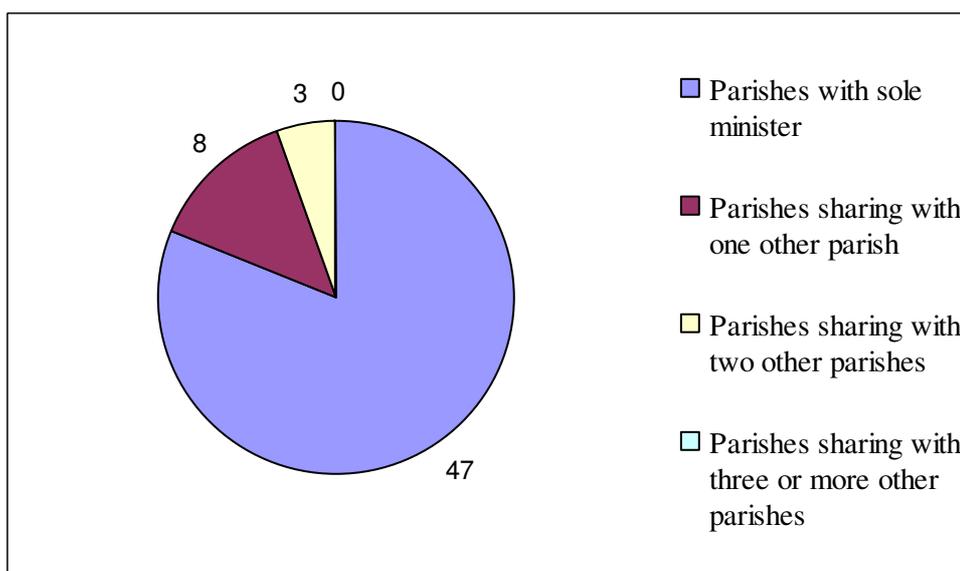
⁷⁰ NAS, E47/1. The total numbers are slightly different for different years due to the exclusion from these charts of parishes with no minister at all.

Chart 1.10 Sharing of Ministers in 1586⁷¹



By 1594, as we might expect given the overall improvement in the provision of ministers already noted, the situation was much improved, with eight of the eleven parishes which still had to share a minister sharing him with only one other parish, leaving only one group of three parishes sharing one minister (Chart 1.11).

Chart 1.11 Sharing of Ministers in 1594⁷²

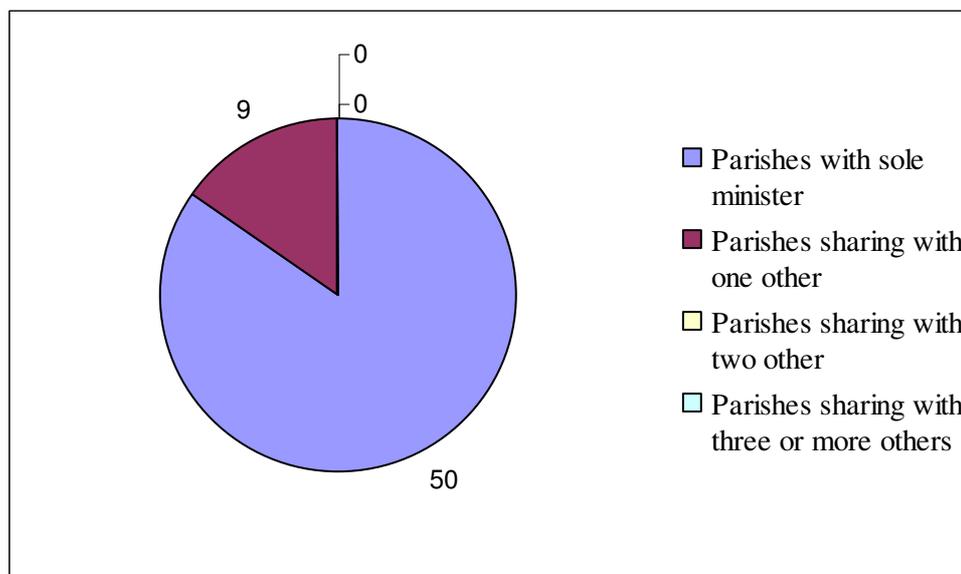


⁷¹ NAS, E47/3.

⁷² NAS, E47/6.

In 1601 we see a consolidation of this situation: no parishes were now sharing with more than one other parish, and only nine are still sharing a minister at all (Chart 1.12).⁷³

Chart 1.12: Sharing of Ministers, 1601⁷⁴



So although the sharing of ministers was a very significant pattern, and indeed was the norm for most parishes for much of the post-Reformation period, the well-publicised scheme of ‘four parishes kirks to ane preacher’ was in Fife more normally refined to two or three parishes for each preacher. Nevertheless such a practice has important implications for our understanding of the ministry after the Reformation. In most of these parishes, the sermon would probably have been a fortnightly event at best. The standard weekly service would have consisted of the reader reading aloud passages from scripture, and from the prayer-book, and the singing of psalms.⁷⁵ Recent analyses like that of Margo Todd have placed the sermon at the heart of reformed religious culture, but since most parishes did not have their own preaching ministry until at least twenty or thirty years after the Reformation we need to apply such characterisations with a greater sensitivity to geography and chronology. To

⁷³ The apparent anomaly of an odd number of parishes sharing a minister with one other parish is explained by the fact that Moonzie was served by Cupar’s second minister. Thus while Moonzie had only access to a shared minister, Cupar had its own minister and shared access to a second.

⁷⁴ NAS, E47/ 8.

⁷⁵ For more on this see ch.3.

understand the situation in the parishes it is not sufficient to rely on national estimates and contemporary observations such as all but 10 per cent of lowland parishes having a minister or reader by 1574.⁷⁶ Todd describes the continuing office of reader and the sharing of ministers in rural areas as aids to the cultural transformation she describes, but they must also be understood as expedients, replacements which helped to fill the gap left by the absence of a full preaching ministry.⁷⁷

Preaching was not the only religious essential for which parish ministers were necessary. Only a minister could provide the sacraments, the second mark by which a true church could be identified. Of course, the provision of communion and baptism was less problematic than that of preaching, since a minister of three or four parishes could theoretically have supplied regular communion (and regular baptism on weekdays if necessary) to all the parishes.⁷⁸ The practice of communion taking place much less frequently than the church desired was probably not a result of the short supply and sharing of ministers, since it continued well into the seventeenth century in spite of the much better provision of ministers. More problematic, given a ministry limited in numbers, was the provision of discipline, the third ‘mark’ of the true Christian church. Although kirk session discipline involved lay elders, it was heavily dependent on the presence of a parish minister, both to direct the work of the kirk session and encourage reforming zeal, and also simply to ensure that the kirk session functioned properly.⁷⁹ In addition to these three formal ministerial functions, Frank Bardgett has pointed out that each parish needed its own minister for a more general purpose: that the teachings of the sermon might be backed up by pastoral oversight and practical application.⁸⁰ It is all too easy for historians to overlook the importance of this aspect of the ministry, but the parish minister’s intimacy with his flock must

⁷⁶ Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 56. See also Robert Healey, ‘The Preaching Ministry in Scotland’s First Book of Discipline’, *Church History*, 58 (1989), 339-353 for the importance of preaching to the reformers. Also much-quoted (even in international surveys) is the national statistic that there were 400 unfilled parishes in 1596 which masks the fact that, as we have seen, the 1590s were a period of great progress in areas like Fife. See Graeme Murdock, *Beyond Calvin: The Intellectual, Political and Cultural World of Europe’s Reformed Churches* (Basingstoke, 2004), 98; Benedict, *Christ’s Churches Purely Reformed*, 170.

⁷⁷ Although they did of course come to be an established part of the church well into the seventeenth century. The readership is discussed at more length in ch. 3.

⁷⁸ Although see below for cases where the sacraments or marriage seem to have been in short supply.

⁷⁹ Verschuur, ‘Enforcing the Discipline of the Kirk’. This is discussed at more length in ch. 2.

⁸⁰ Bardgett, ‘Four parishes kirkis to ane preichir’, 197-8.

have been seriously limited by the practice of sharing ministers between already large parishes (in the physical as well as demographic sense).⁸¹

This raises the additional question of the distances between parishes which shared a minister. If a minister was shared between two or more parishes this would have affected how frequently he was able to visit and preach in his different charges. Although we can never be sure of sixteenth-century journey times or ministerial levels of horse ownership, and despite the fact that the terrain may have been very different from today, it is still possible to get a rough idea of how far ministers had to travel between their charges.⁸² The following discussion is based on the 1576 groupings, but it remains applicable since even when the larger groups of parishes were split up they tended to remain with the same partners.⁸³

The distances faced by some of the Fife ministers were not excessive, Fife being a relatively manageable size, especially in contrast to the challenges faced by highland ministers.⁸⁴ The parishes sharing with one other minister were usually around five or six kilometres apart, a perfectly manageable distance, although not necessarily for preaching on the same Sunday. Depending on the tracks and terrain between the parishes, ministers serving these combinations might have been able to keep something of a presence in both parishes, and probably provide emergency services such as baptism and caring for the sick relatively quickly. However, a note of caution should be sounded, as Burnett's study of Basel and its relatively compact rural hinterland has noted significant problems with preaching even within individual parishes which consisted of more than one village. The distances between even Fife's

⁸¹ Most parishes, including burgh parishes, contained a variety of dispersed settlements, several miles apart. The combined charges of Anstruther, Pittenweem, Kilrenny and Abercrombie had at the very least 800 adult communicants in the late 1570s. StAUL, CH2/624/1, Anstruther Wester Kirk Session Minutes, pp. 1-17; Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 221. By 1670 even the rural parish of Torryburn had a population as high as 1800. Andrew Cunningham, *Culross: Past and Present* (Leven, 1910), 126. Assuming the population estimates in the thesis introduction to be roughly accurate, there would have been a mean of about 1000 inhabitants in each of Fife's 65-odd parishes.

⁸² John Duncan of Culross probably owned a horse, given that he travelled to preach in Tulliallan on one Sunday afternoon. NAS, CH2/77/1, Culross Kirk Session Minutes, f. 44v. But it could not be taken for granted that ministers would own horses: in 1586 the parishioners of Bothkennar (Stirling Presbytery) offered to provide feed for a potential minister's horse, and that 'giff he hes not ane hors of his awin thai sall furnes him ane hors to travell to the prisbitre and assemblies': Kirk, *Visitation of the Diocese of Dunblane*, 7. Only four of 27 Fife ministers whose testaments were analysed for the database used in ch. 4 were recorded as owning a horse.

⁸³ For example the four-parish grouping of Monimail, Collessie, Auchtermuchty and Abdie was divided in two, putting together Monimail and Abdie, and Collessie and Auchtermuchty. The parishes were grouped in 1580 (E47/2) in much the same way as they had been in 1576.

⁸⁴ Dawson, 'Calvinism and the Gaidhealtachd', 243-5.

closest together parishes must have been greater than the distance between these outlying villages within Basel's rural parishes.⁸⁵

Even those parishes in groups of three or more were often relatively well grouped together. Coastal groupings like Kirkcaldy-Dysart-Wemyss and Anstruther-Kilrenny-Abercrombie-Pittenweem often made good topographical sense and the ministers in these parishes could have accessed the major settlements in each of their charges with relative ease, probably within half a day.⁸⁶ Some groupings in the south and west of Fife, like Dunfermline-Carnock-Beath, were spaced further apart, but still manageably so. In this example, David Ferguson, the minister of Dunfermline, was located halfway between his charges and could probably have reached either Carnock or Beath in half a day, although he would have struggled seriously to attend all three, especially in later life. But even relatively clustered parishes might still face problems, especially in areas with more difficult terrain. On the borders of Fife (as defined in this study) with the Dunblane area, around the Ochil Hills, Adam Marshall attempted to serve the relatively close parishes of Glendevon, Fossoway, Muckhart and Tullibole. Visitation records from 1586 note, pointedly, that he 'supportis thame as he may'.⁸⁷

But some other groupings were less manageable. Many groups of three had two parishes close together, but with one other charge a long distance away, often well over ten kilometres. Aberdour-Dalgety-Saline is the most serious example of this, with Saline lying between fifteen and twenty kilometres from Aberdour and Dalgety, but this problem was also faced by the ministers of Markinch-Portmoak-Kirkforthar and Inverkeithing-Rosyth-Torrie. In these parishes, the minister may have been able to serve the two close parishes relatively well, but the far parish must have received only infrequent visits, since even with a horse the journeys must have taken several hours each way except on any routes which had well-surfaced tracks. So most parishes had to share with a minister that also had care of a parish between five and ten kilometres distant, but many ministers also faced longer journeys that would have made even weekly contact with all their charges a challenge. These estimates assume

⁸⁵ Burnett, *Teaching the Reformation*, 222-223, and 198 (fig. 1) for the compact nature of the area. Most parishes were within 5km of each other, so the outlying villages within each were probably only a couple of kilometres apart at most.

⁸⁶ Today, admittedly on a very good path, it is easily possible to walk from Crail to Elie in a day, covering most of the East Neuk and more than the bounds of the Anstruther-Kilrenny-Abercrombie-Pittenweem grouping

⁸⁷ Kirk, *Visitation of the Diocese of Dunblane*, 33.

a diligent and fairly able-bodied minister: ministers unable or unwilling to walk or ride long distances must have provided even patchier services to their parishes. Severe weather, frequent in most winters, also must have seriously disrupted services in parishes which shared a minister, even if they were close together.⁸⁸

There is considerable evidence that contemporaries were aware of the seriousness of these problems. There were notable complaints against Regent Morton's policy of 'four parishe kirkis to ane preichir', although the fact that this was clearly a rationalisation of existing practice rather than a new policy makes it likely that what opponents like John Davidson objected to was not innovation, but the worrying prospect of an undesirable temporary situation becoming a perpetual arrangement.⁸⁹ The Dunfermline minister, David Ferguson, preached an inflammatory sermon in front of the nobility at Leith in 1572, which used Old Testament imagery to launch a thinly-veiled attack on what he saw as the sacrilegious appropriation of the church's patrimony which was preventing the establishment of God's ministry.⁹⁰ The General Assembly, in a supplication to the Privy Council, requested that the 'puir lauborares' of the ministry should receive their proper stipends.⁹¹ And in the introduction to his *Autobiography*, James Melville describes at surprising length his efforts to arrange separate ministers for the four parishes he acquired in 1586: he clearly saw this as a very important exercise (and one which reflected well on himself). Four parishes were, to him, 'a burding intolerable and importable with a guid conscience', although these parishes were unusually close together.⁹² These sorts of complaints tend to relate to the problems of the kirk in providing for ministers financially, and it is on these problems that historians as well as contemporary polemicists have understandably focused.⁹³

⁸⁸ One example of this was the bad weather of December 1631, which prevented most ministers in Kirkcaldy Presbytery from attending the weekly exercise, including the minister from relatively nearby Wemyss. This was a recurring problem in the winter months. W. Stevenson (ed.), *The Presbyterie Booke of Kirkcaldie* (Kirkcaldy, 1900), 24-5, 35, 84. In the parish of Culross, the kirk session failed to meet because of 'the great storme' in February 1634: this was in a burgh parish where 15 elders represented the town itself. NAS, CH2/77/1, f. 42v.

⁸⁹ See Bardgett, 'Four Parishe Kirkis to Ane Preicher', and the tract itself in Charles Rogers (ed.), *Three Scottish Reformers* (London, 1876), 53-80.

⁹⁰ *Tracts by David Ferguson, Minister of Dunfermline MDLXII-MDLXXII* (Edinburgh, 1860), 61-80.

⁹¹ NAS, CH1/1/2A, General Assembly Records, p. 1. See also a 1593 complaint about the appropriation of kirk patrimony, listed among the 'Causes of this present fast' in Kinghorn: NAS, CH2/472/1, Kinghorn Kirk Session Minutes, p. 278 (new pagination).

⁹² *JMD*, 1-11.

⁹³ Although see Kirk, *Books of Assumption*, lxxviii for a more positive view of the financial situation.

But financial matters alone can not explain the difficulty facing the reformed church in establishing a ministry in Fife. It also seems that part of the recruitment problem resulted from the high standards set for the ministry. Although university education was not a formal requirement, Chapter Four shows that there were more university-educated men in Fife parishes even before the 1580s than has hitherto been realised. This would suggest that even soon after the Reformation it was preferred that ministers had at least attended university. The fact that so many parishes had readers but only shared access to a minister raises the question of why these men were not ordained for the ministry. At least one of the few readers about whom we have any qualitative information, Alexander Wardlaw of Ballingry, wanted to be considered a minister, and like some other readers he carried out ministerial duties against the wishes of the authorities. He affirmed ‘that he wald not be ane readar to Ihon Knox nor any other in Scotland’.⁹⁴ Since readers were normally already drawing stipends, albeit smaller ones than ministers, the most obvious answer to the question of why they were not ordained is that they were not considered able.⁹⁵ This may be especially true of some of the pre-Reformation clerics who might have been advanced in age and unused to preaching. Reading out the Bible and prayers in church was a very different, and less challenging task (both intellectually and physically) than preaching long sermons expounding doctrine on the basis of scriptural exegesis.

Despite the staffing problems, ministers tended to be deposed or refused admission to the ministry if they were deemed unsuitable or committed offences: one graduate of St Andrews University was refused admission to Fossoway parish on account of his invalid doctrine in 1588, and others were deprived of their parishes for their faults.⁹⁶ It seems that the reformed church went some way towards fulfilling the First *Book of Discipline*’s principle that it is ‘alike to have no minister at all, and to have an Idoll in

⁹⁴ *RStAKS*, i, 82-9.

⁹⁵ Ordaining readers may have been financially viable in some cases. For example, in 1576, the minister of Burntisland, Kinghorn and Auchtertool was paid £173 6s 8d, while the three readers received £20, £20 and £16 respectively. This amounts to a total for the three parishes of around £230, which could have paid for each parish to have its own minister with a stipend of at least £75. This would have been a severe pay cut for the serving minister in such groupings, although mitigated by a two- or three-fold reduction in his charge, but would have also meant an equally steep pay-rise for the readers, were they to be ordained. Some Fife ministers were already existing on stipends at this level while serving several parishes, suggesting that such a policy might have been theoretically possible. NAS, E47/1, f. 40r.

⁹⁶ *FES*, v., 2, 62; *RStAKS*, i., 172, 189; *BUK*, 397.

place of a true minister', even at the expense of parish provision.⁹⁷ This was in stark contrast to the approach in England, where mass ordinations were held as a temporary response to the vacant livings at the end of the 1550s, and it was felt that 'any pastor was preferable to no pastor at all'.⁹⁸

Whatever the causes, the shortage of ministers manifested itself in a demand for the religious services they provided. The feelings of the congregation of Tullibole are left to us in more explicit form than we find elsewhere as a result of the parochial visitations carried out in the late 1580s: 'this congregacion ar zelus off the Word and varie desyrus to heve a minister to quhome thai promes favouris, obedience and assistance'.⁹⁹ Normally lay desires for better ministerial provision were reflected more subtly, and the emphasis was more often on the sacraments than the Word. Unauthorised persons, especially readers, were often in trouble for administering the sacraments and performing marriage ceremonies.¹⁰⁰ There must have been a demand for such services (especially a potentially urgent sacrament like baptism) in parishes with sporadic access to a minister due to the long distances between his charges, and readers in these areas often met this demand. There were probably more cases where the reader was not caught and recorded. The laypeople involved would certainly not have an incentive to report the fault. It is also significant that these cases are predominantly from the 1560s and 1570s, and more or less disappear by the 1590s, by which time there was far less sharing of parishes. These complaints and problems suggest that the slow pace of parish provision was noticed at the time, and taken seriously by all concerned. The church was not satisfied with the progress it was making in the parishes, and although lay attitudes are extremely difficult to judge, the demand for illicit baptism by readers suggests that in the first few decades of the

⁹⁷ *FBD*, 104. This goes on to argue that it is sometimes even better to have no minister, because such parishes will search diligently for one, while those which have a 'vain shadow' of a minister are more likely to be complacent.

⁹⁸ Rosemary O' Day, *The Professions in Early Modern England, 1450-1800: Servants of the Commonweal* (Harlow, 2000), 65.

⁹⁹ Kirk, *Visitation of the Diocese of Dunblane*, 33. These visitations mainly covered the area around Dunblane and Stirling, but extended to the western limits of the area selected for this thesis.

¹⁰⁰ For example Thomas Skirling, reader at Crail (*RStAKS*, 176-7); Alexander Wardlaw, reader at Ballingry (*RStAKS*, 84-9); William Thalland, reader at Auchtertool (*BUK*, ii., 695); William Blacater, parson of Methil; Andrew Angus, reader at Leslie and David Stirk at Kinglassie, several years before he was admitted reader (*RStAKS*, 179). See also *BUK*, ii., 621 for the General Assembly's condemnation of such unlawful baptism ceremonies. In 1577 the General Assembly deprived James Blackwood, reader at Saline, for marrying two persons without a testimonial from their minister, though it is not clear whether this was aggravating the offence of marriage by a reader, or whether the marriage might have been tolerated had testimonials been presented. Calderwood, *History*, iii., 386.

reformed church, parishioners too were in some respects dissatisfied with the provision of ministers.

Conclusion: Was Fife typical?

Naturally we cannot automatically assume that the patterns observed in Fife were typical of Scotland, or even of lowland Scotland. Indeed one of the problems with existing national estimates of the reformed ministry is that they are based on central estimates and do not reflect varying patterns in individual regions. The results here cannot be assumed for elsewhere simply as a matter of proper academic caution. And of course Fife was not typical in many respects: although it made up a fair proportion of the national population (by the late seventeenth century around 10%), it was probably an atypically prosperous area.¹⁰¹ Perhaps more importantly in terms of the church, were Fife's ecclesiastical resources. As well as St Andrews itself, the capital of the medieval Scottish Church, which provided a significant proportion of Fife's ecclesiastical resources – both human and financial – there were several other ecclesiastical houses which supplied resources. Outside St Andrews, the Abbeys and Priors at Balmerino, Lindores, Dunfermline, Pittenweem and Culross provided valuable supplements to the thirds of parochial benefices which formed the basis of most stipends.¹⁰² Of course there is no such thing as a typical county, but Fife's combination of relative economic prosperity with a rich ecclesiastical heritage make it potentially unusual.

In the absence of systematic research on the early ministry in other areas it is difficult to attempt a direct comparison. Obviously, to compare the data for other parts of lowland Scotland in the *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae* with that presented here for Fife would not be to compare like with like. However, two monographs on the Reformation in other Scottish counties offer an opportunity for a basic comparison. Frank Bardgett's monograph on Angus and the Mearns does not include a detailed analysis of the ministry, but does make some comments on the provision of ministers after the Reformation, and includes a table of provision.¹⁰³ By 1563, Angus had 88 clerics for its 91 parishes, although this figure includes readers. As with Fife, the

¹⁰¹ See thesis introduction, n. 14.

¹⁰² NAS, E47/1, ff. 36, 39-42; E47/8, ff. 24-27 for the sources of stipends in 1576 and 1599, for example. See Lamont-Brown, *Villages of Fife*, 4-5 for religious houses in Fife.

¹⁰³ Bardgett, *Scotland Reformed*, 89-92.

readers actually formed the majority of the clergy in the years after 1560: only 28 of the 88 clerics were actual ministers. As in Fife, vacant parishes were not the major problem, because these ministers were shared between parishes. In Angus itself (leaving aside the Mearns) ‘the spread of ministers and readers across the shire was virtually complete’, but it might well be the case that detailed local analysis of the kind presented here for Fife might reveal similar problems with sharing and service by readers alone.¹⁰⁴ By 1590, when Bardgett’s analysis ends, there were 59 ministers for the 91 parishes, suggesting that, as in Fife, the late 1580s saw the start of the process by which each parish got its own minister. Unfortunately, the discussion does not continue past 1590 and so we cannot be sure if the 1590s saw the same level of success as in Fife.

Margaret Sanderson’s study of Ayrshire seems to suggest similar patterns: in the final decades of the sixteenth century parishes started to receive their own minister who would often serve well into the seventeenth century.¹⁰⁵ Ayrshire, like Fife, saw university-educated men in the parishes well before the 1580s. However, there seem to have been more cases in Ayrshire than Fife of parishes devoid of even a readership until the 1570s. Sanderson’s own take on these issues is that a surprising degree of success was achieved in finding pastors for parishes; this may well be true in terms of providing parishes with the bare minimum of a reader or a shared minister, but as with Angus, fuller analysis of the raw statistics might give a more complete, and complex picture.¹⁰⁶ Finally, we have some limited evidence on the situation in the nearby, but more rural parishes of Dunblane Diocese. In 1567, there were only nine ministers for the 38 parishes, although as in Fife there was a reader for almost every parish, and there seems to have been some sharing of ministers, meaning that the total number of vacant parishes may not have been as high as the overall statistics imply.¹⁰⁷ Even so, these numbers compare poorly with Fife, especially when we consider the greater difficulty in communications between these more upland parishes. We also have some visitation records from the 1580s, which show that in 1586, only 11 of the 25 parishes surveyed in this area had their own minister, although five more acquired one

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁰⁵ Sanderson, *Ayrshire and the Reformation*, 158-176.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 109. There is also a brief survey in a local study not focused on the Reformation: Meikle, *A British Frontier?*, 211. This yields very roughly similar results, although as with the work of Sanderson and Bardgett the statistics do not reflect on the sharing of parishes.

¹⁰⁷ Todd, ‘Reformation in the Diocese of Dunblane’, 196, 199.

during the visitations.¹⁰⁸ This is roughly similar to the situation in Fife, especially if the influx of new ministers accompanying the visitations was followed up into the early 1590s.

In order to put Fife in context comprehensively, it would be necessary to draw on the fruits of much deeper and broader research than presently exists. But the published work on Ayrshire and Angus suggests that the patterns emerging from Fife would be at least recognisable in other parts of Scotland. Certainly the fact that there were no major variations between different parts of Fife suggests that the trend of a gradually emerging complete ministry was not limited to certain types of territory. Given Fife's resources, and its university, one wonders whether other areas would display even more hesitant progress if subjected to similar scrutiny.

A rather mixed picture has emerged of the establishment of the ministry in Fife up to 1600. Although, as we shall see in Chapter Four, the church was able to provide a good proportion of university-educated clerics even in the first few decades, ministers were in short supply and had to be shared between parishes until almost the end of the century. The reasons for this were not merely financial, and it seems that the church attempted to maintain high standards even in the face of a manpower shortage. The problem of vacant parishes was a much smaller one, however, than both contemporary observations and recent historiography might suggest. The path to a relatively complete, graduate ministry by the early seventeenth century was not a simple one, and it cannot be crudely characterised as 'successful' or 'unsuccessful', or as 'rapid' or 'slow'. The quality and comprehensiveness of service received by parishioners was dependent on a number of local factors, including such prosaic matters as topography and the physical condition of the ministers. Any estimate of the success of the early reformed church must rest on local analyses (using a wide variety of sources for the early ministry) rather than on assessments made from national statistics and contemporary complaints.

Without parish ministers, the institutions of the church in the parishes would remain weak. There could be only intermittent preaching or administration of the sacraments, and only limited enforcement of discipline. It seems hard to justify the conclusion that 'remarkably quick progress' was achieved on the provision of

¹⁰⁸ Kirk, *Visitation of the Diocese of Dunblane*, xxiv.

sermons.¹⁰⁹ Still, the church strove to achieve its goal of a proper, educated minister in all parishes, and achieved this in Fife by the early seventeenth century. Although there were some vacancies and examples of non-residence in parishes after 1600, they arose from gaps between the departure of a minister and the arrival of his replacement, or in some cases from problems with the manse or glebe. They were no longer part of a county-wide problem with providing one minister for each parish. But the establishment of a preaching parish ministry was not the end goal of the reformation in the parishes, it was the starting-point. We now turn to trace the progress made in establishing the other key parochial institution: the kirk session. This could not happen without ministers, but did not necessarily follow immediately even when ministers were provided.

¹⁰⁹ Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 185.

Chapter 2

The Reformation of Discipline

When the Scottish Reformed Church was officially established in 1560, it was declared, unusually, that the third sign by which the true Christian Church could be identified was ‘Ecclesiastical Discipline uprightlie ministred, as Goddis Worde prescribes, whereby vice is repressed, and vertew nurished’.¹ This definition is instructive, since it brings in the element of scriptural warrant for discipline. Discipline had to be enforced not just to repress vice and nourish virtue, though these were important motives for Scottish Calvinists, but also simply because God commanded it. It was also important not just as an added extra to the Word and the Sacrament, but as an essential tool to protect them: ‘Unless the Word and Sacraments war keipit in sinceritie, and rightlie usit and practesit be direction of the discipline, thay wald soone be corrupted’. Without discipline, ‘Chryst’s Kingdome could nocht stand’.² Although church discipline has most often been studied in a Protestant setting, it was not an invention of the Reformation, and evidence of some strikingly similar practices can be found in medieval English church court records, and to a lesser extent in the more limited Scottish sources.³ However, the Scottish reformers

¹ *The Scots Confession*, 44. The other two signs were the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. That the three signs continued to be important to ministers is demonstrated by James Melville’s inclusion of an explanation of them in his catechetical poem, ‘A Morning Vision’, where they form part of a paraphrase on the Creed. He, at least, seems to have felt that it was still important for Christians to be aware of these three signs. James Melville, *A Spirituall Propine of a Pastour to his People* (Edinburgh, 1598), 86-87.

² *JMD*, 280.

³ See in particular L.R. Poos (ed.), *Lower Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction in Late-Medieval England: The Courts of the Dean and Chapter of Lincoln, 1336-1349, and the Deanery of Wisbech, 1458-1484* (Oxford, 2000), where the procedure and some types of offence were in some respects similar to that of kirk session discipline; M. Harvey, ‘Church Discipline in the Later Middle Ages: The Priors of Durham as Archdeacons’ in K. Cooper and J. Gregory (eds.), *Retribution, Repentance and Reconciliation* (Woodbridge, 2004); and Sandra Brown, *The Medieval Courts of the York Peculiar* (York, 1984), 5-6, where the ex officio part of the courts’ workload was similar to that of kirk sessions, covering among other things sexuality, sabbath-breach and defamation. For Scotland see *Liber Officialis Sancti Andree* (Edinburgh, 1845), xxxii-xxxiv and S. Ollivant, *The Court of the Official in Pre-Reformation Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1982), 75-6 for slander in particular. As well as some similarities in terms of the types of offence punished, these courts also imposed some similar penalties to kirk sessions, involving corporal penance, public acts of contrition and even fines. There are also similarities between kirk session discipline and the discipline of the structurally very different contemporary English church courts, which punished a similar range of cases and also imposed public penances and fines. See Ralph Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People during the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1979), 46-7, 75, 281; Kenneth Parker, *The English Sabbath: A Study of Doctrine and Discipline from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge, 1988), 66-67; F. G. Emmison, *Elizabethan Life: Morals and the Church Courts* (Chelmsford, 1973), 1-46, 48-9, 68, 75-6; Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge, 1987), 3, 4-7, 54. The parallels with English church courts have been neglected because of their ‘half-reformed’ nature, and perhaps also their complicated structure. The

sought to enforce a strict discipline in contrast to what they saw as the laxity of the medieval church. They were innovative in aiming to impose this through a system of parish-level consistories, the kirk sessions, rather than regional ecclesiastical courts.

How successful was the Scottish Church in establishing this reformed discipline? It should be noted firstly that this is not the same thing as asking whether the church managed to purify society, as was its stated, rhetorical aim.⁴ Not only do we know that the chances of eliminating sin from society were zero, but so did the reformers.⁵ After all, as Margo Todd has so persuasively argued, the stool of repentance in the heart of the church served as ‘a reminder to those in the congregation of the pervasiveness of sin, even in the most godly communities’.⁶ This anti-Pelagian symbolism must have been re-enforced by those visible manifestations of God’s anger at human sinfulness: the storms, plagues and droughts which were the cause of so many fasts in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁷ So discipline was not a zero-sum game in which either society was purified or the project failed. Discipline was intended to provide disincentives to sin and encourage more godly behaviour, but it was also an end in itself, proof that the church was living up to its scriptural precedents. Thus in tracing the establishment of parish discipline the aim is not to answer the largely unanswerable question of how far the church was able to cleanse society, but to address how long it took to establish the structures and procedures which were the backbone of a healthy and functioning church in the localities.⁸ The workings of the disciplinary system itself, once in place, are discussed at more length in Chapter Six.

While there have been two outstanding recent monographs which have focused on discipline and the kirk sessions, the question of the timescale over which kirk session discipline was established has yet to be answered satisfactorily. Margo Todd’s *Culture of Protestantism* employs a deliberately thematic approach, eschewing

similarities (and some contrasts) have now been noted in Heal, *Reformation in Britain and Ireland*, 457-63, but we still lack a detailed comparison of English and Scottish discipline. The similarities, given a lack of direct co-operation or shared external influence, seem to suggest a debt to the shared medieval heritage.

⁴ ‘...neither can the Kirk of God be brought to purity neither yet be retained in the same without the order of Ecclesiastical Discipline...’ *FBD*, 165.

⁵ See Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 149, for the minister Robert Bruce’s understanding of this fact.

⁶ Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 134.

⁷ See for example *JMD*, 585; *BUK*, 854. For a discussion of fasting see Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 344-352.

⁸ Although see Rosalind Mitchison, *Lordship to Patronage: Scotland 1603-1745* (Edinburgh, 1983), 9 for the suggestion that there was some success in repressing sexual incontinence in the seventeenth century.

chronological and statistical analysis, and so leaves unanswered questions over the speed with which the cultural trends identified actually developed across Scotland.⁹ Michael Graham's *Uses of Reform* takes a more time- and place-specific approach, analysing in detail some parishes from across Scotland in turn.¹⁰ This enables him to draw more concrete conclusions about the nature of kirk session discipline, but it is still highly questionable whether selecting a handful of parishes from across Scotland gives us a really representative impression of the progress made in establishing kirk sessions. The study also ends in 1610, by which time parish discipline was not, as this chapter demonstrates, comprehensively established. In the wider historiography there is only a vague understanding of the timescale over which kirk sessions developed.¹¹ There is thus a need for a more sustained, detailed local analysis of parish discipline and the long-term processes by which it was established.

This chapter traces the spread of functioning kirk sessions across Fife, including all the parishes for which we have evidence. It seeks to address not just the question of when kirk sessions first existed, but when they began to function effectively and pursue rigorously a variety of offenders: in other words, at what point they were up and running and working as they were supposed to. All disciplinary aspects of the kirk sessions' functioning have therefore been analysed in some detail. Of course the survival of sources has complicated this matter. But it is possible to gain a rough idea of how a kirk session was functioning in the years before the first minutes survive, by examining the standards of the kirk session in the first few years for which we have minutes. We can also gain some impression of parish discipline from various sources other than kirk session minutes, especially presbytery and synod records. And of

⁹ Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 13-14, 16-19 for her rejection of statistical analysis. It might be countered that the problem of manuscript survival and informal resolution of cases does not preclude statistical analysis if we assume that there was no deliberate bias in which portions of manuscript have been destroyed and which cases were not written down by the scribe. If this was the case, the loss of some business to the vagaries of manuscript survival and notation merely reduces the size of our sample. However, in both this chapter and ch. 6 statistics have been used alongside more qualitative discussion, and it has certainly not been assumed that it is possible to 'render sin quantifiable' (18).

¹⁰ Graham, *Uses of Reform*, chs. 3, 6. His discussions of St Andrews and Anstruther have proved very useful. Although the statistical analysis here is distinct, and the emphasis has been rather different in places, many of my findings bear out Graham's conclusions on these parishes.

¹¹ Gordon Donaldson's view that sessions were in operation more or less everywhere by roughly 1620 is fairly typical, but does not take into account the enormous variations that make this far too late a date for many areas, and even too early a date for others. Gordon Donaldson, *The Scottish Reformation* (Cambridge, 1960), 95. Foster notes simply that 'by 1600 many parishes had established kirk sessions'. Walter Foster, *The Church Before the Covenants: The Church of Scotland 1596-1638* (Edinburgh, 1975), 66. See MacCulloch, *Reformation*, 596 for the optimistic claim that kirk sessions were established across the lowlands by the 1560s and 1570s.

course the very small number of surviving manuscripts from prior to 1600 may in itself be suggestive of problems with the early establishment and functioning of kirk sessions. But in any case, the research from this chapter has itself indicated that we need to look not just at the sixteenth century but also at the first half of the seventeenth century if we wish to understand how and when parish discipline was fully established across the county of Fife. The chronological divisions which follow are of course arbitrary, and used loosely here, but they do reflect three broad stages in the development of discipline in Fife.

Discipline in St Andrews and Beyond, 1560-c.1580

The minutes of St Andrews Kirk Session are the earliest to survive not just from Fife but from Scotland as a whole. They are also the only kirk session minutes from this period to be published in their entirety, so it is unsurprising that they have been the focus of much of the attention paid to kirk session discipline.¹² This focus has sometimes distorted our perceptions of discipline, and this chapter will later look beyond St Andrews to the rest of Fife, but the St Andrews records must form the starting point of our discussion.

As the minutes indicate, St Andrews Kirk Session was in existence by 1560.¹³ But it was not a vigorous kirk session pursuing a variety of offences from the outset, and it is important to put its early workings in context rather than conflating the early years with the discipline of the 1580s and 1590s. The chief concerns of the session in the early years were two-fold: ensuring obedience to the newly established faith, and marital and sexual matters. The session was immediately concerned with procuring renunciations and subscription to the new faith.¹⁴ In addition to these matters there were a significant number of cases - more than twenty in the first five years – where

¹² *RStAKS*. See Geoffrey Parker, ‘The “Kirk by Law Established” and the Origins of the “Taming of Scotland”’: Saint Andrews 1559-1600’ in R. Mentzer, (ed.), *Sin and the Calvinists: Morals Control and the Consistory in the Reformed Tradition* (Kirksville, Missouri, 1994); James Cameron, ‘Godly Nurture and Admonition in the Lord: Ecclesiastical Discipline in the Reformed Tradition’ in Leif Grane and Kai Horby (eds.), *The Danish Reformation against its International Background* (Göttingen, 1990), 273-6.

¹³ In the discussion of St Andrews kirk session, business from both the session itself and the superintendent’s court are included.

¹⁴ *RStAKS*, i., 6-7, 11-18.

people were disciplined for disobedience to the church or heterodoxy of some form.¹⁵ By no means was the bulk of this opposition from a Catholic perspective: some offenders simply insulted the church leadership with expressions like ‘God give Knox be hanget’, ‘The Divell cayre the kyrk’.¹⁶ There is little evidence of a sustained conservative resistance in St Andrews.¹⁷ Indeed, there were more disturbing undercurrents running through much of this early dissent. A common charge was that the offender had blasphemed the sacraments: one man referred to the communion as ‘the Divellis dirt’. He went on to claim that ‘I sall by [buy] ane poynt of wyne and ane laif, and I sall haif als [as] gude ane sacrament as the best of them sall haif’, a claim later repeated by another man. As well as this unsophisticated questioning of the church’s monopoly on the materials of communion, two others were charged separately for ‘blasphemous sayings against the sacrament of the body and blude of Christ’.¹⁸ Taken together, these seem to suggest a more radical interpretation of the sacraments. Similarly, another man later claimed that baptism ‘is nocht grundit upon the scriptur, it is bot idolatre inventit be the braen of man!’¹⁹ This claim, echoing the rhetorical language of the reformers against papist ‘innovations’, suggests real considered dissent, albeit not of a strain that can be directly linked to any particular radical movement. Another man claimed to be ‘nether ane Papist nor ane Calwynist, nor of Paul nor of Apollo, bot Jesus Cristis man’.²⁰ Another even questioned the Trinity.²¹ So although the early kirk session did not face sustained and organised opposition to the new faith, there were some very troubling, if crude, ideas circulating in addition to the general abuse faced by the church, and this took up much of the time of the kirk session in its early years, not least for fear of this ‘evyll example spreading’.²²

¹⁵ Throughout this chapter, where numbers of cases are mentioned this refers to the number of separate cases rather than the number of individuals involved. Thus if five people were summoned together for one offence, it is recorded as one case, not five. This is preferred because the aim here is to trace the concerns, priorities and ambitions of the kirk session rather than to measure popular behaviour or gender distribution. Cf. Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 77. Also, each individual or group accused are counted as one case, rather than counting multiple appearances for one offence as separate cases.

¹⁶ The meaning of ‘cayre’ in this context is unclear, it may mean that the devil has a care or regard for the church (*DSL*).

¹⁷ *RStAKS*, i., 36, 41. There was one case of mass and unadmitted sacraments being said in private houses (193).

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 36, 43-4. This problem was also noted at national level by the General Assembly: *BUK*, p. 8.

¹⁹ *RStAKS*, 195, 206n. This man had, however, communicated in the past.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 135.

²¹ *Ibid*, 44.

²² *Ibid*, 196.

The other early concern of the kirk session, sexual and marital cases, occupies even more space in the minutes. There were three cases relating to adultery in 1559 alone, and this focus on illicit sexuality was to continue in the early years of the kirk session: 241 cases out of 367 in the period 1559-80 were for sexual misdemeanours, of which fornication was the largest category. As well as prosecuting adulterers and fornicators, the kirk session dealt with matters relating to marriage, including divorce. The session had inherited these functions from the pre-Reformation courts, particularly before the establishment of commissary courts after 1564, and much of the session's time was taken up with divorce proceedings and other marital business.²³ Of the six statutes passed by the session in the 1560s, three related to sex and marriage.²⁴

Beyond these basic concerns, the functioning of the early kirk session in St Andrews was fairly limited. As well as the fact that only six statutes were passed in the 1560s, it is worth pointing out that in most years fewer than twenty cases were pursued.²⁵ This may seem relatively high compared with some other parishes dealt with later, but taking into account the higher population of St Andrews and the volume of cases pursued there later in the century it is clear that the kirk session was not yet up to speed. It failed to pursue a wide variety of offences, perhaps because of its concerns with disobedience and sexuality, and throughout the 1560s the kirk session met on average once a fortnight rather than weekly, as should have been the case. We can also trace the rigour of a kirk session through the penalties it imposes, and in the 1560s it is noticeable that the session usually simply ordered offenders to desist under pain of further censure, normally enforcing the humiliation of public repentance only for marital issues and adultery cases. The kirk session was not yet imposing fines, and relied mainly on admonition rather than punitive action to ensure amendment of behaviour. This is not to suggest that admonition was necessarily ineffective, but it would have required backing-up by the potential for more punitive measures to have its full effect.

The 1570s saw an improvement in the functioning of St Andrews Kirk Session. There was a sharp increase in the number and variety of statutes passed by the session, as it started to concern itself with Sabbath-breach, Yule observance and

²³ See for example *RStAKS*, 18-33.

²⁴ The other three related to internal church matters like elders' attendance at session meetings and the procedure for the superintendent's examination of ministers and readers.

²⁵ 1564 and 1565 were the exceptions.

absence from communion.²⁶ In the 1570s the session showed a more zealous streak, seeking to tighten punishments and proactively seek out sinners with visitations. There was a small increase in the number of cases prosecuted too, from around 16 per year in the 1560s to around 18 per year in the 1570s. But the increase was only slight, and the late 1570s saw a downturn after the disciplinary crackdown of the first half of the decade.²⁷ Nevertheless the 1570s saw public repentances in use as a more frequent punishment, and fines also became more commonplace. By 1580 public repentance was the standard punishment and fornicators were imprisoned. Adulterers were even ordered to wear sackcloth for their repentance, as the kirk session started to resemble our image of the archetypal seventeenth-century kirk session. The 1570s saw the emergence of a more recognisable kirk session as the particular problems of the 1560s were left behind and the concerns of the session expanded beyond sexuality, although it still formed the bulk of the session's business. But the timescale over which this development occurred is notable: even in St Andrews, the centre of the reformed church in Fife, fully functioning discipline took decades rather than years to develop, and as we shall see, the process was not complete even by 1580.

If this was the case in St Andrews, what progress was made towards establishing discipline in the rest of Fife during this early period? We do not have direct evidence from most parishes but there is good reason to suppose that the rest of Fife lagged behind St Andrews, even leaving aside the indirect evidence we do have. St Andrews was one of the first places to convert to Protestantism, and was a beacon of the reformed church. But, as Jane Dawson has pointed out, rather than pushing out its religious influence, St Andrews instead sucked it in and became a rather isolated religious centre, acting as an exemplar rather than an actual 'power-house'.²⁸ This was confirmed in the previous chapter, where we saw that the parishes in St Andrews' hinterland did not experience a more rapid planting of ministers than elsewhere in Fife.

St Andrews Kirk Session also had significant advantages over other Fife parishes: the Reformation in St Andrews enjoyed considerable support from the burgh leadership and the university, and both these groups were instrumental in the initial

²⁶ Although Calderwood reveals that in 1574 St Andrews kirk session was criticised by the General Assembly for allowing 'the violatioun of the Lord's day by prophane playes' and not keeping a fast. Calderwood, *History*, iii., pp. 332-33

²⁷ See also Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 92-3 for the mid-1570s crackdown.

²⁸ Dawson, "'The Face of Ane Perfyt Reformed Kyrk'", esp. 434-35.

establishment of the kirk session.²⁹ The session's status as the superintendent's court under John Winram must have also boosted its authority.³⁰ Plus there is the simple fact that no other kirk session records survive for the first fifteen years after the Reformation from any of Fife's approximately sixty parishes, while St Andrews has voluminous minutes (Table 2.1). As we have seen, the planting of ministers to parishes was a gradual process, and during this early period most parishes shared ministers, relying on the services of readers. This must have impeded the setting up of parish discipline, since where we do have evidence, ministers have emerged as central to functioning kirk sessions.³¹ We have a stray reference to this problem in 1586, when a visitation of Muckhart recorded that 'for lack off a pastor, the Sabbath is not dewlie observit'.³² On these grounds alone it would seem dangerous to assume automatically the existence of significant kirk session discipline outside the parish of St Andrews during this period.³³

Table 2.1: Earliest survival of kirk session minutes, 1559-1640³⁴

Parish	Date
St Andrews	1559
Anstruther	1575
Abercrombie	1597
Burntisland	1602
Crail	1604 ³⁵
Kinghorn	1607
Kirkcaldy	1614
Dysart	1619
Markinch	1626
Scoonie	1626 ³⁶
Newburn	1628
Culross	1629

²⁹ *Ibid*, 417-8; *RStAKS*, i., 1-2, 19.

³⁰ For the superintendent's court see Dunbar, *Reforming the Scottish Church*, ch. 6.

³¹ Verschuur, 'Enforcing the Discipline of the Kirk'; Lynch, 'Calvinism in Scotland', 249; see also discussions of Anstruther, Kilconquhar and Culross below.

³² Kirk, *Visitation of the Diocese of Dunblane*, 25.

³³ Michael Graham, utilising the minutes of Monifieth in Angus, has reached the similar conclusion that the case for widespread rural discipline before the 1580s 'would have to rely more on faith than reason'. Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 126-9.

³⁴ This excludes miscellaneous kirk session material which is scattered in the parochial Births and Marriages Registers, which begins in the following years: Fossoway 1609 (GRO, OPR 461/1); Kinglassie 1627 (GRO, OPR 440/3); Torryburn 1629 (GRO, OPR 458/1); Balmerino 1632 (GRO, OPR 409/1); Kettle 1633 (GRO, OPR 435/1); Largo 1636 (GRO, OPR 443/1). This seems to fit in well with the patterns in the table of actual kirk session minutes.

³⁵ Statutes only.

³⁶ Statutes only.

Monimail	1630
Kingsbarns	1630
Kilconquhar	1637
Ferryport-on-Craig (Tayport)	1640

One piece of evidence which we do have about early discipline in Fife, albeit not from parish level, is a manuscript surviving from the Synod of Fife from around 1570.³⁷ It contains a series of questions to be asked in visitations, and a set of acts, some relating to discipline. Although it is interesting that the Synod was taking an interest in discipline at this relatively early date, the evidence of the manuscript suggests that the practice of discipline at parish level was haphazard and in need of reform. It was recorded that every minister or reader, rather than the kirk session, was to have a copy of the acts so that none could claim ignorance of discipline.³⁸ Also, visitations rather than regular kirk session meetings were seen as the main instrument of discipline. Some of the kirk sessions which did exist seem to have been uncontrolled and disorganized, since the Synod had to order that excommunicated persons were not allowed to sit on sessions.³⁹ The Synod manuscript contains almost as much material on arranging church services (sermons, marriage arrangements and so on) and on internal administration as it did on discipline, revealing a local church leadership that was still getting to grips with basic church functions rather than refining disciplinary procedure.⁴⁰ And in any case, it seems unlikely that parishes with at best informal disciplinary structures would have been able to enforce those disciplinary requirements that were imposed by the Synod. This was, after all, a body dealing with the whole of Fife, and some other areas, and its pronouncements must be seen (like those of General Assemblies) as aspirational rather than practical.⁴¹ The Synod was clearly not satisfied with discipline in Fife in around 1570, and it may be that the crackdown we have observed in St Andrews in the 1570s stemmed partly from this ambition on the part of the church leadership, whose authority was after all

³⁷ Transcribed in Linda Dunbar, 'An Early Record from the Synod of Fife, c. 1570', *RSCHS*, 28 (1998) 217-238.

³⁸ Dunbar, 'Synod of Fife', 219-20.

³⁹ See Linda Dunbar, 'Synods and Superintendence: John Winram and Fife, 1561-1572', *RSCHS*, 27 (1997), 104.

⁴⁰ 16 acts related to discipline, while 23 dealt with services and internal matters. Among other things, the Synod was trying to ensure good ministerial behaviour: legislating against ministers setting tacks, non-residence and preaching without admission to the ministry.

⁴¹ Indeed some of the acts are traceable to the General Assembly: Dunbar, 'Synod of Fife', 218.

stronger in the city. But although the Synod document cannot tell us directly about the situation in the parishes, it does not give a favourable impression of the state of kirk session discipline, as opposed to visitation and ministerial inquisition, across Fife.

The minutes of St Andrews Kirk Session offer us some tantalising evidence about discipline outside St Andrews, since they contain references to parishes from across Fife.⁴² We know from a reference to ‘the minister, eldaris and diacons, of the said toun of Kirkcaldy’ that the parish did have at least a rudimentary kirk session in 1560, although it was not willing to judge a marriage grievance case and passed it on to St Andrews.⁴³ We also have a reference to the ‘minister and eldaris of Crayll’ in 1561 and the ‘minister, eldaris and ballies’ in 1562, although again this reference occurs because the session had felt it necessary to pass on a case to St Andrews.⁴⁴ Crail and Kirkcaldy were significant burghs, however, and had a relatively stable ministry compared to other parts of Fife. The situation in the more rural parish of Logie seems to have been more informal, since we have a reference in 1561 to the ‘minister, reader or ane of the diaconis’ (no elders are mentioned), suggesting that some ad hoc responsibilities were in place but not necessarily a full kirk session.⁴⁵ Aberdour, on the other hand, seems to have had no regular kirk session in 1560-61, since it was a minister, a baillie and other ‘inhabitanes and maist honest men’ who subscribed a testimonial, rather than the ‘elders’, ‘deacons’ or ‘sessioners’.⁴⁶ Similarly, we have a record in 1563 of an ‘inhibicion [formal prohibition] to be direct to the minister of Monymayll [Monimail] to be execut thar’: we would normally expect such a request to be directed to the kirk session.⁴⁷

Some cases are harder to define. In 1564 some fornicators were ordered ‘to mak public satisfaccion in the essemble of Flysk [Flisk] this next Sundaye’.⁴⁸ Although ‘assembly’ was often used to refer to the session, it could also have referred to the whole congregation, especially since the repentance was to take place on a Sunday. And a case from Largo in 1562 was uncovered by a visitation rather than by any kirk

⁴² This was probably due to its status as the superintendent’s court: there are references not just to the adjacent parishes but from right across John Winram’s jurisdiction.

⁴³ *RStAKS*, 50-1.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 105, 143. See also *BUK*, i., 16.

⁴⁵ *RStAKS*, 124. See Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 130-31.

⁴⁶ *RStAKS*, 54-6.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 183-4.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 188.

session, though this does not technically preclude the existence of a kirk session.⁴⁹ Apart from these early references to parish arrangements outside St Andrews, the session minutes, along with the presbytery minutes, also give us our first solid evidence of the existence of formal kirk sessions in Leuchars by 1582 ('elderschip'), in Kilmany by 1589, in Largo by 1599 and in Forgan by 1600, when a woman was 'fugitive fra the disciplene of the kirk of Forgund in Fyiff'.⁵⁰ We also know from the presbytery minutes that Kilconquhar had a session by 1595, for it was recorded then that it only met fortnightly during the harvest.⁵¹ This evidence still only covers a small proportion of Fife parishes, but it suggests that the establishment of kirk sessions outside St Andrews in the first twenty years of the reformed church was slow, and at first limited to major settlements with stable ministers like Crail and Kirkcaldy. In the other parishes there may have been informal arrangements, varying from parish to parish, and some discipline may have been imposed by the minister or reader and any rudimentary group of elders, deacons, or honest inhabitants who assisted them.⁵² But the picture that has emerged is, at best, mixed.

Before we turn to look at the next stage in the development of parish discipline, it is worth examining one chance survival of a document which provides a very different view of the early reformed parish even to the ones surveyed so far. The parish of Kemback was situated directly between Cupar and St Andrews, and was by no means in an isolated location. But an instrument of exchange dated 29 May 1583 recorded

how that the parochie kirk [of Kemback] beand ane lang tyme bypast awtterlie demolisshit baith in ruf and wallis nathar hawand doore nor window quhairby nather the parson nor minister thair of resort and repair thairto to preiching of goddis word nor zit the people and parochiners of the said paroching for herin of the samin swa that be the space of twentie zeiris last bypast nather hes goddis word bene preichit in the said kirk nather zit communion and supper of the lord nor sacrament of baptime ministrat to the parochineris.⁵³

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 145.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 491 (Leuchars), 919 (Forgan); *StAP*, 30 (Kilmany), 297 (Largo). We also know that Anstruther had a kirk session by the late 1570s, but Anstruther as a whole will be dealt with in the next section of the chapter.

⁵¹ *StAP*, 193.

⁵² Similarly in the Dunblane visitations, many parishes had some sort of session by the 1580s. Kirk, *Visitations of the Diocese of Dunblane*, xxxvi-xxxvii and passim.

⁵³ *StAUL*, ms37490/33, Barclay of Collairnie papers, Instrument of Excambion. See also *StAP*, 322n. In 1587 it was also recorded that Creich church was ruinous and that the parishioners had to resort to Dunbog for services, but there is no indication that this problem was as long-standing as that of Kemback. *StAP*, 25. Outside Fife, the situation in the parish of Strowan (Dunblane Presbytery) in 1588 was similar to Kemback: Kirk, *Visitation of the Diocese of Dunblane*, 79.

If the kirk was in such a state of ruin, and religious services so thoroughly neglected since the Reformation, it is very unlikely that any attempt at kirk session discipline was made in the parish. Crucially, this was not a parish without a minister: since 1567 it had been served by a series of ministers, albeit ministers who retained roles at St Andrews University.⁵⁴ Admittedly this reference does occur in a document which details the financial arrangements for the building of a new church and manse ‘to ye promotioun of goddis glorie and furtherance of the Religioun of Jesus Chryst’, and the remains of the new church still stand as a testament that this was achieved. And in the absence of similar chance survivals of documents from other parishes - the manuscript survives in a collection of family papers, not ecclesiastical records - we can not be certain of how typical or atypical the parish of Kemback was. But it seems hazardous to assume that St Andrews was more typical than Kemback. It is probable that most Fife parishes fell in between the two extremes, and that in much of Fife kirk session discipline was fairly limited, if not entirely absent, for the first two decades after the Reformation.

The Second Generation: The Development of Discipline, c.1580-c.1610

The 1580s were a period of heightened radicalism in the Scottish Church, and saw the production of the Second *Book of Discipline* and the erection of presbyteries.⁵⁵ They also, as discussed in the previous chapter, saw the beginnings of major improvements in the provision of ministers to parishes. The new ministers of the 1580s and 1590s were part of a second generation of ministers, who unlike the early ministers and readers after 1560 were brought up and trained in the post-Reformation era.⁵⁶ This may have played at least as significant a role in the enhancement and expansion of parish discipline over the next few decades.⁵⁷

As we saw above, discipline in St Andrews was functioning reasonably well by 1580, even if the range of offences prosecuted was not yet comprehensive. The 1580s

⁵⁴ James Martin, William Ramsay, David Guild, Thomas Brown and the present incumbent in 1583, John Rutherford. For the university roles of these ministers, see Annie Dunlop (ed.), *Acta Facultatis Artium Universitatis Sanctiandree 1413-1588* (Edinburgh, 1964), 427-37, 444-49, 451-2. Kemback was one of the parishes annexed to St Salvator’s College in its original foundation. See Cant, *College of St Salvator*, 13, 55, 168-9.

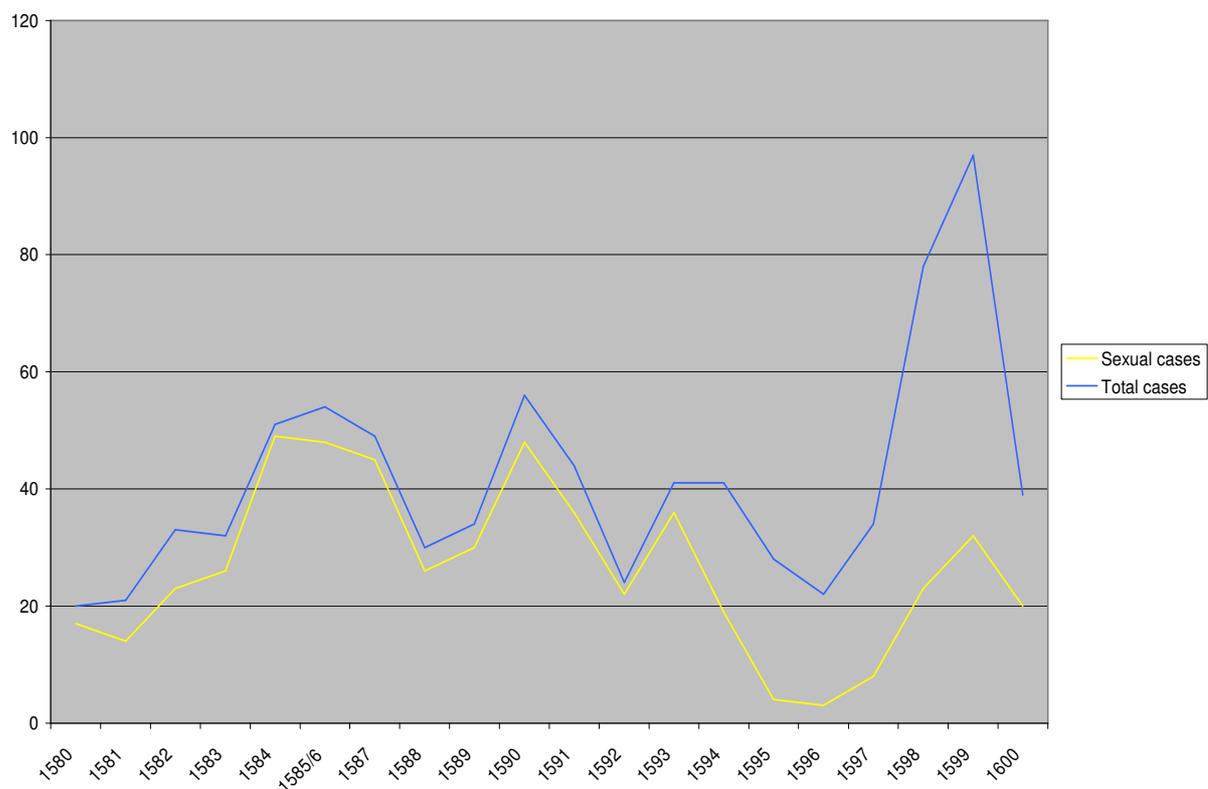
⁵⁵ *SBD*.

⁵⁶ Verschuur, ‘Enforcing the Discipline of the Kirk’, 234-36.

⁵⁷ Cf. Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 129.

and 1590s were to see an expansion and tightening of discipline in St Andrews. The number of cases prosecuted rose after 1580 (subject to annual fluctuations), and never again fell below 20 per year. As the 1580s ended there were an average of around 40 cases per year. The mid 1580s saw another crackdown, and the decade saw a total of 35 statutes passed by the session, some dealing with liturgical and other matters, but many cracking down on abuse of the Sabbath and a variety of sins. Still harsher punishments were imposed, with more regular imprisonments. But sexual offences still made up a remarkably high proportion of the total number of cases throughout the 1580s, as Chart 2.2 demonstrates. The 1580s saw an increase in the volume of discipline, and some attempts to clamp down more thoroughly on ungodly behaviour, but these attempts were still aspirational and took the form of statutes rather than a significant number of prosecutions for offences other than sexual.

Chart 2.2: Number of sexual cases compared with total number of cases in St Andrews Kirk Session, 1580-1600



The 1590s were probably the most crucial decade for the establishment of the thoroughgoing discipline that we expect from kirk sessions. Michael Graham has argued for the importance of the replacement of the normal civic regime, led by James

Lermonth of Dairsie as Provost, with the regime of William Murray of Pitcarleis from 1593 to 1595. Murray of Pitcarleis was much more sympathetic to the ‘Melvillian’ ministers David Black and Robert Wallace.⁵⁸ This may well have had important repercussions for burgh politics and ecclesiastical tensions, but there was only a minor tightening of discipline during this period. In fact, even the crackdown of 1595, when previous acts were ratified and codified into a more coherent body of statutes, came not under Murray of Pitcarleis but after the return to power of the Lermonth regime.⁵⁹ And crucially, it was the period after 1595, and especially from 1597 to 1599, that saw the biggest formalisation and expansion of discipline in the parish. When George Gladstones replaced David Black as minister in July 1597, he initiated the biggest swathe of legislation seen by the session: 69 acts were passed by the session from 1597 to 1600. Seventeen of these came in October 1597, indicating Gladstones’ immediate desire to crack down on immorality.⁶⁰ And, crucially, these ordinances were now backed up by a huge increase in the number of prosecutions, demonstrated in Chart 2.2. And, as Chart 2.2 also shows, sexual misdemeanours no longer dominated the session’s workload as they had done since 1560. The session under Gladstones prosecuted many cases of Sabbath-breach, and also slander, blasphemy, disorder and even lack of religious knowledge.⁶¹ Gladstones’ drive against Sabbath-breach showed clear signs of success: by June 1600 the Sunday afternoon sermons were so well attended that for reasons of space it was necessary to establish a parallel service in St Salvator’s College Chapel during the summer months.⁶² Despite the relatively large population of St Andrews (there were probably at least 2000 communicants in 1590), this was the first time since the Reformation that the parish church could not accommodate the entire congregation, a fact which does not reflect well on the attendance levels of the early reformed church.⁶³ Under Gladstones, offenders could expect severe punishments: a trilapse fornicator was banished from the parish, and Sabbath-breakers were now fined as well as performing public repentance. And by 1598, the session was meeting on a more-or-less weekly basis.

⁵⁸ Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 208. See also Benedict, *Christ’s Churches Purely Reformed*, 468, where the high levels of consistorial vigilance are linked to Andrew Melville’s ‘ministry’ in St Andrews.

⁵⁹ *RStAKS*, ii., 807-811.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 827-30, 828-33.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 835-840, 874.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 925-26. Even this new drive could not achieve total success: in 1607 the cordiner craft ordered its members to attend preaching, under pain of 2 shillings. StAUL, msDA890.S1C7, Minute Book of the Cordiner Craft of St Andrews, 1570-1796, f. 12v.

⁶³ 2000 communion tokens were purchased by the kirk session in July 1590: *RStAKS*, ii., 677.

Under Gladstones, the session's discipline was transformed to encompass a wide variety of offences, prosecuted more rigorously, and it was during this period that the recognisable patterns of discipline from the seventeenth century were established.

It is particularly interesting that the architect of this disciplinary transformation was George Gladstones, who was to become Bishop of Caithness in 1600 and then Archbishop of St Andrews in 1606. David Hay Fleming, the original editor of the St Andrews minutes, praised the radical firebrand David Black, and his like-minded colleague Robert Wallace for bringing disciplinary zeal to the parish.⁶⁴ In a much less partisan manner, Michael Graham also emphasises the role played by Black and Wallace, seeing them as the leaders of the disciplinary crackdown, in contrast to Gladstones and David Lindsay, his colleague, who were 'more palatable to the burgh establishment and the crown', and states that under them the parish 'had a moderate-conservative ministry'. They were also apparently less committed as members of St Andrews Presbytery.⁶⁵ But while the post-1597 ministry may have been more conservative on matters of ecclesiastical polity and had been placed in the parish by royal intervention, their disciplinary zeal was no less than the previous radical ministers, and they achieved better results.⁶⁶ This suggests that rather than presbyteries and presbyterian affiliation, it was the attitude of individual ministers that was central to the process of establishing thorough discipline.⁶⁷

So even in St Andrews it took until the end of the sixteenth century to establish a system of parish discipline that matched the aims of the reformers. The first parish outside St Andrews for which we have direct evidence of kirk session discipline is Anstruther, whose earliest surviving manuscript dates from 1575.⁶⁸ However, the level of parish discipline in the late 1570s was cursory at best. The majority of disciplinary matters in the period 1575-1586 involved fornication, and of these most came to light when an illegitimate child was presented for baptism. This suggests that the session was not taking a proactive role in seeking out sin but was reacting to

⁶⁴ *RStAKS*, lxvii-lxx.

⁶⁵ Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 201, 210, 220.

⁶⁶ See *JMD*, 417-419; Calderwood, *History*, v., 650 for James VI's visit to St Andrews in June 1597, which led to the removal of Andrew Melville from the rectorship of the university as well as the change in the ministry.

⁶⁷ See below (Kilconquhar) for another case of effective discipline led personally by an episcopalian minister.

⁶⁸ GRO, OPR 403/1 is formally dated 1577-1601 but contains material which can be dated to 1575 by cross-referencing with a later manuscript which contains transcripts of disciplinary acts: StAUL, CH2/624/2, p. 3. See also Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 126. Prior to the late 1580s the session of Anstruther also dealt with the parishes of Kilrenny, Abercrombie and Pittenweem.

obvious cases when the offenders appeared before them anyway. The session was also failing to inculcate an atmosphere where people confessed voluntarily or brought their own allegation to the session. In the manuscript the fact that the parents of illegitimate children had to repent is noted as part of the baptismal register rather than in a separate register, as is the case with more advanced sessions.⁶⁹ And where cases of other offences occur, they are noted specially and subscribed by the minister himself, with a list of the elders, suggesting that the prosecution of adulterers and Sabbath-breakers was a rare and noteworthy event.⁷⁰ The minutes from this era also contain no sederunts, only minimal noting of business relating to the parish poor and are rather badly organised, which in contrast to later entries and the normally neat and logical layout structure of most session minutes, suggests an informal and haphazardly functioning kirk session.

It is not merely the number and extent of cases appearing before the kirk session that shows a low level of disciplinary activity in Anstruther prior to 1586. During this period, the session produced very few statutes compared with the following years, and what little was produced betrayed a modest set of ambitions for parish discipline (Table 2.3). This demonstrates that the sessions of the late 1570s and early 1580s largely preferred to deal with cases on an ad hoc basis, and that merely getting the session to function properly with full attendance and the co-operation of offenders was still one of their main concerns. Non-sexual offences, like slander, Sabbath breach and fighting do not yet register in the acts produced by the session. Indeed the early session did not need extensive legislation, because its main activity was recording baptisms and marriages, and forcing the parents of illegitimate children to repent. So the practice of discipline in the Anstruther area before 1586 was far from rigorous or well-organised, and was carried out by sessions either unwilling or unable to carry out a thoroughgoing and comprehensive reformation of manners.⁷¹

⁶⁹ See OPR 403/1 ff. 15-17 for example. By the seventeenth century the baptisms (OPR 403/2) were recorded in a totally separate volume from the disciplinary business (CH2/624/2).

⁷⁰ OPR 403/1 f. 34v (4 June 1583).

⁷¹ Michael Graham has noted this widespread tendency of the earliest sessions to focus on the issue of illegitimacy in his 'Knox on Discipline: Conversionary Zeal or Rose-tinted Nostalgia?' in Roger A. Mason (ed.) *John Knox and the British Reformations* (Aldershot, 1998), 284.

Table 2.3: Disciplinary Statutes in Anstruther under William Clerk and Robert Wood, 1575-1585⁷²

Year	Subject of Act
1575	Absence of session members from sermons and session meetings
1575	Baptism (to be deferred until the parents of illegitimate children repent)
1576	Not appearing before the session when charged
1579	Absence of session members from session meetings
1579	Vagabonds and beggars
1579	Disorder at marriage celebrations ⁷³
1583	Fornication

In the summer of 1586, James Melville became minister of Anstruther, assisted by Robert Durie who was to become his successor when Melville removed to the charge of Kilrenny alone in 1590.⁷⁴ In his first few months as minister, Melville initiated a radical overhaul of the disciplinary procedure in the parishes.⁷⁵ This radical change in the practice of discipline cannot be attributed directly to the introduction of a Presbyterian system since it coincided exactly with the arrival of Melville and Durie, and was initiated within the session itself rather than as a result of orders from higher up the church hierarchy. Whereas there had been around 30 disciplinary cases before 1586, averaging around five per year, there were around 270 cases between 1586 and 1601, averaging around nineteen cases per year. In addition, the years after 1586 saw a wealth of new statutes produced by the session, a more formal style of pursuing cases, better organised notation of proceedings and a crackdown on particular offences accompanied by more serious punishments.

Melville replaced the existing pattern, whereby most cases seen by the session were fornicators presenting children for baptism, with a more inquisitorial approach in

⁷² CH2/624/2, p.3; OPR 403/1, f. 3r, 20r. The 1579 acts were from the Kilrenny branch of the session.

⁷³ Act re-iterated in 1583, f. 35.

⁷⁴ See *DNB* for more on Durie.

⁷⁵ Melville's entry in *DNB* dates his appointment to November 1586, perhaps following the note in the preface to his Autobiography that he began administering baptism on 22 October (*JMD*, ix). *FES* states that he was proposed in July, and ordained in November. The entry of a minister to a parish was complicated, and it is impossible to pinpoint one date on which Melville became minister. Melville himself, however, dated his entry to the summer of 1586, referring to it as the 'summer following' the events of the winter of 1585 (*JMD*, 253-4). This would suggest that he at least began his pastoral duties at some point during the summer, perhaps before his official ordination that autumn/winter.

which people were specially called before the session and accused of a particular offence. This is reflected in a more organised and business-like method of notation, it no longer being necessary for the minister to subscribe cases personally. As Graham has suggested, the variety of cases to be pursued also expanded. Sex or suspicious activity by a couple was the subject of 83% of identifiable disciplinary cases arising during the six years before Melville's arrival in July 1586.⁷⁶ During the following six years this figure had dropped to 61%, and the number of cases of Sabbath-breach had risen from one to twenty-three.⁷⁷ While it would be dangerous to rely solely on the increase in the number of cases, the fact that a wider variety of cases was being pursued and that kirk session business was no longer dominated by the issue of fornication suggests a transformation in approaches to discipline. The seriousness with which cases of Sabbath-breach were being treated had also increased, as indicated by Melville's desire to involve the synod in a case arising a few months after his arrival.⁷⁸ Four new types of cases were pursued by the session under Melville and Durie in these first six years: charming, contumacy (where an offender was punished for disobedience to the session as a separate offence), idolatry and receiving banished or scandalous persons.⁷⁹

The enhanced vigour of the kirk session after 1586 is also apparent if we compare the legislation from the years prior to 1586 (Table 2.3) with the acts produced in the following few years (Table 2.4). As well as the increased number of acts (fourteen in four years compared to seven in ten years), the acts show a more wide-ranging and severe attitude to discipline, particularly where the Sabbath and attendance at sermons were concerned. Fornicators were now to be imprisoned in the steeple, and although we do not know the duration of their incarceration in 1586, by 1609 they were to remain imprisoned for eight days and nights.⁸⁰ Under Melville and Durie, a haphazardly and informally functioning kirk session was transformed into a more zealous institution, and one more concerned with a full reformation of morals.

⁷⁶ Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 226. OPR 403/1, ff. 22-53. I have also excluded from this statistic those mentions of fornication which arose from baptism and were not treated as disciplinary matters in themselves. If they had been included the proportion of sexual cases would be even higher. The totals of identifiable cases (covering 6 years, since the first identifiable case occurs in 1580) were: 1 adultery, 19 fornication, 1 sabbath-breach, 4 scandalous carriage, 4 verbal. Thus 24 out of 29 were sexual.

⁷⁷ OPR 403/1, ff. 44-76. 61 out of 103 identifiable cases were sexual (fornication, adultery and scandalous carriage).

⁷⁸ OPR 403/1, f. 55v (September 1586).

⁷⁹ For more on this last offence see ch. 6.

⁸⁰ CH2/624/2, p. 6. Cf. Foster, *Church Before the Covenants*, 80, where it is claimed that confinement was simply used against those who did not pay their fines.

Table 2.4: Disciplinary Statutes in Anstruther under James Melville 1586-1590⁸¹

Year	Subject of Act
July 1586	Absence from preaching
1586	Fornicators to be imprisoned in the steeple on bread and water in addition to their fine ⁸²
1586	Alms collection to take place at kirk door, not during preaching. ⁸³
1586	Sabbath Breach (followed by another act requiring magistrates to fine Sabbath-breakers)
1587	Sabbath-breach
1588	Servants guilty of fornication
1588	Sabbath-breach
1588	Limiting the ability to pay a sum of money to avoid censure
1589	Trafficking to Spain
1589	Leaving the sermon before the blessing
1589	Arranging visitations to check for Sabbath-breach and sermon attendance
1589	Leaving church early
1590	Blasphemy; Swearing
1590	Superstitious kirk-burial

As well as providing further evidence of the poor state of discipline even in parishes relatively close to St Andrews prior to the 1580s, the Anstruther minutes illustrate the importance of ministers to the introduction of discipline. While St Andrews Presbytery might claim some credit for placing ministers in parishes, it was individual ministerial agency which provided the catalyst for the introduction of comprehensive reformed discipline. The parallels with Mary Verschuur's research on Perth, where a second-generation reforming minister transformed the practice of discipline in the 1580s from a relatively low-key state in the 1560s and 1570s, are compelling.⁸⁴ The speed with which Melville and Durie transformed discipline in

⁸¹ These acts are spread throughout OPR 403/1 and CH2/624/2 pp. 1-6. They do not occur in order since some occur both in their original context and as later copies transcribed in the 1600s. This may perhaps explain Graham's failure to utilise them in his section on Anstruther. Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 220-239.

⁸² This act is confirmed again twice in the following months.

⁸³ Presumably to avoid disruption to the sermon, and perhaps so that the elders or deacons collecting the alms could take note of who gave what.

⁸⁴ Verschuur, 'Enforcing the Discipline of the Kirk'. See also Foster, *Church Before the Covenants*, 67; Muir, 'The Covenanters in Fife', 211-212; Murdock, *Beyond Calvin*, 95 (noting that across Europe 'the effective exercise of consistorial discipline depended first upon the presence and ability of the

Anstruther may have been unusual, however, since even St Andrews saw a more gradual process of bringing parish practice into line with the ideal, and the discipline of Anstruther by the late 1580s was in some respects more comprehensive than St Andrews at the same time.⁸⁵

The parish of Burntisland, or Kinghorn Wester, is another case of a parish which by the early 1600s had established a well functioning kirk session. Its minutes begin in 1602, and are prefaced with a set of disciplinary acts which give us our first impression of discipline in the parish.⁸⁶ These acts are severe, prescribe unusually harsh punishments, and demonstrate a kirk session which must have been particularly zealous in its ambitions for parish discipline. As with many other sessions, a key concern is preventing beggars from entering the parish, but the penalties for merely harbouring such persons were severe: 40 shillings for the first fault, 80 shillings for the second fault and so on.⁸⁷ In keeping with the general mood of the early seventeenth century in Fife, all idle persons without land or master were to be banished, but the session also went so far as to specify particular categories of forbidden persons, including gypsies, those claiming unnatural powers, all musicians not in the service of barons or gentlemen and ‘fenizeit scollaris quha has not licence of ye dene of facultie of thair universitie to tak almes’. The punishments for idle persons were extreme: scourging and banishment for the first offence, scourging, branding with hot irons and banishment for the second, and, theoretically, death for the third.⁸⁸ As well as these concerns, the kirk session also legislated fully against more typical offences, imposing fines for Sabbath-breach and absence from the sermon, swearing, blasphemy and flyting, fornication and impeding the work of the session.⁸⁹

These acts are noted continuously in the manuscript, rather than in the course of weekly meetings, and are likely to be a codification of previously existing acts, possibly due to the arrival of a new minister, William Watson, in 1601. And the practice of discipline under Watson lived up to the zeal displayed in the legislation.

local minister’). For the impact made by ministers see also the discussions below of Culross (John Duncan), Kilconquhar (David Munro), and the 1586 visitation of Muckhart discussed above.

⁸⁵ Cf. Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 220.

⁸⁶ NAS, CH2/523/1, Burntisland Kirk Session Minutes.

⁸⁷ CH2/523/1, p. 2.

⁸⁸ CH2/523/1, p. 2, act repeated on pp. 8-9 with punishments on p. 9. See ch. 6 for a fuller quotation from the act, which seems to be adapted from a 1579 Act of Parliament: *RPS*, 1579/10/27 (Date accessed: 22 July 2008).

⁸⁹ CH2/523/1, pp. 2-9.

Punishments were severe, including several weeks of repentance for sexual offences. A man who laboured on the Sabbath was warded in the tolbooth as well as paying fines and doing public repentance. A persistent drunkard had to pay a fine of £40 and do public repentance.⁹⁰ The session fully pursued 13 cases in the first nine months for which we have records in 1602. Despite the recent codification of parish statutes, the session continued to produce acts when necessary over the next few years: there were seven acts in 1602 and 1603. The session was well organised, and in 1602 the parish was divided into quarters and the visitation of these was to be the responsibility of specific elders.⁹¹ By 1610, the session was meeting on a regular weekly basis, and over 30 cases were prosecuted in the year. Sampling of the years 1620 and 1630 suggests that these high disciplinary standards established around the turn of the century continued as the seventeenth century progressed.⁹²

So Burntisland had seen a successful establishment of discipline by the early seventeenth century, and its kirk session was zealous, imposing severe correction on wrongdoers in the parish. Because the minutes only begin in 1602 we cannot be certain when this discipline was introduced, although the fact that Burntisland first enjoyed a minister not shared with another parish in 1593 may be significant.⁹³ Although Burntisland was, unlike Anstruther, well outside St Andrews' sphere of influence it was certainly not a backwater: it enjoyed coastal trade with the Low Countries, had finally been confirmed as a royal burgh in 1587, and a new church had been completed there in 1600.⁹⁴ This may make it somewhat unrepresentative of Fife parishes, but by the early 1600s, at least some parishes (especially the coastal burghs) had well functioning parish discipline.⁹⁵ This is supported by the evidence from Kinghorn Easter, just along the coast from Burntisland. The minutes proper begin in 1607, and by this date the kirk session was functioning reasonably well, although it was less inclined to impose very harsh penalties than its neighbour. There are some

⁹⁰ CH2/523/1, pp. 13-21.

⁹¹ CH2/523/1, p. 13.

⁹² See also ch. 6.

⁹³ The codification of 1602, the arrival of a new minister in 1601 and the fact that these are the earliest Burntisland minutes to survive suggest that the turn of the century might have been the time when proper record-keeping and storage were first introduced.

⁹⁴ George Pryde, *The Burghs of Scotland: A Critical List* (Oxford, 1965), 27; Lamont-Brown, *Villages of Fife*, 58-9; Deborah Howard, *Scottish Architecture: Reformation to Restoration* (Edinburgh, 1995), 180.

⁹⁵ Dysart, another coastal burgh, does not have surviving session minutes at this stage, but the burgh records contain an attempt to impose religious propriety (punishing abuse of the church and churchyard) in 1584; this might have been petitioned for by the kirk session. W. Muir (ed.), *Gleanings from the Records of Dysart, from 1545 to 1796* (Edinburgh, 1862), 40-1.

signs of kirk session activity, if not discipline in Kinghorn as early as the 1580s and 1590s.⁹⁶ By the 1600s the session was meeting regularly, dealt with plenty of offenders (there were around eight or nine cases per month around the start of 1608), and dealt with cases fully, imposing fines as well as public repentance and admonition. And when the minutes resume in 1622, after a gap, the session was still functioning well. So Kinghorn provides us with another example of a coastal burgh parish having developed reasonable discipline by the early seventeenth century.

The only other parish for which we have direct evidence of discipline in the 1580-1610 period paints a rather different picture. The parish of Abercrombie, which later included the small baronial burgh of St Monans but was in our period centred on the small village of Abercrombie, has kirk session minutes beginning in 1597. They betray a kirk session that was seriously limited in its functioning.⁹⁷ The session was meeting infrequently in the first years for which we have records, and even by the late 1610s there were no more than 23 meetings in a year (Chart 2.5). There are gaps in the minutes' coverage, but it seems that it was only by the 1630s that the session was meeting on a regular weekly basis. The early kirk session also prosecuted few cases: only sixteen from 1597 to 1602 (Chart 2.6). This was to increase after Daniel Wilkie arrived in the parish in 1605: the period from 1606 to 1612 saw 35 cases, and for the first time, some legislation. But this increase was not sustained, and it was only after the arrival of another new minister, Wilkie's son Robert, in 1628, that the kirk session really began to function properly. An analysis of the legislation produced by the session, as well as the numbers of cases and meetings, reveals that it was only in the 1630s (and in particular with the ordinances of 1630) that the kirk session started to legislate fully (Table 2.7). Findings such as these may raise doubts over Todd's assumption that kirk session minutes from the later period are representative of earlier kirk session minutes which have failed to survive.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ The earliest script to appear in the minutes comes towards the end, a list of subscriptions to the Negative Confession of 1581, demonstrating that the minister or session was by this date able to arrange such an operation. There are also details of fasts held in the 1590s. CH2/472/1, pp. 249-278. Some extracts from these are published in *A Selection of Extracts from the Ancient Minutes of the Kirk-Session of Kinghorn* (Kirkcaldy, 1863).

⁹⁷ StAUL, CH2/1056/1, St Monans (i.e. Abercrombie) Kirk Session Minutes.

⁹⁸ Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 13, and passim.

Chart 2.5: Number of meetings p.a. of Abercrombie Kirk Session, 1597-1633⁹⁹

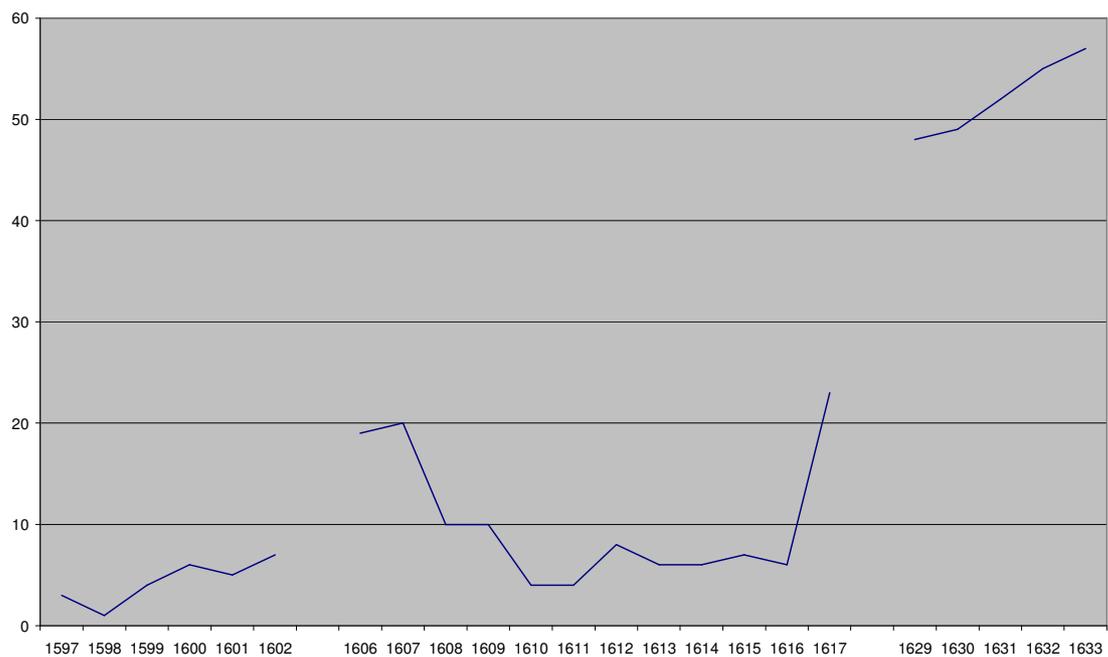


Chart 2.6: Number of cases before Abercrombie Kirk session in six-year blocks, 1597-1640¹⁰⁰

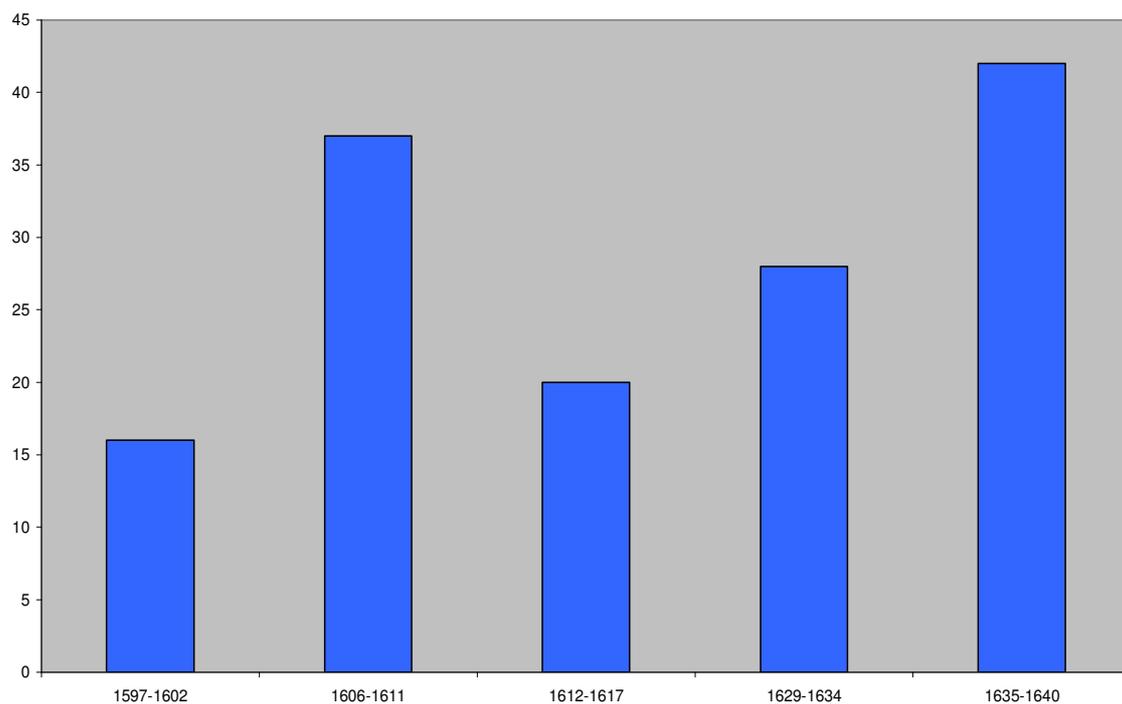


Table 2.7: Disciplinary Statutes produced by Abercrombie Kirk Session, 1597-1640¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ CH2/1056/1. The breaks in the chart between 1602-1606 and 1617-29 arise from gaps in the manuscript.

¹⁰⁰ The cases in Chart 2.7 are divided into six-year blocks because the manuscript, fortuitously, presents us with six years of cases at a time between the gaps.

¹⁰¹ CH2/1056/1.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Subject of Act</u>
1606	Sermon-absence
1606	Receiving beggars
1606	Drinking during sermon time
1607	No subletting without the permission of the session
1612	Dancing on the Sabbath
1612	Causing disturbances at night
1612	Flyting
1629 ¹⁰²	Absence from examination
1630	<u>1630 Series of Ordinances</u> ¹⁰³
	Elder/deacon attendance
	Elders and deacons to keep private matters secret
	Those disobedient to the session
	Working on the Sabbath
	Hindering an officer of the law
	Fornication
	Flyting
	Violence against other people's servants
	Heads of families absent from preaching
	Servants absent from preaching
	Players or drinkers in time of sermon
	No subletting without the permission of the session
	Receiving a servant from another parish without a testimonial
	Refusing to repair one's part of the kirk dyke
	Bringing a slander accusation without proof
	No marriages on Sunday without paying a sum and promising good order
1634	Absence from examination
1638	Sundry abuses of the Sabbath
1638	Supporting sturdy beggars
1638	Sermon-absence
1638	Absence from examination
1639	(from Presbytery) Yule to be treated as normal working day

¹⁰² There is a gap in the manuscript between 1614 and 1629.

¹⁰³ These are bound out of order at the end of the volume, ff. 63-4.

So while St Andrews, Anstruther and Burntisland had proper kirk session discipline by the start of the seventeenth century, it took around thirty years longer for the same to be true of Abercrombie. This suggests an important distinction in the timescale of the establishment of discipline between the more rural parishes and the burghs. And although we can not be certain that Abercrombie was any more typical than the burghs we have examined so far, anecdotal evidence, such as the request as late as 1596 ‘That everie Minister be chargit to have a Sessioun established of the meitttest men in his congregatioun’, suggests that church leaders at least were not satisfied with the progress made even in simply establishing kirk sessions.¹⁰⁴ Once more, it may also be revealing that so few kirk session minutes survive until after 1610.

The period after 1580 was marked by the establishment of presbyteries. The Presbytery of St Andrews is the only Fife presbytery for which we have direct evidence during this period, although we do know that the Presbyteries of Kirkcaldy and Dunfermline were in existence and active by 1587, and that of Cupar (disjoined from St Andrews in 1592) was keeping records by 1601 at the latest.¹⁰⁵ Presbyteries have been seen as important not least because of the controversial nature of their very existence and the political tensions which dogged them in the 1580s and 1590s. They have also been credited with some importance in imposing reformed discipline themselves.¹⁰⁶ But their significance as disciplinary courts was limited, and they were much more important in their functions as organisations for ministerial oversight, training and administration.¹⁰⁷ The role that they played in planting and monitoring the work of ministers must have helped in bringing discipline to parishes, and they may have helped to inculcate a more enthusiastic ministerial community, but their actual involvement in normal discipline was limited.¹⁰⁸ Although the bulk of the

¹⁰⁴ *JMD*, 349.

¹⁰⁵ *StAP*, 26 (Kirkcaldy and Dunfermline), 1, 453n (Cupar). Although the first full minutes of Cupar Presbytery date from the second half of the seventeenth century, some minutes from the early part of the century survive in St Andrews University’s Muniments: StAUL, UYSS110/G/11.1-2, St Salvator’s College Records. I am extremely grateful to Steven Reid for this reference and transcriptions, without which this would have been missed.

¹⁰⁶ Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 129, 163.

¹⁰⁷ See *StAP*, iv.

¹⁰⁸ For planting, see in particular *StAP*, 33, where in 1589 arrangements were made to try to limit the practice of parishes having to share a minister. More specifically, 440 for the planting of Daniel Wilkie to Abercrombie, although the Synod had to become involved in this instance. The Presbytery of Cupar took action in 1601 to ensure that the parish of Cults was properly served by its minister James Martin, also Provost of St Salvator’s College. As it happened, he was replaced by Andrew Morton, who was able to be resident in the parish. UYSS110/G, 11.1, 11.4-11.6.

space in the presbytery minutes is taken up by discipline, this is because many of the cases were complicated and required more than one meeting, and detailed minute-taking. It is probable that the ministerial exercise took up just as much of the presbytery's time, although normally all that is recorded is the biblical text which the minister in question expounded.

There were, however, occasions where the presbytery might advise a minister or kirk session on how to proceed, or might be used as an extra level of authority to ensure the amendment of a persistent sinner.¹⁰⁹ Although they played no significant legislative role, except in disseminating acts of general assemblies, synods and parliaments, the presbytery did have some impact on how discipline might be implemented at parish level.¹¹⁰ St Andrews Presbytery became quite deeply involved in parish discipline in Pittenweem in 1597, but this was in fairly unusual circumstances since witchcraft was the key problem in the parish. Rather than consistorial discipline, this was more of a one-off inquisition.¹¹¹ Again in Pittenweem, in 1604-05, the presbytery intervened to replace the existing elders with more diligent ones, and took over business until the new session was in place. But it was fairly typical of the biblical and doctrinal preoccupations of the presbytery that one of its responses to this mini-crisis was to interrupt their series of exercises on Revelations so that they could arrange for a sermon to be preached on 'the tua epistles to Timothie for learning the groundes of discipline', presumably to inspire the new elders of Pittenweem to diligence.¹¹² So presbyteries did have a part to play in the establishment of discipline, but it was normally an indirect one.¹¹³

As this reference to Pittenweem suggests, the presbytery records themselves give us some hints at the levels of discipline in individual parishes within its bounds. In Pittenweem, the existence of a kirk session in 1604-5 with elders was not sufficient to ensure correct discipline, although there were also references to 'variances' in the

¹⁰⁹ See for example *StAP*, 9, 249, where the Presbytery advises a minister on punishments

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 309 (Synodal acts), 351 (Act of Parliament on Sabbath-breach).

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 236-44.

¹¹² *Ibid*, 403, 434-6.

¹¹³ Cf. Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 201-202, where it is suggested that the ideological disputes which gripped presbyteries like St Andrews and Edinburgh 'got in the way' of discipline, while less controversial presbyteries like Stirling were more involved in discipline and parochial matters. But Stirling Presbytery was struggling to establish proper order and procedure in its parishes. A presbytery largely free from ideological disputes, and which dealt with well established kirk sessions, like Kirkcaldy Presbytery in the early 1630s, still only played a largely advisory and assisting role, getting involved mainly in very serious or difficult cases. See Stevenson, *Presbyterie Booke of Kirkcaldie*, 6-32.

parish which might have impeded the work of the session.¹¹⁴ In nearby Crail, 1605 also saw problems with kirk session attendance, and some confusion over the identity of the elders led to a new election.¹¹⁵ Given that Pittenweem and Crail were coastal burghs akin in some respects to Anstruther and Burntisland this may force us to take a slightly more pessimistic view of these types of parishes, but it is perfectly possible that these were temporary lapses, especially since the presbytery had taken no previous note of problems in Pittenweem and Crail.

The other court of the reformed church, the synod, played even less part in normal disciplinary practice, except to intervene in some serious cases like adultery, incest and papistry.¹¹⁶ Like the Presbytery of St Andrews, the Synod of Fife played a co-ordinating role, which enables us to gain from its records some insights into the state of discipline in parishes around 1610. A series of visitations took place in 1611, recording that Falkland had no proper session book, and it is significant that this situation was combined with the apparent need to elect a new kirk session.¹¹⁷ There were also more positive findings: parishes like Forgan, Ferryport-on-Craig and Kilmany were found to have no serious public slanders like witchcraft and papistry. In Kennoway some people were found to shear their corn on Sundays, and the Synod had to order the session to discipline them, but in Abdie ‘best practice’ was being observed in that tenants were given Saturdays to work their land so that the Sabbath could be kept free.¹¹⁸ These visitations do not fully reveal the extent of discipline in these parishes, but do at least suggest that some disciplinary structures were in place by the 1610s, even in rural Fife.

The thirty years after 1580 saw a definite expansion and improvement in the practice of discipline across Fife, especially in St Andrews and the coastal burghs, but also encompassing the implementation of discipline, at varying levels of sophistication, in more rural areas. This expansion was normally initiated and led by individual ministers at parish level rather than as a result of broader institutional

¹¹⁴ *StAP*, 412.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 423-30

¹¹⁶ Limitations of space preclude a full discussion of synodal discipline, but see for example the serious case of incest in Kirkcaldy, where the offender was to perform his public repentance in sackcloth for a full year, passing each week to a different parish within the Presbytery. CH2/154/1, pp. 25-26.

¹¹⁷ CH2/154/1, pp. 61-3.

¹¹⁸ CH2/154/1, pp. 51-2, 63-72; *Fife Synod Selections*, 31-33 (as this published, though abbreviated, version of the synod minutes is more accessible, it has been cited alongside the manuscript where possible).

changes. To trace fully the establishment of parish discipline in Fife, however, we need to turn to the period after 1610.

Discipline Reaches Across Fife, c.1610-c.1640

In the period after 1610, we have our first direct evidence of discipline in a significant number of Fife parishes, to the extent that more sampling of minute books becomes necessary. This provides us with a good opportunity to examine the progress made by the 1610s and 1620s, especially in the light of Gordon Donaldson's claim that kirk session discipline 'was in operation everywhere by 1620 or so'.¹¹⁹ Some of these post-1610 minutes show evidence of functioning kirk sessions before that date, others do not. But the fact that so many parish records begin in the period 1600-1630 (see Table 2.1) and that this was the first era in which the parishes consistently had their own ministers, gives us our first hint that this may have been the critical period for the establishment of kirk session discipline across Fife.

The session minutes of Crail begin in 1648, but include a transcription of previous acts made by the session beginning in 1604.¹²⁰ Although five acts were passed in the 1600s, it was in the period after 1610, and particularly in 1617-19 that the legislative work of the session really took shape. By 1620, the session had produced a fair set of acts, covering a good variety of offences, and was taking steps to clamp down on the long-forbidden practice of burial within church.¹²¹ The 1611 act on sermon absence was comparatively timid, however, requiring three Sundays' absence before punishment as Sabbath-breakers was imposed.¹²² It was only after 1620 that the session's action against Sabbath-breakers of all kinds really intensified. Unfortunately we do not have the minutes necessary to show whether these acts were fully enforced, but in other parishes statutes have acted as a fair barometer of the vigour and efficiency of a kirk session. So Crail probably had reasonable (albeit still developing) parish discipline in place at least by the first two decades of the

¹¹⁹ Donaldson, *Scottish Reformation*, 95.

¹²⁰ StAUL, CH2/1543/1, Crail Kirk Session Minutes, pp. 2-7. The acts were copied by the later clerk in order of offence rather than chronologically, but fortunately dates were included making it possible to arrange them in sequence.

¹²¹ *FBD*, 199-201. See also Andrew Spicer, '“Defyle not Christ's kirk with your carrion”: Burial and the Development of Burial Aisles in Post-Reformation Scotland' in Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (eds.), *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2000).

¹²² CH2/1543/1, p. 2

seventeenth century, although given its size and early ministerial provision this might not reflect well on less fortunate parishes.

Kirkcaldy, like Crail, was a major Fife burgh, and when its kirk session minutes begin half way through 1614 it had enjoyed a steady, unshared minister for some time.¹²³ As this would lead us to expect, the kirk session was functioning reasonably well in 1614: there were properly arranged session elections, regular weekly meetings and plenty of financial business relating to the poor. 14 cases were prosecuted in the six months for which we have records in 1614, and the resulting average of almost thirty cases a year was very healthy. These cases were fully pursued (as opposed to an offender being summoned and then disappearing from the minutes), and the punishments were rigorous, including six public repentances and a fine of £6 for a relapsed fornicator. Sabbath-breakers were warded or fined 40 shillings.¹²⁴ This level of activity in 1614 was not an aberration; there were nine cases just in January of 1615, and a total of 59 in the 14 months for which we have minutes in 1614-15. These cases were for a variety of offences, with no particular type of sin dominating.¹²⁵ These standards of discipline were maintained as the years passed: in 1625 there were as many as 65 cases, again they were fully pursued and did not consist simply of summons to appear before the session.¹²⁶ The session continued to meet on a weekly basis, pass statutes and punish a variety of sins rigorously. The kirk session of Kirkcaldy had reached a fully functioning standard at least by the 1610s, and possibly before, putting it roughly alongside coastal burghs already examined like Burntisland and Anstruther.

In nearby Dysart, the kirk session minutes begin in 1619, two years after the arrival of a new minister in 1617. There is a reference to previous ordinances of the session, so there was clearly a functioning kirk session before that date.¹²⁷ The standards of Dysart session do not, however, compare favourably with those of Kirkcaldy at this point. Although the session produced a large number of ordinances, the punishments meted out in practice were not always so formal and severe. Those making trouble in the kirk were theoretically supposed to be fined £40 and warded.¹²⁸ But in reality, the standard punishments imposed by the session in 1619-20, apart

¹²³ NAS, CH2/636/34, Kirkcaldy Old Kirk Session Minutes.

¹²⁴ CH2/636/34, pp. 1-5.

¹²⁵ CH2/636/34, pp. 5-12.

¹²⁶ CH2/636/34, pp. 123-145.

¹²⁷ NAS, CH2/390/1, Dysart Kirk Session Minutes, p. 1.

¹²⁸ CH2/390/1, p. 1.

from in cases of fornication and adultery, were admonitions or occasionally public repentance.¹²⁹ The kirk session was nominally pursuing a high number of cases (over 30 per year in 1619-20 and 45 in 1625), but many of these only involved someone being summoned for an unspecified offence, with no further details given beyond the summons. The session was not, unlike Kirkcaldy, pursuing cases to conclusion, possibly in part a result of its (relatively unusual) preoccupation with some witchcraft cases.¹³⁰ Another explanation may lie in the problems with elders' attendance experienced in 1625, and again in 1635 when there was a reference to 'the Elders neglect of sessioun'.¹³¹ The session also failed to record its proceedings with the same efficiency and formality as a better organised session like nearby Kirkcaldy. The 1630s did see an improvement in standards, as the session acted more formally and on a less ad hoc basis. But it is notable that even in a coastal burgh like Dysart, kirk session discipline was, although functioning acceptably in the 1620s, only fully operational in the 1630s.

There is also some evidence that parishes like these may have been islands of rigorous discipline, in contrast to smaller settlements with rather more hesitant development. As late as 1629, the Burntisland minutes record that 'thair was a letter sent to Aberdour for cawsing the minister thereof send back to us sum fornicatoris that fled thither for eschewing the discipline of our kirk heir'.¹³² The parish of Aberdour (for which we have no session minutes from this period) was apparently seen by offenders as a soft touch, and problems like this must have meant that even in parishes with discipline as rigorous as that of Burntisland it was still possible to escape censure.

The next kirk session minutes to begin are those of Markinch, and here for the first time we leave the coast of Fife completely and turn to a landlocked, entirely rural parish.¹³³ The first few pages of the minutes consist of administrative and financial business rather than discipline, and the initial entries are in an unusually rough scrawl, even by the standards of kirk session minutes. The first disciplinary case occurs three months in, and it seems hard to accept that this could be the result of 'off the record'

¹²⁹ This is not to suggest that these punishments were insignificant, on which see ch. 6.

¹³⁰ CH2/390/1, pp. 38-42, 110-117 for example.

¹³¹ CH2/390/1, pp. 46, 148. In 1623 there had also been a problem with elders drinking in taverns after 10pm (p. 30).

¹³² CH2/523/1, p. 248.

¹³³ NAS, CH2/258/1, Markinch Kirk Session Minutes. Markinch only became a burgh of barony in 1673: Pryde, *Burghs of Scotland*, 75.

resolution of offences, given the scribe's tendency to record every financial detail.¹³⁴ Between July and December 1626 the session met 20 times, but only dealt with three cases. As this was not a small parish, this suggests a fairly lax session, especially since, as in Anstruther before James Melville's arrival, all three cases involved women guilty of fornication, suggesting that illegitimacy was the key concern and pregnancy the method of discovery.¹³⁵ This is made more likely by the fact that the first hint of something approaching a formal act that we have in Markinch establishes the assumption that men guilty of fornication were held to be the fathers of illegitimate children.¹³⁶ Even when no child is mentioned, the language used by the scribe implies that illegitimacy is at the forefront of the session's attention: on 22 March 1629 'Issobell Henrisone compeired and confessitt hir fornication with Thomas Gray *gotten* abowtt lambes' (my emphasis).¹³⁷ Even as more cases were prosecuted after 1626, fornication still dominated the disciplinary concerns of the session.¹³⁸

In the 1630s this pattern started to be replaced with a more comprehensive establishment of formal discipline. The number of cases rose significantly, up to as many as 20 in some years. A greater variety of sins were prosecuted in the 1630s, with Sabbath-breach even rivalling fornication as the main category of offence punished. The session started to order intimations from the pulpit, and in 1635 there was even a formal statute (against selling ale during sermon time).¹³⁹ So, although Markinch had a kirk session in the 1620s, it was only in the 1630s, as with Abercrombie, that it began to function at a level approaching what had been standard in some coastal burghs for several decades previously. The same was true of Newburn, where actual discipline was minimal in the first few years of minutes, from 1628-30, but improved as the 1630s progressed and was running reasonably well by the middle of the decade.¹⁴⁰ So it is not enough simply to say, on a national basis, that

¹³⁴ CH2/258/1, pp. 3-6. Cf. Judith Pollman, 'Off the Record: Problems in the Quantification of Calvinist Church Discipline', *SCJ*, 33 (2002), 423-38.

¹³⁵ CH2/258/1, pp. 6-7. By 1755 the population of the parish was about 2200, making it among the most populous in Fife, at that date at least. Kyd, *Scottish Population Statistics*, 41.

¹³⁶ CH2/258/1, p. 15.

¹³⁷ CH2/258/1, p. 46. Given the timing of the conception at Lammas, Henrisone must have been visibly pregnant at the time of her confession.

¹³⁸ CH2/258/1, pp. 6-23. 14 out of 19 cases were sexual in 1626-27.

¹³⁹ CH2/258/1, pp. 89, 92, 131, 133.

¹⁴⁰ StAUL, CH2/278/1, Newburn Kirk Session Minutes, pp. 1-8, 44-47. There are some other rural parishes, for which we only have evidence surviving as part of the parochial Births and Marriages

sessions were in place by 1620 (or any other date), since in some cases, especially rural parishes, they were not fully functioning until much later, while in other parishes they had been running well since at least the start of the century. The session minutes which have survived come disproportionately from coastal burghs, but Markinch may well be more typical of the other rural parishes whose minutes do not begin until later in the seventeenth century.

Still, not all rural parishes conformed to Markinch's pattern. We have acts from the kirk session of Scoonie beginning in 1626: as with Crail they have been copied into later minutes by a subsequent scribe. Between 1626 and 1629, the session passed 16 acts against a good variety of offences.¹⁴¹ Like the acts passed by James Melville's kirk session in Anstruther, this amounted to a major overhaul of procedure, and suggests that discipline before this stage was relatively weak, with a need for a large body of acts in a few years. It would be unusual for such a wholesale formalisation of discipline in the form of a body of legislation to follow after a period of efficient and thorough discipline. Nevertheless, in the late 1620s, assuming that at least some effort was made to implement this legislation, Scoonie was functioning better than Markinch, and its elders certainly displayed more zealous intentions. The session continued to pass ordinances as the 1630s progressed, further cracking down on Sabbath-breach in particular.¹⁴² So, although we cannot be certain of the state of discipline in Scoonie before the late 1620s, by the early 1630s it seems to have been a well functioning and thorough kirk session.

The next minutes to survive are those of Culross, which take us back to the coast of Fife, and to a prosperous trading burgh. The late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were the heyday of Culross, typified by Sir George Bruce whose coal mining activities brought extra prosperity to the burgh, which occupied a prime location on the Forth for links with Edinburgh and beyond. When we first have minutes in 1629-30, its kirk session displayed considerable zeal. In 1630 a slanderer was fined £3 and ordered to desist under pain of eight days in the steeple on bread and water, and it was also in the steeple that a man contumacious for his Sabbath-breach was imprisoned. Fornication did not dominate the session's considerable disciplinary

Registers, which showed signs of more formal discipline by the early 1630s: see the footnote to Table 2.1.

¹⁴¹ NAS, CH2/326/1, Scoonie Kirk Session Minutes, pp. 1-4. Similarly, by 1627 Kinglassie had built up a good range of disciplinary acts, especially on the Sabbath. GRO, OPR 440/3, ff. 1r-2v.

¹⁴² CH2/326/1, pp. 5-6.

workload, which was as high as 39 cases in 1631.¹⁴³ A total of around 470 cases were pursued between 1629 and the end of 1640. This was partly due to the increase in disciplinary activity under the new minister in 1630, John Duncan. Under him the session met more regularly, and there was a formalisation of procedure in 1632 with some acts, a session election and the division of the parish into quarters.¹⁴⁴ The level of punishments in Culross was high: fines were often to be measured in pounds rather than shillings; stocks, branks and jugs were used; and some offenders were banished.¹⁴⁵ So Culross had a well functioning kirk session by the late 1620s, but in the early 1630s it was revitalised and strengthened even further by the arrival of a new minister.

The session minutes of Monimail, a parish even more remote from the social and economic centres of Fife than Markinch, begin in 1630, and again reveal that the disciplinary activities in rural sessions, even at this stage, were more limited.¹⁴⁶ The most noticeable aspect of the minutes is the infrequency of meetings: the session met 10 times in 1631 and this number actually fell in following years, until the session met only four times in 1635. In terms of cases, 1631 was again an anomalous year, with 13 cases prosecuted in contrast to the handful pursued in most years. The kirk session had passed several acts in previous years, and continued to pass acts in the early 1630s. And when cases were pursued the punishments handed down were reasonably strong.¹⁴⁷ But the functioning of the session was impeded by the infrequency of meetings in the early 1630s, and the session's legislative agenda could not fully be put into practice. Only in 1638-39 did the session start to meet on at least a monthly basis, and by 1640 there was a noticeable increase in its level of activity. In parishes like Monimail, the reformation of discipline was at its slowest.

The same could perhaps be said of Kingsbarns, which was erected into a separate parish from Crail in 1630. Although its session minutes begin immediately in 1630, there is no record of any consistorial business until 1635, the earlier minutes consisting mainly of business relating to the poor. It is possible that there was a separate register for discipline which has not survived, but this would have been highly unusual. Between 1635 and 1638 we have some disciplinary business. There

¹⁴³ CH2/77/1, ff. 3r, 4r-12v.

¹⁴⁴ CH2/77/1, ff. 13-24. Session elections were to follow every few years.

¹⁴⁵ CH2/77/1, ff. 1v, 4v, 7, 9r, 11v, 14v, 26v, 34r, 46v, 57v. For more on this see ch. 6.

¹⁴⁶ StAUL, CH2/548/1, Monimail Kirk Session Minutes.

¹⁴⁷ Monimail discipline is discussed in more depth in ch. 6.

are some gaps in the manuscript, but many months have survived, and there were only 15 cases in these 3-4 years, of which eight occurred in 1638. The first properly recorded prose entry came in 1640.¹⁴⁸ So Kingsbarns provides a further example of sketchy discipline in some places even in the 1630s. And although it is beyond the scope of this study to trace discipline after 1640, research by another scholar has shown that in Dunbog, about as rural a parish as existed in Fife, there was only limited discipline even in the 1660s and 1670s. There were only 14 cases pursued between 1666-1679, and of these the bulk were for sexual offences.¹⁴⁹ Of course by this stage Dunbog was probably exceptional in its low level of disciplinary activity, but it may have been the case that the parish was lacking in proper discipline thirty years earlier.

The final parish minutes to begin before 1640 are those of Kilconquhar. The minute book begins in 1637 with the installation of a new reader. The level of parish discipline in this period was good: there were regular meetings, with lots of business at each meeting. As many as 19 cases were prosecuted in the seven months of 1637 for which we have records. And in particular, the minister, David Munro, was central to the disciplinary zeal of the session: he exhorted visitors to seek out sinners during the afternoon as well as morning since many parishioners attended the morning sermon but skipped the afternoon one. He directly instructed the visitors to be more vigilant since some absentees hid quietly in their gathering places when they knew the visitors were coming. These visitations later successfully uncovered some drinkers in the time of sermon.¹⁵⁰ It is fascinating to see the minister taking such a lead in steering the work of the session, and constantly exhorting the elders to greater vigilance, but it should be noted that the reason we are aware of this is the more formal style of notation, which recorded the minister's exhortations specifically rather than dryly recording that visitations were to take place. Ministers may well have taken similar steps in other parishes, but the personal nature of these interventions can easily get lost in the writing of the minutes.

The pro-active discipline led by Munro is particularly interesting when we consider his personal background. He was, apparently, a serious episcopalian: in 1637 he was an unsuccessful candidate for the bishopric of Argyll, and was later pelted with stones

¹⁴⁸ StAUL, CH2/819/1, Kingsbarns Kirk Session Minutes, pp. 6-11, 14.

¹⁴⁹ John Di Folco, 'Aspects of Seventeenth Century Social Life in Central and North Fife' (Unpublished B.Phil Thesis, University of St Andrews, 1975), 193.

¹⁵⁰ StAUL, CH2/210/1, Kilconquhar Kirk Session Minutes, pp. 1-13.

in Edinburgh for spying on the covenanters, having ‘had much company with the Bishops’.¹⁵¹ His discipline, like that of Gladstones in St Andrews, showed all the disciplinary and in particular sabbatarian zeal that is all too easily associated with presbyterianism.¹⁵² So he provides further evidence of the importance of individual ministers – regardless of factional affiliation – to the level of discipline in the parishes. Having such an actively disciplinarian minister may explain why a small parish like Kilconquhar experienced such rigorous discipline in the 1630s.

Our final piece of evidence for the 1630s comes from the records of Kirkcaldy Presbytery. Like St Andrews 30 years earlier, the Presbytery was not involved in a significant amount of normal consistorial discipline, instead spending disproportionate time on a few serious offences like murder and adultery. But in 1636, the presbytery carried out visitations of most of the parishes within its bounds.¹⁵³ This revealed that the ministers and elders of the parishes visited generally approved of each other, and no complaints were made about discipline. The congregations also failed to report disciplinary faults in the sessions, although admittedly they would have to have been exceedingly godly parishioners to complain that the discipline was not strict enough. In general the visitations show that the presbytery had no major concerns about discipline in 1636. This seems to conform with most of the evidence so far which has suggested that the late 1620s and early 1630s saw serious improvements in discipline in those parishes which had not before that point established well functioning parish discipline.¹⁵⁴ Naturally there were exceptions to this pattern, with some coastal burghs having achieved good disciplinary practices around the turn of the century and even before, while some more rural parishes only had limited discipline well into the 1630s. And of course all parishes experienced varying reformations of discipline, often dependent on the

¹⁵¹ *FES*, v., 209; David Laing (ed.), *The letters and journals of Robert Baillie, Principal of the University of Glasgow, 1637-1662* (3 vols., Edinburgh, 1841-42), i., 94.

¹⁵² For the theological and spiritual common ground between presbyterians and episcopalians see Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*. Parker, *The English Sabbath*, suggests that in the English context sabbatarianism was by no means the preserve of puritans.

¹⁵³ Stevenson, *Presbyterie Booke of Kirkcaldie*, 93-106. The parishes visited were Ballingry (later in Kinross Presbytery), Dysart, Kirkcaldy, Kinghorn, Burntisland, Auchterderran, Kinglassie, Portmoak (later in Kinross Presbytery), Markinch, Kennoway, Scoonie, Wemyss. Auchtertool and Leslie were not visited until the 1640s.

¹⁵⁴ Although we have no extant session minutes for Balmerino during this period, the fortunate recording of some extracts by a nineteenth-century historian indicates that at least by the late 1630s some discipline was in place in the parish: an act was passed in 1637 instituting a fine of 40s for those selling ale during service-time on a Sunday. James Campbell, *Balmerino and its Abbey* (Edinburgh, 1899), 362.

attitude of their minister as well as the elders. But in much of rural Fife, the period after, rather than before 1600 was the critical one for the establishment of parish discipline, and the situation varied greatly from parish to parish.

Conclusion

The recent historiography of the British Reformations has moved beyond the traditional paradigms of ‘slow’ and ‘rapid’ reformation, to emphasise processes of accommodation and assimilation. There has been a growing perception that reformation was done not ‘to’ or ‘by’ the people, but *with* them.¹⁵⁵ And Margo Todd has argued persuasively that kirk sessions were fundamental to this process in Scotland, and that they were the essential instruments which made for a successful reformation. But if this is the case, we need to develop a greater awareness of the chronological and geographical variations in the establishment of kirk sessions and their discipline.¹⁵⁶ These two chapters have shown that two of the key weapons of the reformers, a preaching minister in the parish pulpit and a kirk session enforcing conformity and moral standards were far from universal across Fife in the years following the Reformation. It took decades, and in some cases the best part of three-quarters of a century, to establish fully these pillars of the reformed church even in a relatively prosperous and compact area of Scotland.

This is not to argue that the reformation in Fife was a failure, or that it conformed to the patterns found in conservative areas of England by Christopher Haigh and others.¹⁵⁷ There was little resistance or recusancy in Fife, and the following chapters address the paradox of slowly developing institutions with an apparently successful reformation. Also, the variations found even within Fife were considerable, and the coastal burghs which enjoyed full kirk session discipline by the start of the

¹⁵⁵ See above all for England, Ethan Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 2003), and for a helpful recent summary Alec Ryrie, ‘Britain and Ireland’ in A. Ryrie (ed.), *Advances in the European Reformations* (Basingstoke, 2006). Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 20 and passim; Christopher Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England: Holding Their Peace* (Basingstoke, 1998), 216 and passim.

¹⁵⁶ Despite disclaimers in the introduction, Todd often writes as if kirk sessions were fully functional even in the early years after the Reformation. See for example *Culture of Protestantism*, 31. The claim that from the outset sessions prioritised attendance at sermons can only be justified if we are referring to the outset of the specific kirk session’s disciplinary activities, not from the outset of the Reformation.

¹⁵⁷ Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1975).

seventeenth century show signs of being healthy reformed parishes. But as we continue to examine the processes of reformation in Scotland, we shall need a greater sensitivity to the varying and sometimes faltering establishment of the institutions which were supposed to reform the people.

Chapter 3

The Reformation of Worship

The main context in which early modern Scots encountered their church was through its programme of public worship.¹ This meant not just sermons and sacraments, but also the praise of God through prayer and the psalms, an aspect of worship which has received much less attention from Reformation historians, particularly those working on Scotland.² As we have seen, the Scottish *Confession of Faith* of 1560 listed preaching, the sacraments and discipline as the three marks of a true church. However, the *First Book of Discipline* of the same year added to these signs ‘common prayers publickly preached’ and the instruction of children and the ignorant as things ‘so necessarie that without the same there is no face of a visible kirk’.³ It goes on to acknowledge the difficulty of establishing a fixed order of worship to apply in diverse parishes, but it does stipulate that ‘before noone must the word be preached and the Sacraments ministred’. In great towns there were to be daily services.⁴ The reformers wanted to see a full programme of public worship and instruction in place as soon as possible after the Reformation, based around a weekly sermon, quarterly communion, public reading of the Bible and prayers as frequently as possible, and the singing of psalms. This chapter traces the success of the reformers in achieving this goal over the eighty years after the Reformation, and considers the role of the worship of the church in the task of winning over the Catholic laity of Fife, and fostering a new Protestant identity. Here, we have less evidence than on discipline, the main focus of the kirk session minutes, and so in places our conclusions must necessarily remain more speculative.

¹ The best general account of reformed Scottish worship is still William McMillan, *The Worship of the Scottish Reformed Church, 1550-1638* (London, 1931), which provides an excellent introduction to the reformed liturgy.

² See Alec Ryrie, ‘Introduction: The European Reformations’ in his *Palgrave Advances in the European Reformations*, 7-8. Spirituality has received attention for a slightly later period in David Mullan’s *Scottish Puritanism*.

³ Religious instruction is dealt with at more length in ch. 5.

⁴ See above, ch. 2, and *FBD*, 180-182.

Patterns of Worship

In order to provide this full programme of worship and instruction in the parishes, the church would have needed a full set of ordained ministers across the parishes of Fife, so that there could be at the very least weekly Sunday sermons. As we saw in Chapter One, this was not the case in most Fife parishes until around thirty years after the Reformation. Most parishes had shared access to a minister, relying instead on a reader for regular public worship. Apart from exceptional cases like St Andrews and Crail, only in the late 1580s and 1590s did most parishes start to enjoy the services of a dedicated minister. It was also during this period that the newly established presbyteries began to co-ordinate worship in their parishes, arranging for covering sermons when ministers were unavailable and ensuring that empty charges were filled.⁵

Before that transition was achieved, the regular programme of public worship would not have been based around a Sunday sermon, except perhaps in parishes with very good communications and a highly committed minister. Some parishes might have received fortnightly sermons, but the majority experience in the early years after the Reformation was probably of occasional sermons, delivered when the minister was in the parish. This may, of course, have made the sermons into more special occasions, rather like the communion celebrations discussed below. Perhaps the sense of occasion, and anticipation before a sermon from the shared minister, might have made for a more memorable and impressive service.⁶ Still, the regular Sunday service would have been delivered by the reader, who read passages from scripture, prayers, and led the congregation in psalm-singing.⁷ Readers were employed in most parishes relatively soon after the Reformation, and so this basic form of worship was probably widely available across Fife in the 1560s and 1570s, even in most rural parishes.

Fortunately, we have some direct evidence of the progress of worship in parishes before 1600 to flesh out these generalisations. The parish of St Andrews, as one of the places where Knox claimed that ‘Christ Jesus is preached...and his blessed

⁵ See for example *StAP*, 40, 50, 67.

⁶ I am indebted to Andrew Pettegree for this observation.

⁷ For the order of worship (although including the minister’s sermon) see *BCO*, 79-120. Cf., for example, Sanderson, *Ayrshire and the Reformation*, 138, where the sermon is described as ‘the vital part of the service’.

sacraments rightlie ministred' as early as 1559, was probably the first to see a comprehensive programme of worship established.⁸ Fortunately we do not have to rely on Knox's claims for this: we know from an incidental reference to a sermon held on 3 November 1559 (a Friday) that even weekday sermons took place in the parish from the outset, although in 1570 the kirk session had to exhort the minister 'moest gentelye' to keep to his commitment to preaching on Sundays and Wednesdays.⁹ This does at least show, however, that such standards had come to be seen as normal by this point. Further afield, we know from a reference in the St Andrews session minutes that the parish of Kinglassie had a reader's service established by 1563.¹⁰ This reference only occurs because another person had tried to usurp the reader's office, and so given the relatively high numbers of readers available in the 1560s there were probably many other parishes with such services in place that have left no record.

Thanks to the fortunate survival of the kirk session minutes of Anstruther from well before the turn of the century, we have a clearer idea of how public worship developed in this parish. This was a fairly prosperous burgh, and was certainly not a rural backwater. By 1575 the parish enjoyed Tuesday sermons as well as regular Sunday preaching. As the parish of Anstruther itself rather dominated William Clerk's ministry, however, his other congregations at this point (Abercrombie, Kilrenny and Pittenweem) may not have enjoyed such regular preaching, although unlike some other groups of parishes sharing a minister, the very small distances between these coastal parishes would have allowed for the very pious to follow the minister to where he was preaching.¹¹ But at this stage, kirk session legislation shows that it still could not be taken for granted that even elders and deacons would attend the weekday sermon, so our estimate of ordinary lay attendance at services must remain conservative.¹²

⁸ *RStAKS*, i., 5n.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 6, 345. There was also an incidental reference to the daily morning and evening prayers which were in place by 1579, but almost certainly earlier (441). Throughout this chapter, when calculating days of the week, I have followed the tables given in C. R. Cheney, *Handbook of Dates for Students of English History* (London, 1945), a useful technique, since often in kirk session minutes the date is given but not the day of the week. Thus we can distinguish between weekday and sabbath sermons.

¹⁰ *RStAKS*, i., 179.

¹¹ See ch. 1. The walk between Anstruther and Abercrombie, the furthest away of the parishes, took the present author a couple of hours, although the modern path is of high quality.

¹² OPR 403/1, f. 3r.

By 1590, when James Melville had been minister for four years, a much more rigorous programme of worship and instruction was in place in Anstruther. The schedule on Sundays was for the main preaching service to begin at 9am and end by 11am. The afternoon ‘doctrine’ session would start at 1pm and end by 3pm, and the rest of the day was to be spent in catechising.¹³ The Sabbath was now unequivocally a day for public worship, and for both public and private religious education. After Melville’s departure, this programme of worship was sustained, with sermons becoming so regular that missed ones were worthy of an entry in the session minutes, and regular weekday prayers were recorded by 1604.¹⁴ Just as Melville reformed and improved the disciplinary procedure in the parish, he also acted to institute a programme of worship more in line with the ambitions of the reformers. By 1631, George Dewar, minister of Anstruther, was under contract with the burgh to preach three times a week.¹⁵

There is another side to this discussion of early reformed worship though, as hinted at by the reluctance of even some Anstruther elders and deacons to attend the weekday sermons. Of how much use is a programme of worship if attendance and correct behaviour at these occasions is not enforced? However many ministers were in place, and however many sermons and catechism sessions were running, the church cannot have hoped to achieve their goal of enhanced understanding of Protestantism if the only laypeople to attend services were already committed, and the ministers were, to adapt Michael Lynch’s phrase, ‘preaching to the converted’.¹⁶ So it is important to be aware also of the development of the machinery which forced every member of the congregation to attend services and behave properly during them. As we saw in the previous chapter, in Anstruther there was little prosecution of disciplinary matters other than fornication and session procedure before James Melville arrived in the parish in 1586, the only sabbath-breach case relating to a disturbance during the sermon in 1583.¹⁷ But in the fifteen years after Melville and Robert Durie arrived in Anstruther, the Sabbath, and in particular the sermon, became the main disciplinary priority – over half of the ninety or so cases of sabbath-breach during these years involved absence from a church service. The session now legislated to protect the

¹³ OPR 403/1, f. 66. The ‘doctrine’ session may have involved a more instructional sermon or formal catechism in the church: the precise format is unclear from the phrase.

¹⁴ CH2/624/2, pp. 67, 72, 54.

¹⁵ NAS, TE1/1, Commissioners for Surrenders and Teinds Sederunt Book, p. 208.

¹⁶ Lynch, ‘Preaching to the Converted’.

¹⁷ OPR 403/1, f. 34v.

sabbath, not just to ensure sermon attendance, but also to avoid disruption: it was stipulated in 1586 that the alms-plate should not be passed round during the service, but that collections should be taken at the church door before the service. The offence of leaving church before the blessing was described in serious language: such offenders were ‘slanderous persones’ who offended God and the community.¹⁸ The session instituted Sabbath visitations to catch absentees from church, and in 1594 householders were ordered to ensure that their charges all attended.¹⁹ Despite this, as late as 1607, the session felt that Tuesday sermons were still neglected.²⁰ Still, the drive to reduce absenteeism in the late 1580s and 1590s must have made the task of inculcating Protestant doctrines and values in the general laity more achievable, since a greater proportion of the nominal congregation would have been exposed to the necessary instruction and exhortation.

Anstruther was not alone in seeking to enforce proper attendance and behaviour at public worship. In St Andrews, attempts were made in the 1570s to tackle the ongoing problem of communion absence, and some visitations were introduced as early as 1574.²¹ As in Anstruther, the 1590s were the critical decade, and in particular the final years of the decade under George Gladstones’ ministry, when the number of prosecutions for sabbath-breach dramatically increased (see above, Chapter Two). As we saw, his drive met with quantifiable success in 1600 when the session noted that ‘in this somer seasoun, the peopill convenis sua frequentlie [in such large numbers] to preaching that the kirk may nocht con[veni]entlie contene thame’, and was forced to introduce a separate sermon in St Salvators Chapel for reasons of space.²² This was in contrast to the situation at the start of the decade, when David Black had complained about the ‘contempt of the word’ in St Andrews, as illustrated by ‘the emptines of the kirk’.²³ Black’s angry and aggressive stance was legendary and the church was probably not ‘empty’ in the modern sense of the word, but the 1590s clearly saw a dramatic increase in attendance. However, St Andrews and Anstruther were not typical parishes, and in more rural parts of Fife, as we saw in the previous chapter, full kirk session discipline took even longer to develop. In Abercrombie, only the

¹⁸ OPR 403/1, ff. 55r, 62v.

¹⁹ OPR 403/1, ff. 66r, 86. The 1590s also saw attempts to encourage education through enforcement of attendance at school and catechism: OPR 403/1, ff. 5v-6r, 95r; CH2/624/2, pp. 4-5.

²⁰ CH2/624/2, p. 82.

²¹ *RStAKS*, i., 394-5.

²² *RStAKS*, ii., 925-6.

²³ *StAP*, 94.

1630s saw a drive to enforce the sabbath, although there had been a few cases of church-absence prosecuted in the 1600s.²⁴ Across Fife, even if preaching was available, the majority of parishes, those which did not develop well-functioning discipline until the seventeenth century, must have experienced at best variable and fluctuating attendance at public worship. As late as 1611, the minister at Ferryport-on-Craig reported to a synodal visitation that, although he was willing to preach after noon as well as before, he could not get the people to attend the afternoon sermon.²⁵

And even this is assuming that proper public worship was laid on: the shocking case of Kemback discussed in the previous chapter may not have been typical, but it may not have been unique either. The physical state of the kirk there was unusually bad, but visitation records reveal that in 1586 the fabric of the kirk at Muckhart was ‘at vare evill point especialy in the ruff and thak quhilk is rottin and rewin’. In nearby Fossoway the roof and thatch were in better condition, but the church was considered inadequate as far as the ‘pulpit, settis for the pepill, communione table and a commoun bassing for baptisme’ were concerned. The floor was also uneven due to the practice of burying people in the kirk itself.²⁶ This problem was not confined to rural parishes: in 1563 the parish church in Dunfermline was in such bad repair that

it is greit danger and perrell to the saidis compleneris of thair lyvis to enter, remane or bide within the said kirk, owther in tyme of prayers, teching, or preching of the Word of God, or any uther besines neidfull to be done thairin.²⁷

From this complaint (submitted by the Abbot and the Vicar) it seems that worship did continue in the ruinous church, but how well attended such services may have been is another question.

The provision of worship and instruction in the first decades after the Reformation was considerably hampered by the lack of supra-parochial institutions to co-ordinate parish provision. Until the establishment of presbyteries in the 1580s, the only such organisations were the Synod and the office of the superintendent.²⁸ The superintendent, John Winram, had little chance of co-ordinating public worship across the whole of Fife. He did look at some individual cases relating to worship in Fife

²⁴ CH2/1056/1, f. 3v.

²⁵ CH2/154/1, p. 63.

²⁶ Kirk, *Visitation of the Diocese of Dunblane*, 26, 30.

²⁷ *RPC*, i., 247 (13 September 1563).

²⁸ On these see Dunbar ‘Synods and Superintendence’; Dunbar, *Reforming the Scottish Church*.

parishes, but these were unusual cases involving serious disputes.²⁹ The Synod of Fife showed some concern over the state of worship in the first decades after the Reformation, but its orders were largely unrealistic. In 1570 it required landward ministers to read the prayers, then preach and minister the sacraments each Sunday morning, during a period when hardly any landward parishes had their own minister and when communion was normally an annual occasion.³⁰ The Synod was probably more realistic in its exhortation that ‘instruction of the zouth be committit till [to] nane within this realme neyther in vniversiteis nor with out the samin bot sic that professes Christis trew religion now publictlye preachit’. The Synod simply did not have the ministerial resources to provide the levels of worship it desired, and neither could it have imposed the sliding scale of fines it stipulated for absence from prayers or the sermon without a series of more local sources of authority.³¹

The establishment of presbyteries in the 1580s provided a more appropriate structure for the co-ordination of parish worship. Although the presbyteries prosecuted relatively few cases of absence from church, their introduction and development during the final decades of the sixteenth century co-incided with the establishment of sabbatarian parish discipline, and so this part of their potential remit was less important.³² More significant was their role in ensuring parishes were provided with proper preaching, both by providing ministers to vacant parishes, arranging cover during temporary vacancies and monitoring the abilities and diligence of ministers.³³ The structure and operation of the presbyteries was well-suited to such activities: it was made up of ministers who could be ordered in person to preach in a particular parish, and it met, if not always weekly, at least two or three times in most months and could therefore respond to preaching shortfalls relatively quickly. We can not be certain that the other Fife presbyteries of Kirkcaldy and Dunfermline (and, from the early 1590s, Cupar) operated in the same way as St Andrews by the 1580s and 1590s, but the regular references to these presbyteries in the St Andrews minutes

²⁹ *RStAKS*, i., 83-86, 104-107.

³⁰ Dunbar, ‘Synod of Fife’, 234.

³¹ *Ibid*, 233, 236.

³² St Andrews Presbytery dealt with only 8 cases of sabbath-breach between 1586 and 1605, according to the editor of its minutes: *StAP*, xix. Also, out of the 305 cases in a database of cases from Anstruther Kirk Session during a similar period, 1583-1601 (based on OPR 403/1), none of the sabbath-breach cases were recorded as having been referred to the Presbytery.

³³ *StAP*, xii-xiv, xxv-xxix. See 36, 39-40 for some examples of the Presbytery arranging for temporary preaching and administration of sacraments where necessary.

show us that they were at least functioning.³⁴ By the end of the century, the state of weekly public worship in Fife had significantly improved, as a result of the better provision of ministers and the hierarchy of church courts which co-ordinated worship and enforced attendance.

The greater survival of kirk session minutes from the seventeenth century enables us to gain some direct insights into the level of public worship in a greater variety of parishes. We know that by the seventeenth century the rural parish of Monimail had both morning and afternoon sermons on Sundays, and this was probably fairly typical by the 1620s and 1630s.³⁵ By 1618, Burntisland Session was enforcing attendance at its Tuesday sermons as well as Sunday sermons: the fine for absence was a substantial 20 shillings.³⁶ The seventeenth century also saw a tightening of procedure on catechising. By 1608 Kinghorn was enforcing attendance at its Friday morning catechism sessions, which took the form of a group of ten or twelve people being instructed each week, although others were free to attend.³⁷ Many parishes built up a rigorous schedule of pre-communion examination: Scoonie Session fined those communicating without examination 20 shillings, and required them to repent publicly on their knees.³⁸ The parish of Culross took steps in 1630 to provide a more convenient location for worship: 'Item the sessione ordained se[ats] to be sett up in the tolbuith and the prayers to be [rea?]d there upon wedinsday and freyday in the morning...for the ease of the people'. Anyone familiar with the geography of Culross will immediately realise the reason for this order, especially given that it came during winter. The parish church of Culross, having been part of the pre-Reformation Abbey, is set just outside the actual village, up a steep hill, whereas the tolbooth is naturally at the heart of the burgh. Perhaps the parishioners of Culross had complained at having to trudge up the hill in the February weather first thing in the morning before a day's work. Possibly the man who was to read the prayers, the schoolmaster Samuel Tullidaff, shared this concern.³⁹ In any case, Culross was not

³⁴ *Ibid*, 1, 453, for the erection of Cupar into a separate presbytery.

³⁵ CH2/548/1, p. 11.

³⁶ CH2/523/1, p. 172.

³⁷ CH2/472/1, p. 73.

³⁸ CH2/326/1, p. 4 (the fine for absence from a normal examination was only 4 shillings). See also CH2/636/34, p. 191 (Kirkcaldy); CH2/77/1, f. 1v (Culross).

³⁹ CH2/77/1, f. 1v (some words and fragments of word are missing in this manuscript). The geography of Culross perhaps also explains the provision in February 1632 of a pension to the officer 'for Ringing of the Tolbuith bell in tyme of preaching and prayers' (f. 14r). Sunday worship probably still took place

alone in taking such action: in 1617 the parish of Burntisland ordered evening prayers to be held in the tolbooth from the start of December to Candlemas. This act was repeated the following year, ‘in respect of the foulness of the gait [road] to the kirk’.⁴⁰ It is harder to explain this act by reference to the geography of Burntisland, especially since the new church there had only been built twenty years before, and unlike Culross parish church, was conveniently situated. Nevertheless the path to it was apparently treacherous; indeed in 1631 improvements to the ‘passage to the kirk’ were arranged by the session, council and the lairds of Orrok.⁴¹ Seventeenth-century kirk sessions seem to have developed an interest in not just ensuring attendance at worship, but also in making services as comfortable as possible, presumably in order to enhance concentration.

Communion

In addition to regular weekly and sometimes daily worship, the other main liturgical act was the sacrament of communion. Whereas Calvin had advocated at least weekly communion, the Genevan magistrates had reduced it to four times a year. The Church of Scotland accepted this reduced frequency even in its initial statement of intent, declaring that ‘four times in the yeare we think sufficient to the administration of the Lords Table’.⁴² Historians have for some time been aware that communion was in fact rarely celebrated on a quarterly basis, even in towns.⁴³ This assumption, though essentially accurate, has rarely been based on direct evidence however.⁴⁴ An analysis of the known dates of communions in Fife parishes is therefore essential in order to base our conclusions on firmer ground.

in the church, but perhaps the sound of the bells did not always carry to the village, or at least not loudly enough for the session’s liking. See also Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 69n.

⁴⁰ CH2/523/1, pp. 163, 180, 186. As recently as 1608 the Tolbooth had been in a dilapidated state, with the Council deciding ‘that the tolbuith suld be cled and ane ruiff put therevpon with all conveinent expedition’: NAS, B9/12/2, Burntisland Council Minutes, f. 26r.

⁴¹ CH2/523/1, p. 264.

⁴² *FBD*, 183 and n.

⁴³ William D. Maxwell, *A History of Worship in the Church of Scotland* (Oxford, 1955), 51-2; Gordon Donaldson, ‘Reformation to Covenant’ in Duncan Forrester and Douglas Murray (eds.), *Studies in the History of Worship in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1984), 37; Duncan Forrester, ‘The Reformed Tradition in Scotland’ in Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (eds.), *The Oxford History of Christian Worship* (Oxford, 2006), 480.

⁴⁴ Although see Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 86-7, but even this is based on kirk sessions’ prescriptions and plans for future practice rather than actual dates of communions.

Using mainly kirk session minutes, it has been possible to tabulate the known dates of communions in some Fife parishes after 1600.⁴⁵ Kirk session minutes sometimes refer to a communion on a specific day, and sometimes they refer to a season of pre-communion examination, which still gives us a rough idea of the date of the communion. Of course, it is possible that some communions may have gone entirely unrecorded, but the basic patterns across parishes are so similar that this seems not to have been a major problem. Kirk sessions were on the whole fastidious in their recording of this sort of detail, especially since communion involved some important matters which needed to be written down, including the names of elders responsible for stewarding the event and the amount of money raised for the poor. The full tabulation, with dates and arranged by parish, is too bulky to include in full, but Table 3.1 summarises that information which is relevant to the issue of the frequency of communion. It should be emphasised that the increase in annual communions as the century progressed is the result of an increase in the number of parishes for which we have data, rather than parishes which had previously not celebrated communion starting to do so.⁴⁶ The key variable is the ratio between the figures for annual communions, and more frequent communions.

⁴⁵ Some parishes' communion dates were derived from a sermon notebook, and therefore are not necessarily comprehensive; they have been excluded from this discussion of the *frequency* of communion. Prior to 1600 the evidence related to too few parishes for a viable analysis.

⁴⁶ Although, as we have seen, the parish of Kemback did not celebrate communion for the first two decades after the Reformation. There were other cases of parishes not celebrating communion, but these normally arose from a specific problem with a minister: for example *StAP*, 84 (St Andrews, 1590).

Table 3.1: Frequency of communion in Fife parishes, 1600-1640⁴⁷

<u>Year Range</u>	<u>1 Communion p.a.</u>	<u>2 Communion p.a.</u>	<u>3 or more Communion p.a.</u>
1600-1604	2	1	4
1605-1609	2	1	0
1610-1614	10	4	0
1615-1619	10	3	0
1620-1624	16	0	0
1625-1629	19	1	0
1630-1634	27	6	2
1635-1640	27	11	1

Before the turn of the century, the 1590s had seen some improvements in the frequency of communions in Anstruther and St Andrews, unsurprisingly, given what we have already learnt about these parishes. But across Fife most parishes, in most years, celebrated communion only once. While the 1630s, as with church discipline, saw serious improvements, even then there were almost three times as many occasions on which parishes celebrated annual communion as occasions when they did bi-annually. The number of occasions on which a parish celebrated communion more than twice in a year also remained low even by the 1630s.⁴⁸ The seventeenth century did see an increase in the number of sittings for each communion season, and this may have resulted from increased turnout. Nevertheless, this analysis, which has yet to be applied for other parts of Scotland, confirms that the church's aim of more frequent communion was not met within the period of this study, and reveals a surprising continuation of the infrequency of communion even towards the middle of the seventeenth century.

⁴⁷ The figures given refer to each parish for which we have data on the number of communions for a given year. So the figure 10 under '1 communion p.a.' for 1610-1614 means that in that period, there were 10 years in which any Fife parishes celebrated 1 communion in a year. Meanwhile in only 4 parish-years was communion celebrated twice. If two communion dates were at least a month apart, they have been counted as separate communions. Any communion dates closer together were almost certainly different sittings of the same communion 'season'. Multiple sittings were common by the seventeenth century, and so this data records the number of times each parishioner could have communicated, not the number of sittings at which bread was broken.

⁴⁸ That communion could still be conceived of as an annual phenomenon at this stage by ministers is demonstrated by Zachary Boyd's *A cleare forme of catechising, before the giving of the sacrament of the Lords Supper* (Glasgow, 1639). The questions and answers are divided into 47 Sundays, suggesting it was intended to be started about a month after the previous communion and continuing all year.

It does not, however, follow that the infrequency of communion made the sacrament a marginalised element of Scottish worship.⁴⁹ If anything, the practice of celebrating communion on an annual basis may have enhanced its significance and symbolism as an act of corporate worship.⁵⁰ It certainly need not lead us to exclude communion from aspects of worship which may have been particularly appealing to the laity in the early decades of reformation. There were, after all, significant barriers to more frequent communion. Apart from any lay resistance to change - which in any case would not have deterred most seventeenth-century kirk sessions - there was the fact that communion required a lengthy preliminary cycle of catechising, examination, and repentance of offences. There was also the administrative work required in arranging and paying for the elements and organising the elders to act as stewards. Early-modern Scottish communion was a highly organised and choreographed event, and not one which realistically could be laid on weekly.⁵¹ But whatever the cultural resonance of the sacrament, progress towards establishing the desired frequency of communion was even more hesitant than that already traced for regular public worship.

At what time of year did communion tend to be celebrated?⁵² We only have evidence from Anstruther and St Andrews from before 1600, but in these two parishes there was a tendency for communion to be celebrated roughly around Easter. There were no paschal communions in St Andrews, but Anstruther celebrated communion on Easter Sunday five times between 1590 and 1605. So until the controversies of the mid-1610s, communion was often held during the traditional Easter season of March and April, but not regularly on Easter Day itself. This may have arisen from a desire to avoid popular superstition while retaining the traditional season.⁵³ In 1614

⁴⁹ Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 84-85, 92. Cf. Andrew Spicer, 'Accommodating of thame selfis to heir the worde: Preaching, Pews and Reformed Worship in Scotland, 1560-1638', *History*, 88 (2003), 408.

⁵⁰ On the symbolism of communion, see Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, ch. 2.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 91-98; Andrew Spicer, *Calvinist Churches in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester, 2007), 5; Henry Sefton, 'Occasions in the Reformed Church' in Maclean and Veitch, *Scottish Life and Society*, 470-71.

⁵² The following discussion is based on the table of the dates of Fife communions, derived mainly from the extant kirk session minutes but also using NAS, CH2/21/5, Auchterderran Sermon Notebook which records some of the sermons as communion ones. Easter dates are derived from Cheney, *Handbook*.

⁵³ See Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 87, 89 although regarding superstition Todd does not distinguish between communions held on Easter Day and around Easter in general. This leads her to observe that the Jacobean reforms were in this respect a ratification of what had gone before: this is not necessarily the case if we accept that legislating for communion on Easter Day itself is different from ordering communion to take place in Spring. She is right, however, that the royal policy essentially did little to change the timing of communion in the parishes.

however, as part of James VI's liturgical reform, a nationwide communion was ordered for 24 April, Easter Sunday. This was followed a year later by a royal order for the celebration of Easter Day communions in all coming years.⁵⁴ Calderwood noted that the former injunction was obeyed by 'the most part...but not all', and Alison Muir has recently revealed the opposition of some Fife ministers to the new communion policy.⁵⁵ Beyond assessments of ministerial opposition, however, little is known of how parishes responded to these royal orders, and in any case most attention has been focused on the most controversial issue of kneeling at communion.⁵⁶ Other estimates have relied on references to the Easter communion issue in those church records where the issue is mentioned explicitly, but by systematically tabulating the actual dates of communions in Fife parishes, as documented by kirk sessions, we can look in more detail at how widely the communion reform was actually implemented in Fife.⁵⁷

The only parishes for which we have 1614 communion dates are Anstruther and Burntisland: both obeyed the order for an Easter Day communion. But the 1615 order for perpetual Easter communions seems to have been much less well obeyed. The parish of Burntisland did obey: between 1617 (we have no dates for 1615 and 1616) and 1637 nearly every communion was held on Easter Day. In 1638 the session decided at the last minute to avoid an Easter Day communion, although superstition was not directly cited as a reason, and 1639 saw another Easter Day communion.⁵⁸ Interestingly, the minister of Burntisland from 1616 to 1639 was John Michaelson, who as we shall see later also favoured kneeling at communion, and was removed from the parish for his opposition to the Covenant.⁵⁹ In 1618 it was he who reported that the parish ought to acquire 'ministring veshells for the sacramentis', and in 1619, 'the minister made intimatioun of the celebration of the communion the nixt tua sabbothis desyring preparation of the communicantis and specially kneelling because the kingis m[ajestie] hes urgit it and that it was concludit upon at the assemblie of St Johnstone'.⁶⁰ Michaelson's conformity with royal policy may explain Burntisland's

⁵⁴ Ian Cowan, 'The Five Articles of Perth' in Duncan Shaw (ed.), *Reformation and Revolution* (Edinburgh, 1967), 160.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 160; Muir, 'Covenanters in Fife', 59, 63.

⁵⁶ See Muir, 'Covenanters in Fife', 65-72 for kneeling.

⁵⁷ Cf. Foster, *Church Before the Covenants*, 184.

⁵⁸ CH2/523/1, p. 303. The reasons cited were the upheaval in the realm, the potential distraction of the swearing of the covenant and the absence of sailors at sea.

⁵⁹ See below, ch. 4.

⁶⁰ Muir, 'Covenanters in Fife', 63 and n; CH2/523/1, pp. 173, 183.

compliance in holding Easter communions over the next few decades. But other parishes were not so compliant. Anstruther celebrated some, but by no means all, Easter Day communions after 1614, although when we compare this with the pre-1614 pattern it is apparent that this was no novelty for the parish. Abercrombie celebrated Easter Day communions only in 1616 and 1634, Markinch only in 1627 and 1632. For Kirkcaldy and Dysart we have full runs of communion dates from 1616-1639 and 1621-1639 respectively; no Easter communions were celebrated. We have shorter runs of communion dates for Kingsbarns, Newburn, Kinghorn and Culross: none of these celebrated any Easter Day communions, although across Fife there were plenty of communions which took place during the months around Easter, which along with the summer was the most popular time for communion. Of the eight communion sermons recorded in the Auchterderran sermon notebook, none was recorded as taking place on Easter Day.

So paschal communions were rare across Fife during the entire period. Most parishes had either none or only a few Easter Day communions, which given the length of the period and the tendency to hold annual communions in March and April, and even on Palm Sunday, seems unlikely to be a simple coincidence. While the level of dissent from royal ecclesiastical policy is not the subject of this thesis, and is well covered in Alison Muir's thesis on 'The Covenanters of Fife', it is interesting to note that traditional patterns of communion celebration, in terms of timing as well as frequency, seem to have persisted across the period despite the ecclesiastical controversies and official orders. Before and after the 1610s, communion was normally held around, but not at Easter.

The reader's service: continuity and change

For the majority of laypeople in Fife during the first generation after the Reformation, the normative experience of regular public worship would have been the reader's service. Although readers, sometimes clerics who had served in the pre-Reformation church, provided an essential substitute for full ministers in these early years, their introduction turned out to be much more than a temporary expedient. Kirk session records show that many readers could still be found in the seventeenth

century in various Fife parishes, serving alongside dedicated ministers.⁶¹ And their office, like that of the minister, was to be protected from usurpation by unadmitted persons.⁶² So the office of reading the scriptures and prayers, and leading the singing of psalms, was certainly not seen as unimportant.⁶³ As late as 1639, the session of Anstruther responded to a problem with the provision of daily services:

The saidis minister and elderis being convenit haiffing consideratione how this This (sic) kirk hes bein without morning and evining prayeris and considering how necess[ar] the reiding of scripturis is for Instructing of the pepill in the better knowledge and understanding of the word of god Thairfoir the saidis minister and elderis ordanes the prayeris to be red morning and evining everie weik day and desyris Jon Tullus there p[rese]nt reidar to reid the same q[ui]lk he promittit to do⁶⁴

As well as giving the lie to the assumption that the church was by this time united in its opposition to ‘read’ prayers, this quotation illustrates the very high value placed on the reading of the word even by kirk sessions which had experienced half a century of regular preaching: it was necessary, not a temporary substitute for preaching.⁶⁵ In 1624 the Synod of Fife had also noted ‘the gryt benefit and instruction quhilk may redound be reading of the scriptures in publick audience of the people’, and ordered steps to be taken for the provision of new readers in parishes where there was none.⁶⁶ And in 1630, Burntisland kirk session complained that worship ‘hes beine impedit in hering Godis word preached and *red* and in thair [the congregation’s] *prayer and devotioun* by the fychting and barking of doggis in the kirk’ (my emphases).⁶⁷ The importance given to public scripture reading and prayers is suggestive for our discussion of the reader’s service in the first decades after the Reformation. What role did this sort of worship play in meeting the needs and expectations of post-

⁶¹ For example CH2/548/1, p. 11 (Monimail); CH2/1056/1, f. 18v (Abercrombie); CH2/624/2, p. 155 (Anstruther). We know that there was regular ‘reiding of the word’ in Burntisland in 1604 because of the kirk session’s action against a James Young who vomited during the service, ‘his stomach trubillit with tua sindrie drinks of new and ald aill’. CH2/523/1, p. 27. Cf. Benedict, *Christ’s Churches Purely Reformed*, 453.

⁶² *StAP*, 150.

⁶³ Donaldson, *Scottish Reformation*, 82. Prayer was similarly important in England, although there of course it was led by the minister. See Neal Enssle, ‘Patterns of Godly Life: The Ideal Parish Minister in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century English Thought’, *SCJ*, 28 (1997), 18-19.

⁶⁴ CH2/624/3, p. 124.

⁶⁵ See also Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, 126 for the ongoing use of read prayers.

⁶⁶ CH2/154/1, p. 291.

⁶⁷ CH2/523/1, p. 257.

reformation parishioners, and what part might it have played in bringing around the Catholic majority of 1560 to acceptance of the Reformed faith?

First of all, the reader's service was not a complete break with what had gone before. It was based around scripture, but this was not entirely new: although the normal pre-Reformation service had been entirely in Latin, the scriptures were 'woven' into the fabric of the liturgy, and there was sometimes reading of scriptures in the vernacular.⁶⁸ But also, the reading of scriptural texts by a post-Reformation reader would not necessarily have conveyed Protestant ideas, even if the act of listening to scripture in the vernacular was an overtly Protestant act. After all, biblical texts themselves, even if selected for their rhetorical significance, are not inherently Protestant, and they would sometimes be read by the same individual who had carried out services before the Reformation, allowing for a sense of continuity in parish worship on either side of 1560.⁶⁹ The bulk of parish services soon after the Reformation would have only implicitly refuted the doctrines which had been taught before, by their delivery in the vernacular, and probably by their choice of text. Rather than confronting a Catholic laity with an immediate barrage of Protestant exegesis, the church, by reason of its lack of preaching manpower, was forced to persuade congregations more gradually, perhaps firstly establishing the idea of scripture as the basis of Christian piety before trying to inculcate more sophisticated Protestant understandings.

The continuity of the reader's service with the medieval liturgy went beyond the presence of scripture. Psalms were a central part of worship, as before the Reformation, and they were still followed by doxologies.⁷⁰ The fact that the reader would often have been a local pre-Reformation cleric must have reinforced the sense of liturgical continuity in lay eyes.⁷¹ Readers were sometimes local men, often having served in a nearby religious house, and so in some cases might have been familiar faces. Of course, the continuity with medieval service may also have contributed to the decisions of large numbers of clerics to serve the new church as readers: there was

⁶⁸ Maxwell, *History of Worship*, 37. The extent of our knowledge of pre-Reformation worship in practice is rather shaky however, most information being derived from liturgical sources.

⁶⁹ Todd, 'Reformation in the Diocese of Dunblane', 202.

⁷⁰ Michael Lynch, 'Scottish Culture in its Historical Perspective' in Bob Harris and Alan R. Macdonald (eds.), *Scotland: The Making and Unmaking of the Nation c.1100-1707*, vol. 4 (Dundee, 2007), 226 (repr. From P. H. Scott (ed.) *Scotland: A Concise Cultural History* (Edinburgh, 1993).

⁷¹ McMillan, *Worship of the Scottish Reformed Church*, 88-9. See also John Macrae, 'The Scottish Reformers and their order of Public Worship', *RSCHS*, 3 (1929), 28; Gordon Donaldson, *The Faith of the Scots* (London, 1990), 67-73; Forrester, 'Reformed Tradition in Scotland', 473.

no requirement to preach doctrines with which they were uncomfortable (or unfamiliar?), and the new services they were required to lead would have had comforting and familiar elements.⁷² In the wider European context, there has been a growing awareness of the continuities as well as discontinuities which marked the transitions from Catholic to Protestant worship: Nichols has argued that the basic structures of worship remained on medieval lines, and that rather than systematic adoptions of New Testament patterns, ‘traditional forms [were] corrected to convey Biblical meanings’. A recent collection on medieval and early-modern worship is heavily focused on examples of continuity as well as change, and ends with a discussion of possible theoretical frameworks for assessing the relative strengths of either case.⁷³ As well as any liturgical continuity, a more practical similarity between pre- and post-reformation systems was identified by the editor of the *Book of Common Order*: ‘the new arrangement of Minister and Readers was somewhat analogous to that which preceded, when each parish had its own Priest to read the Missal and Breviary, with an occasional visit and sermon from a preaching Friar’.⁷⁴ This observation, the post-Reformation element of which is borne out by the research conducted for the present chapter and Chapter One, should provide a sobering note of caution to any assumptions about the centrality of preaching in the years after the Scottish Reformation.

As well as scriptural readings, prayers and psalms were crucial parts of post-Reformation parish worship, and were again elements which provided continuity with the pre-Reformation model.⁷⁵ As with Bible readings, psalms did not openly teach Protestant messages, but they may have been very important in the process of converting the laity to a Protestant sensibility. The question of how the Scottish laity became firmly Protestant, given an absence of major conversions before the official Reformation, is a very challenging one. Certainly the role of print, questioned recently even for much of continental Europe by Andrew Pettegree, was negligible in

⁷² See above, ch. 1 for Donaldson’s work on the conformity of pre-Reformation clerics, and Haws, *Scottish Parish Clergy*. Margaret Sanderson, ‘Manse and Glebe in the Sixteenth Century’, *RSCHS*, 19 (1977), 89 notes that some reformed clergy may have shared glebes and even manses with pre-Reformation clergy who did not serve in the reformed kirk.

⁷³ J. H. Nichols, *Corporate Worship in the Reformed Tradition* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1968), 12; Karin Maag and John D. Witvliet, (eds.) *Worship in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Change and Continuity in Religious Practice* (Notre Dame, Indiana, 2004), 331-341.

⁷⁴ *BCO*, xxiii.

⁷⁵ See Maxwell, *History of Worship*, 34-36 for prayers, including the Lord’s Prayer, in the pre-Reformation service.

a country with such a small print trade as Scotland.⁷⁶ Some plausible explanations have been offered recently by Margo Todd, and she rightly argues that kirk sessions and the sort of culture that they helped to shape in the parishes were crucial. Preaching may also have played an important role in the long-term building of Protestant culture. But as we have seen, neither kirk sessions nor preaching were in full operation during the first few decades of reformation. Yet there is very little evidence of widespread recusancy after 1560, and the transition to official Protestantism was a smooth one, especially when compared to the religious upheavals that shook much of continental Europe during the second half of the sixteenth century. Todd has argued that elements of continuity and flexibility played a major part in encouraging adherence to Protestantism. But again, as her key arguments are derived from the activities of kirk sessions, whose records survive mainly from the seventeenth century, is not clear how much of a role the sessions' involvement in parish life can have played in the early stages of ensuring acceptance of the Reformation. She has, however, also identified the importance of the reader's office and the metrical psalter to these processes.⁷⁷ These, crucially, are factors which do not depend fully on an active kirk session or the presence of a minister in each parish.

The patterns of worship discussed so far present a possible explanation for some of the reformers' eventual success in building a Protestant laity, or at least a laity that accepted Protestantism. The liturgical continuity we have discussed must have made acceptance of the new order more palatable to the conservative. And in terms of incentives, what elements of church worship, which was after all the church's main contact with the laity, might have appealed to the parishioners of Fife in the absence of regular sermons? As we have seen, psalms would have been an important part of the Sunday services in most Fife parishes after the Reformation; they would have punctuated the prayers and readings which made up the rest of the service. Andrew Pettegree has made a convincing case for the importance of psalms in the process of 'persuasion' by which Protestant communities were built across Europe. In France, psalm-singing became a badge of identity, and although Scotland obviously lacked the violent political circumstances that gave certain psalms such a symbolic association with defiance of Catholic authority, the communal singing of psalms did

⁷⁶ Andrew Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion* (Cambridge, 2005), 7-8.

⁷⁷ Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 22-23, 26, 68-73.

have an ‘emotional impact’ on Scottish congregations.⁷⁸ On a more prosaic note, psalm-singing may have helped relieve some of the possible boredom experienced by parts (though by no means all) of the congregation.⁷⁹ The singing of psalms, like the reading of the Bible, does not instruct worshippers in the details of Protestant doctrine, but in the absence of a full programme of preaching and instruction it may well have gone some way towards the construction of communities with some level of Protestant identification, what Pettegree calls ‘the culture of belonging’.⁸⁰

Other aspects of reformed worship, like prayers and communion, may have contributed to such a trend. Prayers naturally provided an opportunity for orations in church which were not excerpts from the scriptures. They tended however not to provide the doctrinal instruction which was later so comprehensively imposed through catechesis; rather the prayers in the *Book of Common Order* tended to encourage simple Christian piety. If they did follow explicitly Protestant lines, it was strongly anti-Catholic, praying for divine protection for those ‘who are under the tyranny of Antichrist’, and referring regularly to the ‘vanity of superstition and idolatry’.⁸¹ These prayers do contain reinforcement of Calvinist themes such as predestination, but they are not preached *at* the laity in the style of a conversionary sermon, but read out as if they are already understood.⁸² Thus perhaps these messages could be assimilated more gradually through repetition in prayer, and a stronger sense of anti-Catholic identity could be fostered. These were certainly Protestant prayers, but one did not need much of a grasp of Protestant theology to appreciate the Christo-centric sentiments which were at their hearts. The communion service included psalm-singing, which can only have bolstered the sense of communality which was already

⁷⁸ MacCulloch, *Reformation*, 308; Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion*, 60, 64; Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 72.

⁷⁹ See Ian Green, ‘“All people that on earth do dwell, Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice”’: Protestantism and Music in Early Modern England’ in Simon Ditchfield (ed.), *Christianity and community in the West: essays for John Bossy* (Aldershot, 2001), 160.

⁸⁰ Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion*, 40, 211-217. See also Ryrie, ‘Introduction: The European Reformations’, 7-8, where he suggests that more contextual understandings of Protestant prayer and liturgy might help answer the difficult question of why people were attracted to Protestantism. In a different setting, Green has noted that congregational singing might not be ‘sung with complete understanding, but for many it was “the music of the heart”, sung with the spirit’. Green, ‘Protestantism and Music’, 163.

⁸¹ *BCO*, 94, 104. We cannot be certain that these prayers were always used by readers, but given that these men were considered unable to preach, they may not have been capable of full extemporising. The set prayers were perhaps used as the basis for variations.

⁸² *BCO*, 102 for a passing reference to ‘Thine Elect’, a term which is not defined or explained but assumed.

heightened by the new practice of receiving the sacrament sitting down at a table.⁸³ This was naturally a Christo-centric occasion, and although Protestant doctrines might have been imparted during the communion sermon, the sacrament itself was probably a fairly non-controversial and broad Christian ceremony.

So for the early Reformed congregation, worship was still primarily about praise rather than instruction in doctrine.⁸⁴ This has important implications for our understandings of the processes of protestantising the people of Fife. It seems reasonable to posit that the worship of the church plays a role in inculcating Protestantism in two distinct - if not unrelated - areas. Firstly, through the instruction and exhortation provided by ordinary sermons, doctrinal education and both formal and informal catechesis. Secondly, the rituals of public worship may help to instil a sense of protestant identity and fondness for the new church: these include activities like psalm-singing, the newly participatory communion ceremony and the reader's services which revolved around prayer and scripture and so retained a link with pre-Reformation worship. The latter model was dominant in the early stages of the Reformation in Fife (at least outside St Andrews), since a full programme of preaching and catechisation was not yet established and enforced. This was to come in the second generation of the Reformed church, in the decades after 1580.

A possible corollary of this, though admittedly one that is difficult to document, is that the trend discussed above may have actually helped the reformers. Perhaps the absence of rigorous evangelical preaching, enforced attendance and catechisation (with kirk session penalties for absence or poor performance) may have actually helped the eventual success of protestantisation by 'softening the blow' of Reformation. Worship was available which had some continuity with that which had gone before, and which in many cases would not have explicitly contradicted what had been taught before. This worship was even led by some of the same individuals, which may have helped to ease the psychological upheaval of the transition to Reformed worship. Only when people were used to the basics of the new regime, a generation later, did kirk sessions begin to operate across Fife in an active way, and only then were regular sermons provided – now delivered by a minister brought up

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 125; *FBD*, 91-2. See also Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 26 and ch. 2.

⁸⁴ Although the importance of prayers and psalms in the seventeenth century must not be downplayed: they continued to play a very important role in religious culture. This will be developed in ch. 5, but the publication in 1591 of a book consisting of several hundreds of pages of prayers for all occasions and people should give some indication of the ongoing importance of prayer in Protestant piety. *The Sacrifice of a christian soule* (Edinburgh, 1591).

and trained within Protestantism. This was not at all what the reformers wanted, and there must have been many who were virtually untouched by the church, even outside the unfortunate parish of Kemback. But it may help us to understand how a reformation which was not ushered in by a large groundswell of support eventually succeeded without major grassroots opposition. The parishioners who were aggressively preached at, catechised and disciplined by the end of the sixteenth century had at least grown up in a Protestant tradition, with biblical, if not necessarily sermon-based worship. They had time to adjust, having been presented not with a revolution in worship but with a gradual process of transition.⁸⁵ This might be called, in the European context, a process of gradual acculturation; a more helpful term might be acclimatisation. It certainly fits in with the disjuncture that Andrew Pettegree has noted between the expectations of the reformers, based around preaching and catechising, and the lay reception of Protestantism, which was characterised by a traditional sense of religion as essentially shared and communal.⁸⁶

This trend of gradual transition must have been made easier by the distinct circumstances of the Scottish Reformation. Although the provision of the necessary structures and personnel for a properly functioning Calvinist church in the parishes was only slowly established, the destruction of the Catholic system was relatively swift. The iconoclastic force with which images were removed, and the abandonment of traditional devotional practices left those parishioners with Catholic sympathies with few options after 1560. There was no outlet for their Catholic piety, and despite the formal continuation of pre-Reformation ecclesiastical structures for some years after 1560, there was no way in which they could keep up Catholic worship.⁸⁷ And crucially, Scotland's geography and England's new religious settlement meant that the central European option of worshipping in a neighbouring Catholic territory was not available, even to those in the border counties.⁸⁸ So the reformed church had some leeway in its attempts to bring reluctant and nominal Protestants into the church, and in these circumstances the gradual transition in worship would have been all the

⁸⁵ A similar argument is made by Todd regarding the kirk sessions' attitudes to popular festivities, although in the case of preaching it is fairly clear that there was no *intent* to 'soften the blow' of reformation, as Todd suggests was at least partly the case with festivities. Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 221-2.

⁸⁶ Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion*, 213.

⁸⁷ Evidence of ongoing Catholic worship is rare, and necessarily often based on contemporary suspicions and interpolations from recantations. See for example *RStAKS*, i., 11-17, 81.

⁸⁸ I am very grateful to Bridget Heal for advice on this point.

more persuasive. It is possible to hypothesise that some of these people initially tolerated reformed worship since it was not in full and violent contradiction with their Catholic sympathies. Over the many years before Calvinist preaching was universally in place they might have gradually come to accept the new order, in a way which would not have been possible had the option of continuing Catholic allegiance remained.

Conclusion

One of the most challenging questions facing historians of the Scottish Reformation, and one which despite recent efforts has yet to be answered fully, is how a country with minimal conversion to Protestantism before the Reformation became protestantised by the end of the sixteenth century, and vigorously so by the middle of the next.⁸⁹ We have seen that a full parish ministry backed up by kirk session discipline cannot be credited with inculcating Protestantism in the parishes of Fife until the final years of the sixteenth century. So we need to look elsewhere for explanations, and one possibility is the role of Protestant worship in the sense of praise rather than in the sense of preaching. Protestant spirituality has been a neglected theme in recent Reformation scholarship, and more emphasis on prayer and the psalms may help us to understand how Scots came to identify themselves as Protestants during the latter half of the sixteenth century.⁹⁰ In any case, the importance of these features to the post-Reformation church should not be ignored in favour of that more famous element of worship, preaching.

Margo Todd has of course already argued for the importance of continuity in the appeal of Protestantism to Scottish laypeople, but without the sort of chronological analysis attempted here it is difficult to trace how such a trend might have worked in practice. The state of the church in the parishes was very far from static over the eighty years after the Reformation. Of course the argument offered here somewhat over-simplifies the situation. There would have been parishes where regular preaching by a fully committed Protestant was available before this was the norm;

⁸⁹ The problem of 'explaining majority acquiescence in an unwanted religious transformation' is raised and discussed sensitively for the English context in Marsh, *Popular Religion*, 197-198.

⁹⁰ Ryrie, 'Introduction: The European Reformations', 7-8. See also David Mullan, 'A Hotter sort of Protestantism? Comparisons between French and Scottish Calvinisms', *SCJ*, 39 (2008), 66 for the importance of psalms in later Scottish Calvinist (and French) culture.

perhaps more importantly there would have been parishioners who were open to the new faith, who would not have needed the 'blow' to be softened. And part of the reason for the lack of evidence of recusancy and opposition is the poor survival rates of kirk session minutes, and probably also the poor activity rates of the kirk session in Fife soon after the Reformation.⁹¹ Nevertheless the majority of parishioners probably fell into the middle ground. For them, the process of conversion to or acceptance of Protestantism would have been a gradual one, and one in which the nature of worship during the first decades after the Reformation may have been an important factor. In any case, it seems safe to conclude that a radical programme of preaching and catechising played little part in whatever early successes were achieved by the Scottish Reformed church. By the 1590s, however, ministers were attempting a more thorough inculcation of Protestant doctrines in the people, and these attempts are discussed in Chapter Five.

⁹¹ Although see Margaret Sanderson, 'Catholic Recusancy in Scotland in the Sixteenth Century', *IR*, 21 (1970), 87-107.

PART II
MINISTERS AND KIRK SESSIONS: REFORMATION IN PRACTICE

Chapter 4

The Ministry as a Profession

In Chapter One we looked at the provision of ministers to Fife parishes, and noted the gradual progress made towards a complete parish ministry. As such, the focus was institutional and chronological. We still know very little about the careers and lives of ordinary parish ministers in post-Reformation Scotland. Whether we choose to define the ministry as a profession, career or calling, it is a remarkably neglected feature of the Scottish reformed church, especially in contrast with the highly developed literature on the English clergy.¹ There is no full length study of the Scottish parish ministry in this period, and as a group they appear mostly in sections or chapters in books on broader themes, or in article-length surveys.² Certain aspects of the ministry, such as theology and spiritual community, have been relatively well covered, but much of our knowledge of the careers of post-Reformation parish ministers is essentially an overview, based on generalisation rather than detailed local study.³ It is well beyond the scope of this chapter, or even this thesis, to redress this serious deficiency in our understanding of the church. But in order to gain a full understanding of how the Reformed church in Fife functioned and developed, it is essential that we have a more detailed and empirically grounded analysis of its main representatives in the parishes. What were the career patterns of Fife ministers, how mobile were they and for how long did they serve? How well were they educated, and how were they trained for the ministry? How stable was the parish ministry, and how

¹ Rosemary O'Day, *The English Clergy: The Emergence and Consolidation of a Profession, 1558-1642* (Leicester, 1979); *Professions in Early Modern England*, chs. 1-5. See also <http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk> and A. Burns, K. Fincham and S. Taylor, 'Reconstructing Clerical Careers: The Experience of the Clergy of the Church of England Database', *JEH*, 55 (2004), 726-737 for an ambitious project covering the years 1540-1835. For a similar neglect of the parish clergy in the literature on the continental reformations, see Burnett, *Teaching the Reformation*, 5. This study, esp. 35-46, probably offers the nearest comparison to the methodology used in this chapter, albeit in the rather different context of a Swiss city-state.

² For example Foster, *Church Before the Covenants*, 133-155; Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 361-401; Sanderson, 'Service and Survival', 73-96; Rosalind Mitchison, 'The Social Impact of the Clergy of the Reformed Kirk of Scotland', *Scotia*, 6 (1982). For a recent call for further research, see Ian Whyte, 'Ministers And Society in Scotland 1560-1800' in Maclean and Veitch, *Compendium of Scottish Ethnology*.

³ On theology see Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, and for the spiritual status of the ministry, Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 362-400. For an important exception to the overview pattern, see the detailed and careful analysis in Walter Makey, *The Church of the Covenant 1637-1651: Revolution and Social Change in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1979).

did the profession change over the course of our period from Reformation to Revolution?

One of the main sources for this new analysis is a database of Fife ministers in our period, derived from the revised list of ministers used in the first chapter and drawing heavily on the *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanae*.⁴ This has been supplemented with other material where necessary, the most important being details on ministers' educational background. But the data is not straightforward, and has been tackled in a variety of ways in order to answer different questions. The approach has been not only quantitative, but anecdotal. Statistics can provide us with trends and patterns, but in order to understand the ministry fully it is necessary to study individual men, and so case-studies and examples have been used throughout.⁵ There was no such thing as a typical minister, and this chapter will not attempt to replace Makey's sketch of the average parish incumbent of the mid-seventeenth century.⁶ But as well as providing analysis of trends in ministerial careers, it will illuminate the lives of some of the ministers responsible for leading the worship and enforcing the discipline we have studied in previous chapters. It is telling that the two most recent articles on the ministry have been by distinguished social and economic historians.⁷ The ministry as a whole has proved a less appealing theme for historians of religion. But no study of the Scottish reformed church is complete without an understanding of the men who were the public face of the church in the parishes.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first looks at ministerial career patterns, perhaps the most neglected issue of all, and derives statistics on patterns of service and mobility from the database of ministers, while fleshing these out with reference to individual incumbents. The second section looks at the educational background and training of ministers, a topic which has yet to receive detailed analysis from historians. The third section steps back from these detailed and statistical approaches, and offers case-studies of five Fife ministers from across our period and a variety of parishes. There has been no space to include an analysis of ministerial finances, which are in any case notoriously difficult to trace, and would

⁴ See ch. 1 for discussion of how this list was compiled. The additional data for this chapter is discussed at the relevant points in the text below. All material, unless cited otherwise, is taken from the database and list.

⁵ For similar comments on the English professions see O' Day, *The Professions in Early Modern England*, 12-13.

⁶ Makey, *Church of the Covenant*, 102-103.

⁷ Whyte, 'Ministers and Society'; Sanderson, 'Service and Survival'.

have varied considerably. The testaments of Fife ministers would seem to suggest that moderate security was the norm, with both serious poverty and major prosperity unusual. Those ministers who were lucky enough to receive stipends in kind rather than cash would have fared better through the rapid inflation of the period.⁸

Career Patterns

The first question to be asked about the career patterns of ministers is the most obvious: at what age did they enter the ministry? In 1582, the General Assembly stipulated that new ministers should be no younger than 25, with exceptions to be made only for the very able.⁹ This minimum was re-iterated by the Synod of Fife in 1624, without the exception for very talented youngsters.¹⁰ Ian Whyte has suggested that ministers typically began their careers in their late twenties or early thirties, and the evidence from the database would seem to support this general conclusion.¹¹ The following data is based on the 108 Fife ministers for whom we have both dates of birth and dates of death, though in some cases there is a small margin-of-error.¹²

The overall average age of Fife ministers at their first post was 32.¹³ There was no significant regional variation in this figure; within the Presbytery of Dunfermline it was 34; Kirkcaldy 30; Kinross 27; Cupar 32, and in St Andrews it was 34.¹⁴ If we divide the ministry chronologically, there are still few variations in average age at first ministerial post. Of ministers who took office before 1600, the average age was 33. For the post-1600 ministry, the average was 32. For both periods, the range of ages runs relatively close to the actual mean, and so we can be reasonably confident that

⁸ Indeed payment in kind is one of the factors making analysis of ministerial finances so potentially dangerous. However, see Makey, *Church of the Covenant*, 109-115; Foster, *Church Before the Covenants*, 156-67.

⁹ *BUK*, ii., 559.

¹⁰ CH2/154/1, pp. 289-90; *Fife Synod Selections*, 101.

¹¹ Whyte, 'Ministers and Society', 438. For a similar pattern in England, see O'Day, *Professions in Early Modern England*, 90.

¹² Some dates of birth are derived from the fact, recorded in *FES*, that a minister died in a certain year, with the age at death. Thus the figure could be a year out in either direction. The ages given relate to the minister's age at their first post in Fife, which was normally their first post.

¹³ For similar averages in continental reformed churches see Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed*, 446, and in the Lutheran parts of the Empire, Luise Schorn-Schütte, 'The "New Clergies" in Europe: Protestant Pastors and Catholic Reform Clergy after the Reformation' in Bridget Heal and Ole Peter Grell (eds.), *The Impact of the European Reformation: Princes, Clergy and People* (Aldershot, 2008), 117.

¹⁴ This breakdown, as elsewhere, uses the presbytery divisions as regional borders even before their creation. If more than one presbytery was served in, the presbytery which saw the longest service was used.

the pattern of ministers starting their careers around the age of 30 is a strong trend, with a few exceptions. Given that a typical age of graduation was around 20, this suggests a strong emphasis on postgraduate training and experience, which we shall explore later.

The vast majority began their ministry between the ages of 25 and 35. There were some who entered the ministry before the age of 25, such as John Row, who was only 23 when he entered his ministry at Carnock in 1592, and Henry Philip of Creich, who was around 22 at the outset of his ministry. There were also some much older ministers, most of whom were men born well before the Reformation who served in the reformed church after 1560. For example William Ramsay was born around 1517, but became minister of Kilmany in 1564, aged about 47. The two first ministers of St Andrews, Adam Heriot and John Knox, also fall into this category, being in their mid-40s at the time of the Reformation. In some senses these ministers represent a statistical anomaly, since their age at the start of their ministry is not a reflection of career patterns. However, their impact on the figures is slight. For example, removing ministers born before 1530 from the statistics on St Andrews Presbytery only reduces the average age from 34 to 32. This is partly because even in the 1560s, many younger men were also appointed to parishes, such as Thomas Biggar who was only 24 when appointed to Kinghorn in 1564. Only eight of the Fife ministers with known dates of birth were older than thirty in 1560. Many of the men who served ordinary Fife parishes in the first decades after the Reformation were relatively young, and they must have had few adult memories of the pre-Reformation church.

This leads us to the related question of the proportion of ministers who had served in the pre-Reformation church. Of the total of 249 ministers, there is only clear evidence of pre-Reformation service for 20. Even if we limit ourselves to the pre-1600 ministry, only 19 out of 85 ministers had served in the pre-Reformation church.¹⁵ Even allowing for some ministers having untraced pre-Reformation antecedents, the proportion is still in the region of a quarter.¹⁶ If we take each decade individually, of the ministers who served in the 1560s, 11 out of 28 had pre-Reformation antecedents (fewer than half), from the 1570s, 11 out of 46 can be traced to the pre-Reformation period (fewer than a quarter). Surprisingly, the same can be

¹⁵ One of the pre-Reformation clerics, Thomas Biggar of Kinghorn, continued to serve his parish until 1605.

¹⁶ Unlike in Haws, *Scottish Parish Clergy*, attendance at university before 1560 is not treated as a pre-Reformation antecedent.

said for readers: of the 49 readers who served in the 1560s, only 21 had traceable pre-Reformation antecedents.¹⁷ Of course this is not to suggest that pre-Reformation clerics were of marginal importance in serving the parishes of Fife. Some of them were men like William Braidfute, a St Andrews canon who served seven different parishes in his career, and Peter Blackwood (Holyrood) and Peter Watson (St Andrews) who each served six parishes. But with that said, and coupled with the data on age, it would seem that the pre-Reformation church must have had a less serious grip on the memories of even the early Fife ministry than we might at first assume.

Once they had entered the ministry, how mobile were ministers, and how did their careers develop? This is perhaps the hardest question to answer, because not only is there no single career type, there is also no straightforward way of measuring mobility. Instead the highly complex data must be interrogated in a variety of ways. This involves looking at the number of parishes served by a minister, the number of moves between parishes over a minister's career, the total length of service and the average number of years spent in each parish. The result is not a simple index of ministerial mobility, but does help to smooth over some of the flaws with each of the individual measures.¹⁸

i.) Number of parishes served

The most straightforward of these measures, the number of parishes served, gives us a rough idea of the mobility of ministers. It should be remembered that several ministers served more than one parish at the same time, which may artificially inflate the data on numbers of parishes served. After all, serving three parishes concurrently throughout one's career does not represent the same level of mobility as serving three parishes separately, except perhaps in the sense of day-to-day travel between parishes. Overall, the mean number of parishes served was 1.7. However the median and mode

¹⁷ This is in contrast to the Dunblane area, where over 60% of all clergy seem to have had pre-Reformation experience. Todd, 'Reformation in the Diocese of Dunblane', 201.

¹⁸ In all of the following analyses, second ministers are not distinguished from first ministers: thus if a minister changes from being considered the second minister in a parish to the first minister in the same parish, it is not classed as a switch of parish. Only Fife parishes are analysed, but relatively few Fife ministers were mobile in the sense of movement to and from Fife, as was also the case later in the seventeenth century: Muir, 'The Covenanters in Fife', 208. There was certainly no concentrated flow of ministers into or out of Fife in any particular period, with the possible exception of 1636-42.

were both 1.¹⁹ There was little variation between different parts of Fife; in all the presbyteries the median and mode were identical, and the mean only ranged between 1.5 and 1.9. In all of the presbyteries, more than half of all ministers only served one Fife parish; the overall proportion serving only one parish was 59%. So, although some ministers who served several parishes (often at the same time) inflate the simple mean figure, well over half of our ministers only served one parish, while another quarter served two parishes. Given the prevalence of the sharing of parishes in the first part of our period, this is striking. These results also contrast with Alison Muir's findings on the seventeenth century as a whole. Although her method may not be directly comparable to that employed here, she finds that between 1600 and 1700 as many as 60% of ministers served more than one parish.²⁰ This would suggest that the period 1560-1640 was one of greater stability in the ministry than the second half of the seventeenth century; the disruptions of the later seventeenth century doubtless contribute to this trend.

It is worth looking in more detail at these broad averages, since it might be expected that chronological variations within the period 1560-1640 might modify this picture. Table 4.1 shows the number of parishes served by Fife ministers, arranged by decade intake. In this table, and throughout the rest of the chapter whenever ministers are arranged by decade, the ministers for each decade are the ones who took up service in that decade (the 'intake' of that decade).²¹ Thus all the ministers who first served a Fife parish in the 1570s are included in that category only, however long they may have served after that. This is not a perfect solution to the problem of arranging the ministers chronologically, since it treats identically ministers who serve for two or thirty years, but there is no reason to suppose that this would favour any particular decade. It also makes it essential to bear in mind that the trends identified for a particular decade did not take place exclusively within that decade, but also in following years.

¹⁹ The median records the middle number in a set, while the mode records the most frequently occurring value, and is thus particularly pertinent for our themes here.

²⁰ Muir, 'The Covenanters in Fife', 208.

²¹ A similar method is used in Burnett, *Teaching the Reformation*, though this work was consulted after the analysis was completed.

Table 4.1: Number of parishes served, by decade intake

<u>Decade intake</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mode</u>	<u>(number of ministers)</u>
1560s	2.5	2	1	51
1570s	2.3	2	2/3	18
1580s	2	2	1	41
1590s	1.2	1	1	38
1600s	1.35	1	1	20
1610s	1.3	1	1	23
1620s	1.3	1	1	27
1630-40	1.1	1	1	31

As we might expect, the period 1560-1590 saw the highest number of parishes served per minister, but only in the 1570s was it the norm to serve more than one parish. Even in the 1580s and 1590s, more than half of all ministers served just one parish. The sharing of ministers in the early decades hints that this may actually be an overestimate of ministerial mobility in the early period. To clarify this matter, a different method of analysis must be employed.

ii.) Number of moves

The number of times a minister moved between parishes offers another insight into his mobility. Table 4.2 shows the number of moves by ministers between Fife parishes.²²

²² This does not include as 'moves' any occasions when the group of parishes served changed (for example, when John Dykes of Culross acquired the additional charge of Crombie).

Table 4.2: Number of moves between parishes, by decade intake.

<u>Decade intake</u>	<u>Did not move</u>	<u>Moved once</u>	<u>Moved twice</u>	<u>Moved more than twice</u>	<u>(mean no. of moves)</u>
1560s	37	13	1	0	0.3
1570s	11	3	3	1	0.7
1580s	28	9	3	1	0.4
1590s	29	8	1	0	0.3
1600s	13	7	0	0	0.35
1610s	18	5	0	0	0.2
1620s	20	7	0	0	0.3
1630-40	28	3	0	0	0.1
<u>TOTAL</u>	180	57	10	2	0.3
	72%	23%	4%	1%	

The overall proportion of Fife ministers in this period who did not move at all, almost three-quarters, suggests stability in the ministry even more strongly than the analysis of number of parishes served. In every period, the majority of ministers did not move between Fife parishes. With that said, there were signs of more mobility in the earlier decades, particularly – as with the previous analysis – in the 1570s. But even the ministers of the 1560s and 1570s were more likely to remain in one parish for their career than to move. This confirms that stability in the ministry was not a seventeenth-century development. Although the early ministry were more likely to serve several parishes, they were hardly more likely than their successors to uproot and move to an entirely new parish (as opposed to switching parish of settlement within a grouping).²³

²³ Sanderson, 'Service and Survival', 78.

iii.) Length of time served

A study of ministerial mobility would be incomplete without a discussion of the lengths of ministers' careers. Table 4.3 shows the lengths of ministerial service in Fife parishes.²⁴

Table 4.3: Length of service in Fife parishes, by decade intake

<u>Decade intake</u>	<u>Under 10 years</u>	<u>10-19 years</u>	<u>20-29</u>	<u>30-39</u>	<u>40-49</u>	<u>50+</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Median</u>
1560s	28	14	3	4	2	0	12	8
1570s	9	0	3	2	3	1	21	14.5
1580s	15	3	6	6	5	6	24	22
1590s	14	10	4	5	3	2	19	15
1600s	7	4	5	1	1	2	20	17
1610s	4	3	8	6	1	1	25	26
1620s	5	8	9	3	2	0	20	20
1630-40	13	5	4	5	3	1	19	10
<u>TOTAL</u>	95	47	42	32	20	13	19	15
	38%	19%	17%	13%	8%	5%		

While the mean length of Fife ministry was fairly even at around 20 years (apart from the 1560s), the proportion of ministers serving for fewer than ten years is surprisingly high, and can not be fully accounted for by ministers leaving to serve elsewhere.²⁵ The fact that so many began their careers in their early thirties may help to account for it, as well as the relatively short careers of many early ministers. But the overall mean of 19 years should warn us against too negative an assessment of career lengths. This mean is pushed down by the size of the short-serving 1560s intake, which obviously

²⁴ Some important conventions for this analysis should be noted here. If a minister was serving more than one parish, the time was only counted once. Gaps in service were excluded; thus a minister serving from 1597-1606, and 1610-17 would be counted as serving for 16 years, rather than 20. The figures were derived by subtracting the years, rather than counting each year in which there was some service. Thus 1566-80 counts as 14 years, not 15 years. Full ministries only were counted: assistantships were excluded, though service as a second minister was counted.

²⁵ There was a small exodus of ministers in the period 1636-42, when at least nine ministers left Fife parishes. This was in addition to about seven depositions, as recorded in David Stevenson, 'Deposition of Ministers in the Church of Scotland under the Covenanters, 1638-1651', *Church History*, 44 (1975), 324-25, 335 and confirmed by the database.

contained more ministers than any other decade. Although 38% of all ministers served Fife parishes for fewer than ten years, almost as many, 36%, served for between 10 and 29 years. More than a quarter served for longer than thirty years, and more than one in ten for longer than forty years. These are impressive figures given the relatively late ages of entry to the ministry we noted earlier. Length of service in itself is not an indicator of career mobility, but the patterns revealed here suggest that our emphasis on immobility should be coupled with an awareness that the traditional image of a minister serving one parish for several decades is not the whole story. As well as ministers like John Makgill, who served Flisk from 1609 to 1659, there were also men like John Kinneir, at the other extreme, who became minister of Creich in 1601, at the age of about 25, and died two years later; or Arthur Myrton, who took charge of Crail in 1640, and died five years later aged 45.

iv.) Number of years per parish

The collection of data on the total length of service by each Fife minister makes possible another way of approaching the question of mobility. The average number of years each minister spent in his parish should provide another indicator of ministerial mobility (or immobility). Table 4.4 illustrates this data.²⁶

Table 4.4: Number of years served per parish, by decade intake

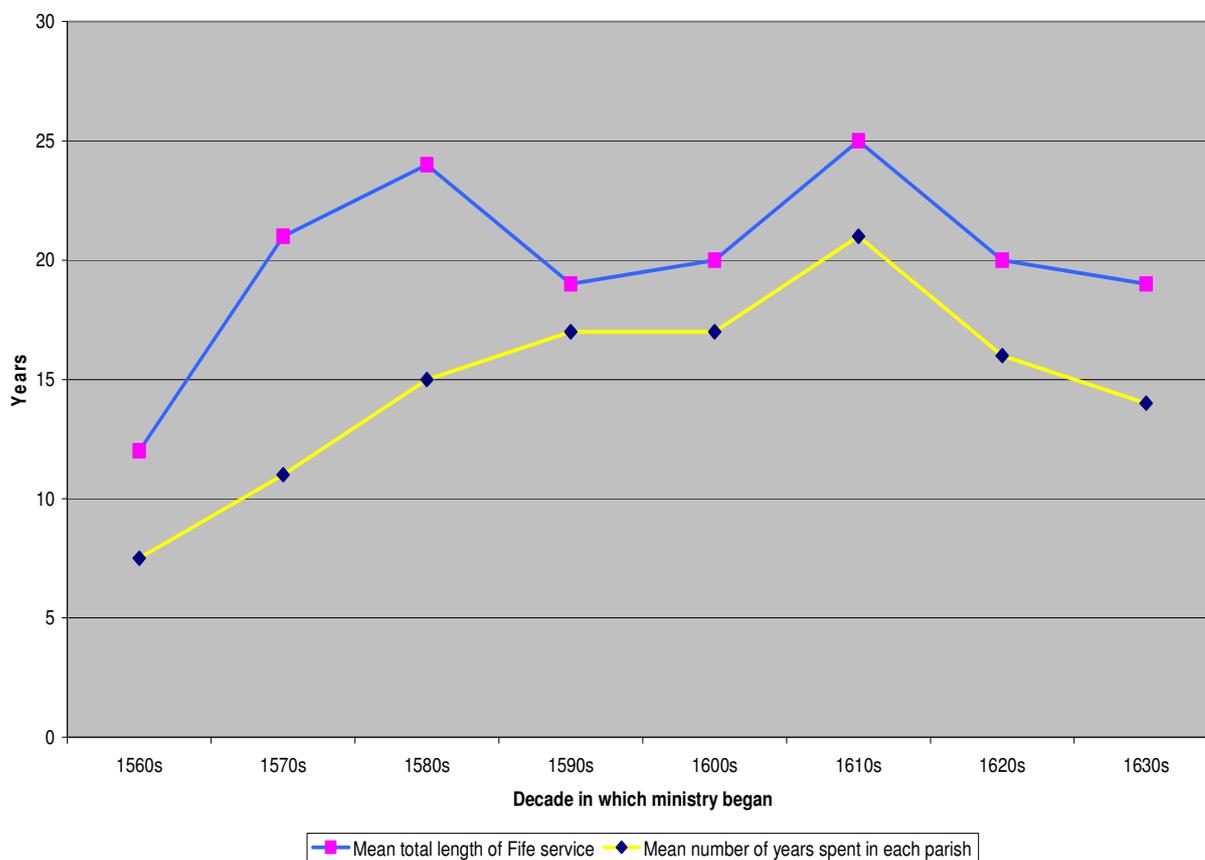
Decade intake	Mean number of years spent in each parish
1560s	7.5
1570s	11
1580s	15
1590s	17
1600s	17
1610s	21

²⁶ The averages were reached by adding up the years served (counting shared parishes twice), and dividing by the number of parishes served. Counting shared parishes twice may seem perverse, but the averages would otherwise be artificially low: a minister serving two parishes concurrently for 10 years can hardly be said to have served an average of five years per parish. On the rare occasion that a ministers returns to a parish, it is counted as a fresh start, since the focus is on mobility.

1620s	16
1630-40	14
Total	14

Again, the 1560s show the least length of time served per parish. After that the figure fluctuates, but is normally in the range 14-17 years. Given the mean length of total service (around 20 years) we saw previously, this suggests a low level of mobility. Chart 4.5 presents the two sets of data together.

Chart 4.5: Length of service by Fife ministers



One way of expressing mobility would be as the difference between the total length of service and the average time spent in each parish. If we assume this criterion, although the level of mobility is at its highest in the first few decades, it is consistently low throughout our period.

v.) Inter-presbytery movement

The final measure of mobility is a rather different one: the frequency of movement between different parts of Fife, defined here again using the later presbytery boundaries for the 1560s and 1570s. This is a rather crude measure, since a minister could move to a neighbouring parish in a different presbytery and it would count as one move. Equally, if he moved to a parish 20 miles away within the same presbytery it would not count as a move. Nevertheless, the patterns which emerge are clear (Table 4.6).

Table 4.6: Number of presbyteries served in, by decade intake

Intake	Served in 1 presbytery	Served in 2 presbyteries	Served in 3 presbyteries
1560s	37	12	2
1570s	15	3	0
1580s	35	6	0
1590s	34	4	0
1600s	20	0	0
1610s	21	2	0
1620s	25	2	0
1630-40	29	2	0
Total	216	31	2

The vast majority of all Fife ministers (87%) served in only one presbytery, a much higher figure than the proportion that only served one parish. So this table not only reflects the tendency to serve just one parish, but also the fact that if ministers did move between parishes, it was likely to be to a parish in the same part of Fife. Only the 1560s intake contained more than a handful of ministers serving in two presbyteries, and any ministers serving in more than two. Again, this was largely a result of the sharing of parishes. For the rest of the period, inter-presbytery mobility was even lower than inter-parish mobility.

From this combination of approaches to the complex material contained in the database, it seems clear that career mobility was surprisingly low, even in the first decades of the reformed church. If ministers did move parish, they did not move often, and not usually very far. The norm was to serve just one parish. This was a pattern which we might have expected to see emerge in the seventeenth century, following the early decades of instability. But despite the severe problems with parish provision we identified in Chapter One, the ministry in the early decades of the reformed church, such as it was, was not particularly mobile.²⁷

But what does this mean? Do we see a lack of mobility as a negative (immobility), or a positive (stability)? The answer depends on one's perspective. In terms of career development and the history of the professions, a lack of mobility might have to be seen as negative, suggesting stasis, perhaps even stagnation. There was little sense of career progression, and once in a parish, a minister was quite likely to remain there until his death. There were certainly few higher positions for a minister to aim for: he could be elected moderator of his presbytery, or appointed to a synodal committee, but this was merely an addition to his parochial duties. A few ministers became bishops, including elsewhere in the British Isles.²⁸ But most of our ministers died in their parishes, having performed the same duties for most of their working lives. This is perhaps the interpretation that would seem most obvious to the modern mind.

But if we look at things from the perspective of the early-modern church, then a different interpretation offers itself. A ministry where incumbents tended to remain in place was a stable ministry. There was a better chance that the minister would get to know his parishioners personally, gain their respect and understand local matters more fully.²⁹ He could develop a well-functioning kirk session, which could be difficult when there was a change of minister. At the most practical level, a stable ministry avoided the trouble of providing new ministers on a regular basis; even in the seventeenth century when there was a steady supply of recruits this was never a straightforward task. And in ideological terms, now that the parish ministry was the highest religious calling one could perform, it would surely be anachronistic to see lack of career development as a negative feature.

²⁷ Cf. Jane Dawson, *Scotland Re-Formed 1488-1587* (Edinburgh, 2007), 220.

²⁸ Examples include Robert Echline (Down and Connor); Andrew Lamb (Galloway); Robert Montgomery (Glasgow); Patrick Scougall (Aberdeen).

²⁹ Michael Zell, 'The Personnel of the Clergy in Kent in the Reformation Period', *EHR*, 89 (1974), 520.

Similarly, if we take the minister's perspective, a lack of mobility may not appear in too negative a light.³⁰ Some ministers may have wished, in vain, to move to a more prestigious (and lucrative) urban parish, and been frustrated by the lack of opportunities. But to focus on this is to neglect the rather more pressing concern of most aspiring ministers, that of finding a parish. By the seventeenth century, getting appointed to a parish was not straightforward even for an able graduate. Many worked as readers, regents in the University, schoolmasters and as assistants before being presented to a parish. In many cases, they were well into their thirties when they finally did. Perhaps the most extreme case was that of William Marche who graduated in 1575 and then became regent in St Leonard's College from 1578 until 1599, when he was finally appointed to the parish of Forgan at the age of about 42. Most served shorter apprenticeships, but it is not difficult to imagine that the achievement of a secure living must have been a more important concern than the prospects for moving parish later.³¹

So it is possible to interpret lack of mobility as a strength of the reformed church in Fife. Certainly a stable ministry, even in a period containing times of severe ecclesiastical tension and banishments, would seem to suggest a reasonably confident church. The stability of the ministry in the first few decades of the reformed church was a counterpoint to the recruitment problems. There may not have been enough ministers to go around, but at least the ministers that did exist were not frequently moving. A few early ministers served a large number of parishes, but even in the early years it was not uncommon for ministers to only serve one parish. It was very common for ministers to die in the parishes they had served for all or most of their careers. The tendency to become minister in one's late twenties or early thirties, coupled with the tendency to graduate aged around 20, raises the question not just of university education, but also postgraduate training for the ministry, both of which subjects are addressed in the next section.

³⁰ In England, well-off ministers were less mobile while the poorer ones were more likely to move. O'Day, *Professions in Early Modern England*, 90.

³¹ Another example is provided by Patrick Geddie, who preached at Kilconquhar in 1596, three years after his graduation, but only eventually achieved a charge, Orwell, in 1601. *StAP*, 200.

Education and Training

We might expect that most Fife ministers would have been educated at St Andrews University. It is relatively well known that by the seventeenth century the majority of ministers were graduates, but we still lack a detailed analysis of educational backgrounds, especially for the crucial first few decades of the reformed church.³² Until recently, the materials for such a study were scattered across a variety of manuscript sources in the St Andrews University muniments; only the graduation and matriculation rolls for the period prior to 1579 had been published.³³ As well as the variety of manuscript sources, the fact that there was no alphabetical index of students for the post-1579 period would have made the cross-referencing of ministers' names an almost impossibly laborious process. However, a new biographical register of St Andrews students during this period is presently being compiled by Dr Robert Smart, drawing on the fruits of several decades' knowledge of the sources. It is as comprehensive a list of students at the University between 1579 and 1640 as we are ever likely to have. Comparison of a draft version of this register and the published pre-1579 rolls with the database of ministers has formed the basis of the following discussion.³⁴

This comparison was still a far from straightforward matter, and some conventions should be noted. Firstly, only matches of ministers' names with known students or graduands have been used as evidence of university attendance; the title 'Mr' has been avoided as a source of information.³⁵ A complete run of primary source material has only been used for St Andrews University, which has the best collection of

³² Muir, 'The Covenanters in Fife', 201-02; Foster, *Church Before the Covenants*, 133. Elizabeth McCrank describes the proportion of graduate ministers rising from 1560 until 1600, and there being an almost entirely graduate ministry from 1600 to 1650. The approach is long-term, however, and her analysis of graduates is based entirely on *FES*. Elizabeth McCrank, 'Godly and Able Men: The Education of Ministers in Post-Reformation Scotland (1560-1699)' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Boston University, 1994), ch. 4.

³³ J. M. Anderson (ed.), *Early Records of the University of St Andrews: The Graduation Roll 1413-1579 and The Matriculation Roll 1473-1579* (Edinburgh, 1926).

³⁴ Cited as Smart, 'Register', hereafter. I am immensely grateful to Dr Smart for allowing me to consult his work in draft form, and to Steven Reid for bringing this to my attention and also for several extremely useful discussions on the subject, and sharing some of the findings from his forthcoming St Andrews University PhD thesis. Of course, neither Dr Smart nor Mr Reid should be held responsible for my interpretations of the data.

³⁵ While the designation 'Mr' may in places be a useful indicator of graduate status, it would be difficult to use it with confidence, as the scribe might not always have been acquainted with the minister's qualifications. In any case, the small number of ministers not traced to a university suggests that its use would not significantly alter the findings.

sources for the period. Graduates of other universities are derived from the *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanae*, and the incomplete records of students elsewhere, meaning that it is possible that some non-St Andrews graduates may have been missed. However, the records of Aberdeen University, Marischal College, Glasgow University and Edinburgh University only yielded one new potentially university-educated minister.³⁶ The most important potential problem with this methodology is that the co-occurrence of names does not constitute proof that the student or graduand was the same individual as the minister. Thus for some very common names, or where there is a substantial and unexplained time-lag between graduation and entry to the ministry, no identification has been made. Sometimes a relatively arbitrary decision had to be made as to whether to include or exclude a minister. Encouragingly, in most cases where there is a name-match, there is only one student or graduand to choose from, and the dates normally match up more or less as we would expect them to. Nevertheless, the results should be treated with an appropriate level of caution, and as a rough estimate, rather than a precise breakdown of the educational backgrounds of Fife ministers. Table 4.8 demonstrates the findings derived from this analysis.

³⁶ Robert Thomson of Torryburn and Crombie was recorded as a student at Aberdeen in 1606: *Fasti Aberdonenses: Selections from the Records of the University and King's College of Aberdeen 1494-1854* (Aberdeen, 1854), 451 (student records begin in 1600, 449-465, 501-511). See also *Fasti Mariscallanae Aberdonensis: Selections from the Records of Marischal College and University, 1593-1860, vol. II: Officers, Graduates and Alumni* (Aberdeen, 1898), 186-212, where there were some name matches but only in cases where there was already a more likely St Andrews University name match. The Glasgow records, beginning as early as 1578, add no new ministers, but do confirm some Fife ministers recorded as graduates in *FES: Munimenta Alme Universitatis Glasguensis: Records of the University of Glasgow from its Foundation till 1727* (3 vols., Glasgow, 1854), iii., 1-24. The same is true of the fairly full list of post-1587 students in *A Catalogue of the Graduates in the Faculties of Arts, Divinity and Law, of the University of Edinburgh, since its foundation* (Edinburgh, 1858), 7-58: no new Edinburgh graduates are added, but the dates of the already known ones are confirmed.

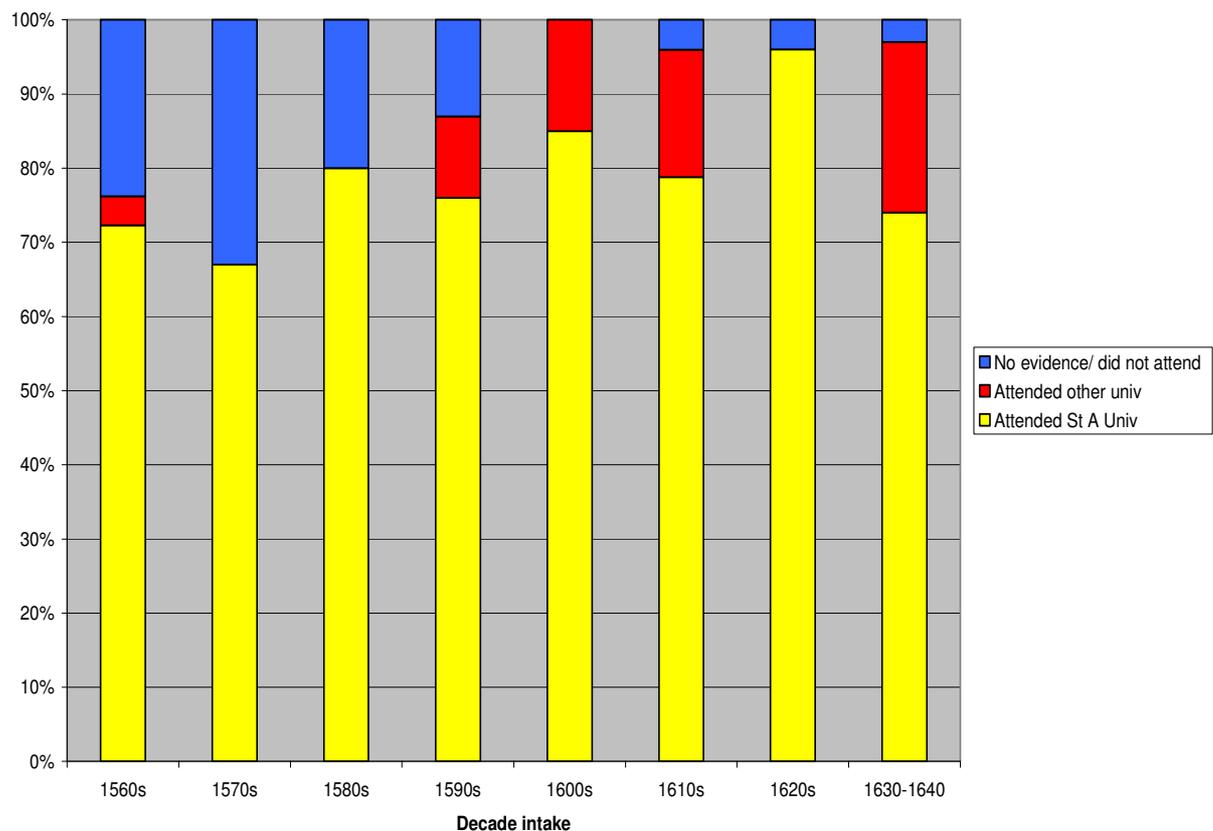
Table 4.7: Educational background of Fife ministers, by decade intake

<u>Decade intake</u>	<u>Attended St Andrews</u> ³⁷	<u>Attended other university</u>	<u>No evidence/ did not attend</u>	<u>Total</u>
1560s	37	2	12	51
1570s	12	0	6	18
1580s	33	0	8	41
1590s	29	4	5	38
1600s	17	3	0	20
1610s	18	4	1	23
1620s	26	0	1	27
1630-1640	23	7	1	31
Total	195	20	34	249

This shows a strikingly high rate of attendance at St Andrews University by Fife ministers, even in the early decades of the reformed church. In every decade, a clear majority of ministers had attended, with an overall total of 78% having attended St Andrews. A further 8% of all ministers attended a different university, mainly Glasgow or Edinburgh. Only a handful of ministers leave no trace in the university records, so even allowing for a generous margin of error, we still have a clear majority of university-educated ministers. Even in the 1560s and 1570s, when the shortage of ministers was at its most acute, only about 18 out of 69 ministers were not educated at university. Chart 4.9 shows the same data expressed in percentage terms.

³⁷ Matriculation or mention as a student or regent is sufficient to merit inclusion in this category: full graduation was not necessary (for a fuller discussion of this see below).

Chart 4 .8: Proportion of university-educated ministers, by decade intake



Although there is a slight drop for the 1570s intake (the smallest intake), the proportion attending St Andrews University never dropped below 60%, and the proportion attending any university was normally well above 70%. Again, even allowing for some false name-identifications, the proportion of university-educated individuals in the early years is impressive, and gives the lie to any assumption that this was an early seventeenth-century development. It also suggests that the role of St Mary's College as a new reformed seminary under Andrew Melville was not revolutionary, at least in numerical terms; the University was already producing future ministers well before the 1580s.

This data appears even more impressive when compared with the English situation. While the data is rather more complicated, Rosemary O'Day has shown that the church was very slow in providing graduates to parishes, even by the end of the sixteenth century. The Diocese of Chester only had one graduate out of 282 clerics in the 1560s, and in 1584 the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield, hardly a rural backwater, had only 14% graduates. The proportion had only risen to 24% in 1603. In 1585, Whitgift estimated, probably with some, but not undue exaggeration, that

only 600 of the country's 9,000 or so livings could support a learned minister.³⁸ This raises one possible explanation for the Scottish church's remarkable success in comparative terms. In England there were 'excellent and sure' alternative career prospects for graduates. Whatever the problems with stipends, which we shall discuss later, the law and medicine in Scotland were unlikely to have been able to tempt away as many potential ministers as they did in England.³⁹ In any case, the English comparison reflects very favourably on the church in Fife, as indeed does comparison with some statistics on continental Europe cited by Philip Benedict in his survey of European Calvinism.⁴⁰ Fife, with its own university, may have been unusual in having so many educated ministers from the outset.⁴¹ But in the Diocese of Dunblane, the situation in the early years seems to have been not too far behind, with 8 of the 15 ministers serving before 1570 having degrees.⁴²

We saw in the first chapter that the final years of the sixteenth century, and in particular the period 1585-1595 was the key period for providing a dedicated minister to each parish, and the end of the practice of sharing ministers. This fact, coupled with the new data on education, raises an apparent contradiction: why was the church so successful in finding educated ministers, but so slow to find sufficient ministers to serve each parish? The high proportion of university-educated ministers actually pre-dates the provision of a comprehensive parish ministry. One possible explanation, already mentioned in Chapter One, is that standards for the ministry were high, and that the church adhered to the injunction in the first *Book of Discipline* that it was

³⁸ Rosemary O'Day, 'The Anatomy of a Profession: the Clergy of the Church of England' in W. Prest (ed.), *The Professions in Early Modern England* (London, 1987), 40.

³⁹ O'Day, *Professions in Early Modern England*, 66; O'Day, *The English Clergy*, 13, 57. For some other negative estimates of the education of English clergy see Peter Marshall, *The Face of the Pastoral Ministry in the East Riding, 1525-1595* (Borthwick paper 88, York, 1995), 13; Jeremy Goring, 'Reformation of the ministry in Elizabethan Sussex', *JEH*, 34 (1983), 363-64. A more positive example is Ely, where 73% of the 1570s intake were university-educated, though this is still only very slightly higher than Fife: Susan Doran and Christopher Durston, *Princes, Pastors and People: The Church and Religion in England 1529-1689* (London, 1991), 147.

⁴⁰ Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed*, 443. Also, in the German territories of Ansbach and Kulmbach around 32% of the clergy of 1560 had attended university, several decades after the introduction of Protestantism. By the end of the sixteenth century the proportion was at a healthier rate. Dixon, *Reformation and Rural Society*, 73. Finally, the growth of a university-educated pastorate in Basel seems to have been more gradual than in Fife: Burnett, *Teaching the Reformation*, 39, 286. A more positive continental sample is cited in Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation* (Oxford, 1991), 391.

⁴¹ The English Diocese of Ely, with its own local university, also enjoyed a high proportion of well-educated clerics before and after the Reformation, though Cambridge University was of course far larger than St Andrews. F. Heal, 'The Parish Clergy and the Reformation in the Diocese of Ely', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, 66 (1977), 143, 159.

⁴² Todd, 'Reformation in the Diocese of Dunblane', 180. That these 15 ministers had to serve 38 parishes further demonstrates the similarity.

‘alike to have no minister at all, and to have an Idoll in place of a true minister’.⁴³ Of course some men who had not attended university were appointed to parishes, the most famous probably being David Ferguson of Dunfermline. It may have been felt that these men were well-enough qualified; certainly the self-taught Ferguson, originally a glover, was competent in Latin.⁴⁴ But the norm, even in the early years, was to appoint university-educated ministers. As we saw in the first chapter, the church was keen to restrict readers from usurping ministerial functions, and also seems to have been reluctant to ordain readers. Perhaps the attitude to the learning of prospective ministers was much the same.

The level of detail in Dr Smart’s register, and the published graduation and matriculation rolls, makes it possible to break down still further the educational background of Fife ministers. Although we do not know the colleges attended by all of the university-attending ministers, we do have 149 references to the college attended by a minister.⁴⁵ Of these, 67 references are to St Leonard’s College, 65 to St Salvator’s, and 17 to St Mary’s. Nearly all of the St Mary’s references are from before 1580, after which time the college only provided postgraduate theological study. So it was as much the old traditional colleges which provided ministers for Fife parishes as the new seminary at St Mary’s, although the latter college was of course to provide an informal setting for much of the study of divinity which some students undertook after graduation.

Not all of the ministers who attended St Andrews University left with a degree, which was not an uncommon practice at the time. Table 4.9 shows the proportion of Fife ministers attaining various levels of education.

⁴³ *FBD*, 104.

⁴⁴ *DNB*. See also the discussion of Peter Blackwood below.

⁴⁵ At the time of consultation, college had not been noted for those students in Dr Smart’s register whose surnames began with the letters S to Z. There is no reason to suppose that this would significantly skew the findings, and it should constitute a mere reduction in the sample size. It should also be noted that there may be some duplicates in these figures, as some ministers are recorded at more than one college during their university career.

Table 4.9: Educational attainments of Fife ministers at St Andrews University

<u>Decade intake</u>	<u>MA or equivalent</u> ⁴⁶	<u>BA or equivalent</u> ⁴⁷	<u>Matriculated only or 'student'</u>	<u>Known to have attended for other reasons</u> ⁴⁸
1560s	18	10	9	0
1570s	7	2	3	0
1580s	19	8	6	0
1590s	22	1	5	1
1600s	13	0	3	1
1610s	15	0	2	1
1620s	23	0	1	2
1630-1640	19	0	3	1
Total	136	21	32	6

Although there was a steady decline in the proportion failing to take an MA, the majority of students who became ministers, even in the early decades, did take a degree. And while there are still gaps in our knowledge of the university at the time, failure to graduate, or graduation with a BA need not be taken as evidence of academic failure. For one thing, it was necessary to pay a fee in order to graduate, and the process of graduating as a master was more costly and complicated than graduation as a bachelor. If anything, future ministers were more likely than others to take a degree, since around half of all St Andrews students failed to graduate.⁴⁹

If ministers had attended a university other than St Andrews, it was normally either Edinburgh or Glasgow. The only exceptions occur in the 1560s intake, of whom John Rutherford was educated on the continent, and Christopher Goodman was educated (and held a professorship in divinity) at Oxford, and in 1615 when Robert Thomson, possibly a former student at Aberdeen, became minister at Torryburn and Crombie.⁵⁰ Apart from these, there were three Edinburgh graduates and one Glasgow graduate in

⁴⁶ Some students are referred to as licentiates; apparently equivalent to MA.

⁴⁷ Some students are referred to as determinants; apparently equivalent to BA.

⁴⁸ These other reasons include time spent as a regent or divinity student, which required undergraduate experience.

⁴⁹ Steven Reid, forthcoming St Andrews University PhD Thesis (appendix).

⁵⁰ *DNB; Fasti Aberdonenses*, 451.

the 1590s; three Edinburgh graduates in the 1600s; one Edinburgh and two Glasgow graduates in the 1610s; and four Edinburgh and three Glasgow graduates in the 1630s. So of the 20 ministers attending other universities, 11 attended Edinburgh, six attended Glasgow, one attended Aberdeen, in addition to Goodman and Rutherford. The records of these other universities are less complete than those of St Andrews, and there may have been ministers who attended universities outside Scotland. It has naturally been impractical to make a trawl of the archives of continental universities, but the low number of ministers for whom we have no evidence means that any such ministers must have been a very small group. The vast majority of Fife ministers were supplied by the local university.

What did potential ministers learn while at St Andrews University, and why was a university education regarded as so important? Our knowledge of the curriculum at this time is still limited, and research currently being undertaken as part of the History of the Universities Project at St Andrews will hopefully shed more light on this. The first thing to be said is that the relatively high number of ministers who attended the University before 1560 need not be treated completely separately from the post-Reformation cohort. The University was not reformed overnight, and even the reforms of 1579 did not sweep away all of the pre-Reformation elements in the curriculum. Before and after 1560, the syllabus was focused on the liberal arts and philosophy, rather than on religious subject matter. There was a particular emphasis on rhetoric and logic.⁵¹ Rhetoric must have been especially important for future ministers, since it required good elocution, projecting of the voice, and the ability to use persuasive language (even if it was in Latin rather than the vernacular of the parish). At Glasgow University, students were ‘trained to use measured language and an adult manner of speech’.⁵² This sort of ‘public-speaking’ training must have been more directly relevant in the parish pulpits than the actual philosophical content of the arts course, except in so far as it contributed to the general level of a minister’s learning.⁵³ Similarly, John Coffey has found that Samuel Rutherford’s undergraduate education at Edinburgh University was ‘strikingly “secular”’, and has suggested that

⁵¹ Ronald Cant, *The University of St Andrews: A Short History* (Edinburgh, 1946), 18.

⁵² John Durkan and James Kirk, *The University of Glasgow, 1451-1577* (Glasgow, 1977), 85. I am grateful to Steven Reid for this reference.

⁵³ For the importance of Arts courses in providing preaching ‘skills’, see Burnett, *Teaching the Reformation*, 111.

‘the MA course at university was to influence the methodology rather than the content of Rutherford’s later theological writings’.⁵⁴ If we were to substitute preaching for writing, this model seems rather apt for the education of ministers in general.

A rather more directly important subject for the post-Reformation Scottish minister was study of the Bible. This was not a core element of the undergraduate syllabus, and was probably developed mainly at the postgraduate level (as well perhaps as part of extra-curricular studies for the aspiring undergraduate). It is not difficult to imagine that students with an eye to the ministry would have been encouraged to develop their biblical knowledge alongside their formal studies. But in terms of actual subject expertise, the most important part of a minister’s training must have come after graduation. Certainly this was the case in Basel, where theology instruction at the University was primarily intended for serving pastors rather than future ministers.⁵⁵

As we saw in the previous section of this chapter, attainment of an MA, aged about 20, was not the final stage on the path to a ministerial career. Most ministers spent several years engaged in other educational activities during this period of apprenticeship. One final aspect of ministers’ education which can be discussed statistically is the proportion of ministers undertaking postgraduate study. The degree of Doctor of Divinity (DD) was not a common degree, and only eleven ministers (4%) are recorded as possible recipients. The degree was sometimes awarded once a minister was in his parish (and in the case of Henry Philip, after he had left Fife for Arbroath), and does not seem to have been a natural corollary of postgraduate theological study. Only three of the DDs were awarded to ministers who began their service before 1600, while seven were awarded to ministers in the 1610s and 1620s intake. Much more common, though still in the minority, was some evidence of general postgraduate study of theology. 39 of the ministers (16%) are recorded as undertaking some theological study without proceeding to a degree; combined with the handful of DDs this means that around one in five Fife ministers had undertaken theological study. There may well have been a higher number of divinity students, since the failure of such study to lead routinely to a degree means that it would have remained less visible in the records. The figure of 39 is also a minimum since the

⁵⁴ John Coffey, *Politics, Theology and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (Cambridge, 1997), 63-4.

⁵⁵ Burnett, *Teaching the Reformation*, 80.

records from the earlier decades do not systematically record divinity students. Therefore no chronological analysis is offered here, although the number of ministers recorded as engaging in theological study seems to have increased steadily from the 1600s onwards. By the 1620s and 1630s around a third of ministers had studied theology at postgraduate level.⁵⁶

Because of the informal nature of this training, it is difficult to be precise about what it involved. In terms of the university curriculum for theology students offered after the Melvillian reforms at St Mary's College, Steven Reid has identified that it offered a strong grounding in the basics of Calvinist doctrine, as well as the Greek language (though there is little evidence of Hebrew teaching).⁵⁷ But this phase of a minister's training was not solely co-ordinated by the University, since the presbytery would also be involved. Practising the delivery of doctrine at the exercise, as well as the experience gained simply by attending presbytery meetings as expectants, would have been a crucial part of preparation for the ministry, since it provided 'on the job' training.⁵⁸ There was not a firm distinction, in St Andrews at least, between the role of the University and the role of the Presbytery.⁵⁹ In 1603 the Presbytery ordered that the 'heads of religion' were to be debated in University buildings, and in Latin, to open up more freely the errors of the papists, 'and the brethrene exercest in the richt maner of lernit and formall ressoning'.⁶⁰ Specific evidence on a minister's training is hard to find, but a copy of a testimonial given by St Andrews Presbytery in 1630 sheds some light on this conjunction of university and presbytery:

We moderator and remanent Brethrene of the presbytery of st androus conveyned [for?] the tyme, to all and sindrie whome it effeires, and in speciall to the Right reverend fatheris in God, the Archbishops, Bishops and ministeres, does testifie that the Bearer heiroff maister walter stewart student in theologie heir with us in the said city, hes passed his tryelles in the saides studies privat and publick both in Latin and English in interpreting the sacred scriptours, and in sustaining publick disputes upone the controversies in Religione as it wes prescryved be us to him, and wes thereafter admitted upone our publick exercest.

⁵⁶ The overall numbers of divinity students also increased over this period. Steven Reid, forthcoming thesis, (appendix).

⁵⁷ Steven Reid, forthcoming thesis.

⁵⁸ 'On the job' training was also expected in Lothian and Tweeddale, where the Synod stipulated in 1589 that expectants should attend the kirk session of the principle church in their presbytery, 'that [they] may grow in the gift of governament alsweill as in doctrein'. James Kirk (ed.), *The Records of the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, 1589-1596, 1640-1649* (Edinburgh, 1977), 8-9.

⁵⁹ This was also the case with the presbytery and university in Edinburgh and Glasgow: Alan Macdonald, 'David Calderwood: The Not So Hidden Years, 1590-1604', *SHR*, 74 (1995), 70.

⁶⁰ *StAP*, 363-4.

In all the whilkes premises he hes given us such satisfacione, swa that we trust, iff he with his god continew in fervent prayer, diligent reading of the holy scriptoures, and sanctified meditationes, he salbe ane good instrument in the kirk of christ for the furthsetting of his glorie, being able to instruct with wholesome doctrine, and to withstand the common adversaries. And thairfore we recommend him unto zow Be this our testimoniall... [subscribed by brethren, 28 July 1630].⁶¹

It is striking that the Presbytery refers to Stewart as a theology student ‘heir with us’, without any explicit reference to the University. The role of St Andrews Presbytery, based in a university town, must have been different to that of other presbyteries, but the Fife ministers who studied theology at St Andrews did end up in parishes evenly spread out across Fife.

Of course, we only have evidence of theological study by a limited number of St Andrews graduates destined for the ministry. While others may have studied theology and gone unrecorded, it was not the only path to the ministry.⁶² Some ministers taught as regents at the University for several years (sometimes more than a decade) before entering to the ministry, although this was sometimes preceded by a spell as a divinity student. Some ministers, such as John Fairfoul and James Leslie, spent equally long periods as schoolmasters before proceeding to the ministry. In the earlier decades of the reformed church, ministers sometimes even served apprenticeships as readers.⁶³ That these were considered acceptable preparatory activities for ministers was confirmed by the Synod of Fife in 1624, when it laid down standards for admission to the ministry. As well as showing testimonials that he was ‘of blameles lyf and conversation’ and had ‘passed his cours in philosopie’ (i.e. undergraduate study), the expectant had to show that since that time ‘he hes bien exercised in sum honest calling or studie, aither in the Universitie or in sum other privat place’.⁶⁴

Although this shows that formal theological study in itself was not a prerequisite for the ministry, the Synod’s instructions go on to lay down a high standard of

⁶¹ NAS, GD106/33, Testimonial of Walter Stewart by St Andrews Presbytery, 1630. See also Foster, *Church Before the Covenants*, 136-37.

⁶² Cf. *Ibid.*, 133.

⁶³ Although the office of reader was not abandoned in the seventeenth century (ch. 3), incumbents tended to be schoolmasters or clerks rather than future ministers.

⁶⁴ CH2/154/1, pp. 289-90; *Fife Synod selections*, 101. James Sibbald exemplifies these trends: since graduation he had been employed as a schoolmaster, but had continued to study theology, according to his presentation to the parish of Torryburn: NAS, GD15/855, Presentation of Mr Sibbald to Torrie (12 Oct. 1628). For a discussion of ordination itself, see Foster, *Church Before the Covenants*, 140-153.

theological expertise. Once testimonials had been provided, the expectant was examined for his doctrine and ability. This involved interpreting a New Testament chapter in Greek, ‘without praemeditation in Latin or English’, and then doing the same for the Hebrew Old Testament. Twenty-four hours were allowed to prepare this. He was then examined on the grounds of religion, according to Calvin’s Institutes and Beza’s ‘Questions and Confession’, although freedom was allowed to use ‘other learned writers’ if these could provide ‘the best and soundest ansueirs’. Similarly, when the expectant was examined on the ‘contraverted heads’ (points of dispute with the papists), he was not ‘tyed to Kemnisius’, the author of *Examen Concilii Tridentini*, as long as his answers were ‘orthodox and agreabil to our profession’. Finally, the expectant had to deliver a private sermon upon a scriptural text, and then ‘be hard in the publict Exercise’, before being tried by the Archbishop and ‘theis of the facultie resident within the cite and Universitie of St Androis’.⁶⁵ The role of St Andrews again appears to be central: most of our ministers were educated there, and then would normally have been examined and interviewed for the ministry there.⁶⁶

As will be apparent from this discussion, there is much that we still do not know about the training of Scottish ministers. But, as we saw in the first section, it was rare for them to proceed straight from the university education which was the norm into a ministerial post. Nearly all served some sort of apprenticeship, which given the level of theological competence required for entry, must have involved much continued study even for those serving as schoolmasters and readers outside St Andrews. Ian Whyte has inferred the limitations of their education from the limited libraries of seventeenth-century ministers.⁶⁷ But although the focus was undoubtedly narrow, the educational standards for the ministry were set high, at least by the seventeenth century, and involved not just factual knowledge, but the ability to interpret doctrine clearly. Whether they were always rigorously enforced is another question, and one which we cannot answer safely. Ministers like James Carmichael, who demitted his

⁶⁵ CH2/154/1, pp. 289-90; *Fife Synod selections*, 101-2. That the Archbishop did interview candidates is shown earlier in the Synod minutes: in 1611 Gladstones tried the expectant minister of Kennoway, James Simpson, ‘anent his sinceritie in the entrie to the holy ministrie [and] his constant resolution and soundness in the profession of the trew religion’. He was also questioned on his obedience to the King and the Archbishop. CH2/154/1, p. 69.

⁶⁶ For similar examinations for the ministry in early seventeenth-century Zurich, see Maag, ‘Called to be a Pastor’, 72.

⁶⁷ Whyte, ‘Ministers and Society’, 446.

charge ‘being sensible of his weakness for the ministrie’, or John Tullos, simply described as ‘a most weak minister’ seem to have been rarities.⁶⁸ While standards must have varied, the healthy educational backgrounds of Fife ministers, coupled with the relatively few problems with discipline recorded in the database of ministers, means that we can ascribe the church a degree of success in meeting its goal of providing godly and learned men to parishes.⁶⁹

So although there was a shortage of parish ministers in Fife during the first three decades after the Reformation, the men who were appointed were relatively well-educated from the outset. Although study of theology only became common by the seventeenth century, the early ministry had at least normally attended university. By the seventeenth century, many studied theology, although it does not seem to have been an essential prerequisite. What was almost universal, however, was a period of several years between graduation and appointment, during which ‘on the job’ training was carried out. Of course, not all of these men would have eventually become ministers.⁷⁰ But next, we turn to examine the careers of some actual Fife ministers.

Case-studies

There were some Fife ministers about whom we know a great deal. John Knox, Christopher Goodman, James Melville, George Gladstones and Alexander Henderson were all ministers in Fife parishes at some point in their careers. But, equally, there are a vast number about whom we know only the bare minimum: the years which they served in their parish. There was no such thing as a typical minister, of course, and the anonymous individuals are by themselves no more significant than the Melvilles and Hendersons, though they were more numerous. But in the following section, a small sample of five ministers from somewhere in between the two extremes has been selected for detailed discussion, in the light of the trends (and variations) we have noted above. The ministers were not selected entirely at random, but with an eye to

⁶⁸ *FES*, v., 61, 120.

⁶⁹ There were 63 ministers, out of 249, who were involved in disciplinary proceedings between 1560 and 1640, but this figure seems rather less significant when we consider that 35 of the offences related to church politics and the conflict between episcopalians and presbyterians. Only a handful were in trouble for immorality.

⁷⁰ Foster, *Church Before the Covenants*, 138.

maintaining a fair chronological spread, as well as eliminating those about whom we know either a great deal or nothing at all.⁷¹

Thomas Biggar was the first of our ministers to take up office, becoming minister at Kinghorn in 1564 at the relatively young age of 24. A Thomas Biggar was recorded as an entrant at St Andrews University in 1563, and Biggar has also been identified as a canon of the Augustinian Priory at St Andrews by Charles Haws.⁷² He served the parish of Kinghorn throughout his career, until his death in 1605 at the age of 65. In 1574 he acquired the additional charges of Auchtertool (until 1586) and Burntisland (until 1590). These parishes were reasonably close together and compact, especially the two coastal burghs of Kinghorn and Burntisland, and the travel requirements would not have been as onerous as those of some other ministers, like Alexander Muir, who in the 1570s served the three dispersed and rural parishes of Strathmiglo, Falkland and Kettle. In September 1565, Biggar subscribed a testimonial along with two elders and one deacon from Kinghorn. Directed to the superintendent, this confirmed that the couple in question had indeed made promise of marriage. It was a complex matter, and Biggar admitted that he was ‘glayd that the Superintendent and ye have takyn the accion from us, because we culd nocht aggre upon the sam’.⁷³ This was during the first year of his ministry, and probably reflects his inexperience in dealing with consistorial matters, and the lack of training and advice in these matters available for ministers until the advent of presbyteries in later decades.

Biggar married Elizabeth Colvin and had one daughter, Elizabeth, and one son, Thomas, who was later a reader at Kinghorn. We know little about his later career, but we are fortunate in that his testament has survived. His inventory recorded simply household goods and clothes worth £26 13s 4d. In addition to this he was owed £180, leaving a net total of £206 13s 4d, as he had no debts himself.⁷⁴ Like a great many other ministers, he seems to have avoided financial difficulties, at least by the time of his death, but had not amassed any significant wealth. Despite serving during the early years of the reformed church, his career was essentially static.

Peter Blackwood served a rather wider variety of parishes, though like Biggar he retained some charges throughout his entire career. He was minister of Aberdour,

⁷¹ Not every reference to the ministers has been included: for example attendance at General Assemblies or service as commissioners from a presbytery have been excluded.

⁷² Anderson, *Early Records of the University of St Andrews*, 158; Haws, *Scottish Parish Clergy*, 255; *BUK*, i., 222.

⁷³ *RStAKS*, i., 250.

⁷⁴ NAS, Edinburgh Commissary Court, Register of Testaments, CC8/8/43, p. 611.

Dalgety and Saline from 1567 until 1586. Aberdour and Dalgety were adjacent, but Saline was a good distance away, with the parishes of Dunfermline and Inverkeithing in between.⁷⁵ If he managed to provide Saline with a full service, he must have been very diligent, as well as fit and healthy. His duties also included some temporary charges, as minister of Auchtertool from 1567 to 1569, Inverkeithing in 1569, and Beath from 1585 to 1586. Thus at some stage in his career he had served half of the ten parishes in the Presbytery of Dunfermline, a presbytery which he was nominated to help establish in 1582. He apparently moved to Aberdeen in 1586, and died the next year. He married the daughter of a Dunfermline burgess, and had a son named Henry. He later re-married, and the first of the two sons from his second marriage was a student for the ministry in 1587.⁷⁶

We have no evidence of Peter Blackwood's educational background, but he had been recorded as a canon at Holyrood in 1558.⁷⁷ He is referred to in the records of the General Assembly as one of the 'diverse godlie and learned men' of Holyroodhouse, and is described as being, along with another minister, of 'good conversation and literature'.⁷⁸ Service in the pre-Reformation church was entirely compatible with being a good reformed minister, and even in the apparent absence of a university education, such men could be praised, not simply tolerated as a necessary evil. Possibly Blackwood appears in a rather less positive light in 1578, when an unnamed Saline minister was one of those ordered to demit their benefices, having been deposed.⁷⁹ However, he is still named as minister in the 'Assignation' records from 1578, 1580 and 1585, and was a member of the General Assembly in 1583.⁸⁰ It is possible that the original reference was a mistake for the minister of another parish, or that Blackwood had been temporarily replaced by another minister, who was then deposed by 1578. If he was the unnamed minister, then his deposition may have been overturned without record.

⁷⁵ From Saline to Dalgety or Aberdour is a similar distance to that from Leven to Kinghorn, a walk which took the present author the best part of a winter's day, on a good coastal path.

⁷⁶ *FES*, v., 1.

⁷⁷ Haws, *Scottish Parish Clergy*, 255. Although both of the ministers from the 1560s discussed here were pre-Reformation canons, this should not be taken as typical, as we saw earlier in the chapter.

⁷⁸ *BUK*, i., 78.

⁷⁹ *BUK*, ii., 424.

⁸⁰ E47/1, ff. 33r-37r (1578); E47/2, ff. 34r-40v (1580); E47/3, ff. 25r-27r (1585). Each volume contains records for two years, foliated separately. The folio numbers given here refer to the specific foliation for the year being cited. *FES*, v., 1 for Blackwood's membership of the General Assembly.

We know rather more about our third minister, John Michaelson. He took his MA from St Andrews University in 1584, having matriculated at St Leonard's College a few years earlier. He was later to be awarded the degree of Doctor of Divinity at St Andrews in 1621. His first charge was that of Auchtertool in 1588, which was near Balbeardie, home to a landed family of the name Michaelson.⁸¹ He only served there for around a year, before moving to Markinch. He transferred to Burntisland in 1616, swapping places with William Watson, who had been associated with a riot in the burgh.⁸² He remained in Burntisland until his deposition in 1639, and during that time served as constant moderator of Kirkcaldy Presbytery from 1606 to 1637.⁸³ He married twice, and had two sons and two daughters. He seems to have married well: his first wife was the daughter of a Burntisland burgess, while his second wife's surname, Orrok, suggests a connection to the lairds of Orrok, who were prominent in Burntisland. Certainly he was unusually wealthy by the end of his career, apparently having lent Alexander Orrok £1000 prior to 1638.⁸⁴ The kirk session records from the time suggest that Michaelson was perhaps a little less strict on discipline than his predecessor, but he still ran a tight disciplinary system, which collapsed on his departure in the late 1630s.⁸⁵

The chief reason why so much more than normal is known about Michaelson is his episcopalian viewpoint. He was a member of the episcopal party at Falkland in 1609, and published a tract in defence of kneeling at communion in 1620. During the previous year, according to Calderwood, he had attempted to interfere with a cargo of books against the Perth Assembly which were landed at Burntisland.⁸⁶ The Burntisland kirk session minutes offer us a valuable insight into his opposition to the Covenant in 1638. Initially, in April 1638, he gave James Adamson, the reader, permission to read out the Covenant, but refused to hear it himself. A few days later the Covenant was read in print by a fellow minister and sworn 'with tearis of great

⁸¹ James F. Leishman, 'Doctor John Michaelson of Burntisland', *Transactions of the Scottish Ecclesiological Society*, 7 (1924), 68.

⁸² *RPC*, x., 329, 429; CH2/523/1, p. 155.

⁸³ *FES*, v. 81; Leishman, 'Doctor John Michaelson', 69.

⁸⁴ Leishman, 'Doctor John Michaelson', 72; NAS, St Andrews Commissary Court, Register of Testaments, CC20/4/9, p. 740. The testament does not specify that the debt was the result of a personal loan, but it seems too large to be related to his stipend.

⁸⁵ In November 1638, 'no elderis convenit to tak ourdour with offences and therefoir no sessioun nor actioun till god send remead seing the pastour dissasentis frome the brethren of the presbiterie and frome his people condaming baith covenant and generall assemblie as being done without autoritie'. CH2/523/1, 306, 308.

⁸⁶ Calderwood, *History*, vii., 381.

joy', and it was soon recorded that the congregation 'gois frome the kirk and will not heir the minister seing he will [not?] covenant with the people of God'. Although his opposition had begun in a tolerant manner, by September he had been accused of speaking against the Covenant. There is no need to reproduce the various proceedings, but he was eventually deposed from all ministerial functions on 7 February 1639, and warned that further proceedings against him would be initiated if he were to 'labour to draw otheris to his corrupt opinions'.⁸⁷

Even this was not to be the end of the affair, and in July 1640 Michaelson was ordered to give obedience and confess his offence in not subscribing the Covenant. This repentance did not go as planned. The report of his speech in the kirk session minutes is highly revealing, and worth quoting in full.

This Sab. 19 Julii Mr John Michaelson foirsaid stude up in his seat and made his appologie (he so calling it) at full lenth purging himselff that so lang tyme he had not allowit of that blissit covenant and be many reasones excusit his obstinat delayis (and as appeirit) was⁸⁸ nowayis penitent thairfoir bot [?] the contrair layit challenge against the peple auld and young saying that he was haitted be the auld and no reverence be the young laying against thame all thair unchristiane lyff not withstanding of thair covenant bot because of his lawnes of voce I could heir no forther yit to conclude no appeairance of repentance quhairthrow the peples hatred was moir incensed thane befoir laying the wytt [blame] upon the presbitrie⁸⁹

The scribe was still James Adamson, the reader who had read out the Covenant two years previously, and his sympathies are clear. But the extract still gives us an insight into Michaelson's attitudes, and the reference to the unchristian lives of the people is striking: from Michaelson's point of view it was those who put all their trust in the Covenant who were misguided. His 'lawnes' of voice need not have been deliberate, as he was by this time an old man.⁹⁰ Though deposed, Michaelson apparently remained in the area, and we last hear of him preaching at Kirkcaldy in 1645.⁹¹

It should be remembered that these events in Burntisland took place during a time of upheaval, when there was less room for compromise. The years prior to 1638 were

⁸⁷ CH2/523/1, pp. 304-08; NAS, CH2/224/1, Kirkcaldy Presbytery Minutes, p. 258. One other minister in Kirkcaldy Presbytery was in trouble at the same time, the other 'doctor', Andrew Learmonth: CH2/224/1, p. 251.

⁸⁸ Deleted: 'mair was'?

⁸⁹ CH2/523/1, p. 317.

⁹⁰ He had been referred to as 'agit' (CH2/523/1, p. 305), and given that he was a student in the 1580s must have been at the very least in his seventies.

⁹¹ Leishman, 'Doctor John Michaelson', 72.

far less eventful, and there is no evidence of any tension in the kirk session minutes, despite the apparent differences of opinion between the minister and his reader, and the minister and his flock. This also raises the question of the sacraments, and the form in which Michaelson administered them. The session minutes record that in 1620 the communion was administered with ‘sum kneelling bot maist part sitting’.⁹² This tolerance of sitting is reminiscent of Michaelson’s initial willingness for the Covenant to be read. Assuming that this mixed policy was continued, it may be that the most part of the people of Burntisland only came into opposition to their minister when he actively opposed the Covenant.

In order to understand more fully Michaelson’s approach to communion, we need to turn to his 1620 tract, *The lawfulness of kneeling in the act of receiuing the sacrament of the Lordes supper*.⁹³ From the very beginning Michaelson acknowledges the unpopularity of the ruling on kneeling at the Perth Assembly, and claims to be ‘one of those who are hated, reproached, barked at, and persecuted with despitefull speeches’.⁹⁴ We can perhaps see here the origins of the bitterness apparent from the report of his Burntisland ‘confession’. The book follows a straightforward structure; the first part tackles the arguments against kneeling logically, while the shorter second part offers arguments in favour of kneeling. He argues that the fact that Christ and his disciples were sitting at the Last Supper does not mean that sitting at communion was obligatory. As he says, ‘they who thinke this is a good Argument for the Sacrament, will thinke it an evill Argument for Preaching. But if it have no force in the one, neither can it have anie in the other’. Taking this to its logical conclusion, if we followed Christ’s example for everything, we would have to ‘celebrate the communion after supper, and in a private house’.⁹⁵ Michaelson continues to employ this mixture of logic (‘I denie the major’), rhetoric and scripture against the anti-kneelers throughout the book. The section offering the arguments in favour of kneeling is somewhat shorter, and his ultimate conclusion is that since kneeling is an indifferent matter, the law regarding it should be obeyed.⁹⁶ This

⁹² CH2/523/1, p. 189.

⁹³ John Michaelson, *The lawfulness of kneeling in the act of receiuing the sacrament of the Lordes supper* (St Andrews, 1620) (the date of death given on Early English Books Online, 1674, actually refers to Michaelson’s son of the same name). David Calderwood responded with *A defence of our arguments against kneeling in the act of receiving the sacramentall elements of bread and wine impugned by Mr. Michelson* (Amsterdam, 1620).

⁹⁴ Michaelson, *The lawfulness of kneeling*, A3r, pp. 3-4.

⁹⁵ Michaelson, *The lawfulness of kneeling*, pp. 6-8.

⁹⁶ Michaelson, *The lawfulness of kneeling*, pp. 91-92.

emphasis on indifference might help to explain Michaelson's position in Burntisland. While positions were balanced and conflict was avoidable, he was not overly aggressive in the cause of kneeling or episcopacy, but he was strongly defensive when attacked.

John Michaelson was one of a minority of Fife ministers who published books, and about whom we know a relatively large amount. He was unusually mobile, well-off, and regularly involved in ecclesiastical politics.⁹⁷ At the other end of the scale was our next minister, John Colden. He lived from 1561 to 1640, covering almost exactly the dates of this study, and became minister at Kinross in 1593, having previously served briefly at Borthwick and Newlands. He remained there until his death, and never served any other parish. We have no evidence on his educational background, but his son George, his successor in the parish, did graduate from St Andrews in 1627. Although he opposed the introduction of episcopacy in 1606 and was confined to his parish in 1607 for opposing Gladstones as moderator of the Synod, we know little else about his long career.⁹⁸

The final minister in our sample was from the later part of our period, and the first of our sample whose father had been a minister before him. James Sibbald was born about 1591, and graduated MA from St Andrews in 1611 at the age of 20. It was another 18 years before he found a parish, and in the interim period he worked as schoolmaster at Dunfermline, although his presentation recorded that he was still engaged 'in the studie of theologie'.⁹⁹ In 1629 he left the burgh for the rural parish of Torryburn and Crombie in the same presbytery. He remained there as minister until his death in 1667 at the age of 76. He had attended the 1638 General Assembly, and conformed to episcopacy in 1662. He married twice, and had four daughters and three sons. His finances at the time of his death were sound enough for him to be able to leave 200 merks to the schoolmaster and 100 merks to the poor, once his friends had been cared for.¹⁰⁰

Conclusion

⁹⁷ For an example from the presbyterian 'side', see *DNB* on John Moray, minister of Dunfermline (and previously Leith).

⁹⁸ *FES*, v., 65.

⁹⁹ GD15/855.

¹⁰⁰ *FES*, v., 52.

Although there is little more to say about James Sibbald, he provides an appropriate end to our case-studies. Ministers like Sibbald are far more numerous in the database than men like John Michaelson, interesting though the latter may be. Sibbald exemplifies many of the trends which emerged from our more statistical discussions in the earlier part of the chapter. He waited a long time after graduation from St Andrews before acquiring a parish, and once he had acquired it, he remained there until his death. He was not completely isolated from the ecclesiastical politics of the time, but they did not particularly shape his life or career. In fact, he could almost be the model for Walter Makey's sketch of the typical minister of the 1640s.¹⁰¹ This is no doubt partly a result of the fact that he was selected from the latter end of our period. But the more surprising trend to emerge from this chapter is the similarity of career patterns across our period. Although earlier ministers had to serve several parishes, they were no more likely to move around than their successors, and they were almost as well-educated. The period 1560 to 1640 was one of considerable stability, security and continuity within the parish ministry of Fife.

¹⁰¹ Makey, *Church of the Covenant*, 102-03. The only substantial difference is Sibbald's longer period of time between graduation and admission to the ministry.

Chapter 5

Instructing and Exhorting the Laity

One of the most important functions of the minister was the task of instructing the laity in doctrine, as the ministry was the only real medium for the controlled transmission of ideas to most parishioners.¹ As well as sermons and catechism sessions, some ministers communicated religious ideas to the laity through treatises, both printed and manuscript, aimed at literate laypeople.² Some of these texts contained material which was intended for an even wider audience through reading aloud and informal dissemination. These more directly pedagogical elements of the process of protestantisation can not always be completely separated from moral exhortation and spiritual advice. Indeed one of the contentions made here is that it is artificial to impose rigid distinctions between the various media used by ministers, since the sermons, catechetical texts and treatises analysed here display considerable similarities of theme and technique; these were integrated and overlapping genres. The core messages which were transmitted by ministers and the techniques they used are examined here. But it is important to be aware of the intended audience for this material, and a tentative assessment of the results achieved by ministers will also be made. Our evidence for these processes of communication dates from the 1590s; it will be apparent from previous chapters that this survival of evidence almost certainly results from the fact that only around this period did the agenda of thorough protestantisation start to be seriously attempted across Fife.³ The sample of texts dealt with is necessarily rather small: the majority of ministers of the period only left evidence of their instruction of laypeople indirectly in the kirk session minutes, and much of this instruction was probably informal and left no record at all. But although the evidence for this aspect of religious life is much scantier than for the ministry and

¹ Burnett, *Teaching the Reformation*, 4-5.

² The printed texts analysed in this chapter were mostly written by ministers in Fife parishes, although other works have been consulted, and comparisons made when relevant. This approach has been necessary for reasons of time and space, but of course the treatises themselves were not so geographically limited: works from elsewhere would have been used in Fife and the Fife works were probably disseminated further afield. Nevertheless the impression is that the Fife works were not atypical in content, although James Melville's versified catechism, discussed at length below, is unusual in form.

³ See also Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, 3 for the observation that publication on piety in Scotland started to 'to gather momentum' from about 1590. In 1581, it was noted that despite public preaching, 'the ignorance of the pepill [of Edinburgh] is gryt, and apperandlie sall grow gryter, except spedie remedie be put heironto'. NLS, Adv. Ms. 29.2.8, f. 155r.

discipline, it is important that we make some effort to examine the religious instruction encountered by laypeople. Encouragingly, the evidence left by those ministers whose works do survive reveals an interestingly consistent picture of how the ministry of this period communicated religious information to their flocks.

Overlapping Genres

Across early-modern Europe, ministers were at the heart of the campaign to inculcate correct religious doctrine among laypeople. Ian Green has noted the increased use of catechising and the printing-press, and that there was a ‘multi-layered pattern of instruction’.⁴ Although Green is here discussing Europe in general, these comments could easily be applied to Scotland, where from the late sixteenth century ministers supplemented their sermons and catechism sessions with various kinds of treatises – albeit published in much smaller numbers - written to instruct and exhort the laity. These were pitched at varying levels for different audiences, but they were essentially part of the same mission, and indeed transmitted similar messages in similar ways. These multiple layers of instruction can even be found co-existing in individual works. James Melville’s *Spirituell Propine* (1598), for example, contains a set of short questions and answers to be used before communion which detail the basic themes of sin and redemption, the core of the Christian religion, and also basic Christian dogma: the Creed, Commandments and Lord’s Prayer. It also contains ‘A Morning Vision’, a very long (over 20,000 words) verse paraphrase of the whole catechism, set up with an extensive and elaborate narrative framework. This poem provides a much more sophisticated as well as artistic representation of basic Christian belief. The intended audience and method of delivery for the two components of the book were different, but they both reflected the central aim of the book, and indeed reflect the instructional aims of the ministry in general.⁵

⁴ Ian Green, ‘Teaching the Reformation: The Clergy as Preachers, Catechists, Authors and Teachers’ in C. Scott Dixon and Luise Schorn-Schütte (eds.), *The Protestant Clergy of Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke, 2003), 156. See also Graeme Murdock, *Calvinism on the Frontier 1600-1660. International Calvinism and the Reformed Church in Hungary and Transylvania* (Oxford, 2000), 144.

⁵ Melville, *Spirituell Propine*, 42-51 for the pre-communion examination. I am grateful to the British Library for supplying me with a microfilm of their complete copy of this work: the version available on Early English Books Online is incomplete, lacking ‘A Morning Vision’ and other verse at the end of the volume.

The treatises produced by Fife ministers show considerable similarities to what we know about sermons from the time. James Melville claimed that his *Fruitful Exhortation Anent Death* (1597) was based on a sermon he found among his scrolls; although this is a standard prefatory device, the treatise probably did have its origins in his preaching ministry.⁶ Like sermons, this work repeats similar points in different form, provides validating quotes from elsewhere in the Bible, gives repeated advice and exhortation as well as instruction, and it uses numbered lists. William Murray, minister of Crail, published *Nyne Songs* in 1634, a work which provides texts, paraphrases, analysis and explanation of the texts of nine scriptural songs, beginning with the Song of Moses from Exodus 15 through to the Song of Simeon from Luke 2. Each text is presented in the same format, including an ‘Argument and Analysis’ which, like a sermon, dissects and logically summarises the parts of the song. As in a manuscript sermon notebook from the parish of Auchterderran, the discussion of the song is arranged into a numbered list of ‘Observations’ derived from the text.⁷ The way that the discussion of each song is arranged would make a possible outline for preaching, and as with a sermon the text, once explained, is used as evidence to illustrate pre-existing arguments.⁸ This similarity may be partly a result of Murray’s stated intention in writing the book to help trainee preachers as well as layfolk, but the similarities between written text and preached word are not confined to this book.⁹ And in any case, the very fact that a book could be intended for both of these purposes simultaneously demonstrates the lack of distinction between sermon and treatise. Sample preaching material and printed instruction for the laity could comprise one and the same text.

The Auchterderran sermon notebook provides further evidence of the interchangeability and variety of ways in which religious ideas were communicated to

⁶ James Melville, *Ane fruitful and comfortable exhortatioun anent death* (Edinburgh, 1597), 2r-v. See also John Abernethy, *The Dignity and Duty of a Christian* (London, 1620), A3r; Zachary Boyd, *Two orientall pearles: grace and glory* (Edinburgh, 1629), 7.

⁷ William Murray, *Nyne Songs* (Edinburgh, 1634), 6-8, 10-11 (wrongly numbered 11-10); CH2/21/5, f. 28r (my foliation). See Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 50-1 for her comments on this manuscript.

⁸ For an example of this see Observation 6 on the first Song (Murray, *Nyne Songs*, 10). All deliverance from danger, salvation and success is taken to come ‘from God of his mercie without our merits’. The Song itself makes no explicit mention of the point about human merits.

⁹ Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, 62, notes that another work by a Fife minister (William Narne, Dysart) closely resembles ‘sermons reworked for the press’. For another example, see StAUL, msBT750.F7C15, Henry Forrester’s unpublished tract of 1615, ‘The Paithe Way to Salvation’. This also uses numbered lists and logical subdivision. Finally, the ‘Forme of Tryall’ in the *Spirituell Propine* (39-42) reads similarly to the cycle of communion preaching, which as Todd shows, built up fear in the audience before turning happily to redemption and salvation. Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 94-95, 99.

the laity. Some Old Testament texts have been copied into the notebook, but they were almost certainly too long to have been part of a sermon. They could conceivably have been copied straight in from the auditor's Bible, but the vocabulary used is Scots, not the English of the Geneva Bible or King James Version, and the excerpts are headed with a title rather too elaborate (and similar to the words of ministers in printed works) plausibly to have been invented by the auditor. The heading reads 'Out of the prophets sum choise promises of confort and uthers remarkable sentences agains the day of neid meitt to instruct and refresche a weak and weirie saul in these apostat and corrupt no les nor dangerous dayes': a rather elaborate construction if this was a layman copying quotations into his notebook from his Bible.¹⁰ So from where did the auditor acquire this material? The minister may have read out the texts, with a heading, for his more diligent parishioners to copy down, perhaps recognising that we best absorb written material if we copy it rather than quickly reading through it. Or the auditor may have borrowed this text, probably from his minister, and copied it down. He may even have simply been directed to these particular texts by his minister. In any case, this example illustrates the potential variety of ways in which a minister could communicate information and direct the private study of his diligent laypeople, since it is obvious that these texts were not transmitted through the traditional means of private book-reading or exegetical preaching.

This points to the overall variety of forms of religious instruction. As well as sermons and treatises, there was private family prayer and catechesis in the household, the reading - aloud as well as individually - of printed material (like that in Melville's *Spirituell Propine*), and the circulation of manuscript material. These opportunities would not necessarily have been open to all parishioners, and we are seriously limited in our discussions of these processes by the fact that almost all of it would have taken place with no written record whatsoever. Nevertheless the evidence that we do have indicates that we should avoid imposing arbitrary distinctions between sermon, family study, conversation, and text.

¹⁰ CH2/21/5, my f. 93r.

Message and Medium

What information did ministers transmit to the laity using these media, and what knowledge did they seek to impart? The texts surveyed here contain a vast amount of instruction on diverse topics, and only a fraction of this is summarised here. Nevertheless, the aim is to pick out the key themes, and especially those common to most works. At the heart of most religious instruction was the contents of the catechism: the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments and the Creed. These three texts were acknowledged as the core doctrinal statements of the Christian faith.¹¹ The main printed catechisms used in Scotland - Calvin's Catechism and later the Heidelberg or Palatinate Catechism¹² and Craig's Catechism - covered the contents of the three texts through a series of questions and answers, and these were apparently used at parish level to commit to memory the texts themselves, and to foster greater understanding of their content.¹³ But the main aim of parish catechism seems to have been simply to teach parishioners to repeat the three texts: kirk session minutes often refer to laypeople who have failed to rehearse some or all of these essential Christian statements of doctrine.¹⁴ If we use Ian Green's concept of a 'multi-layered pattern of

¹¹ These had been included even in the heretical texts smuggled in from England before 1560: Donaldson, 'Reformation to Covenant', 34, and were at the centre, along with the sacraments, of Archbishop Hamilton's pre-Reformation catechism: John Hamilton, *The Catechisme* (St Andrews, 1551) (a slightly more accessible version is A. Mitchell (ed.), *The Catechism set forth by Archbishop Hamilton* (Edinburgh, 1882)).

¹² One Scottish version of this catechism had the original questions and answers but with additional 'uses' after each section derived from an edition of the Palatinate Catechism used in Dutch churches, showing that even the official catechisms could be presented in varying formats. J. Bastingius, *A Catechisme of Christian Religion* (Edinburgh, 1591), was presumably derived from Hieremias Bastingius, *In Catechesin religionis christianae quae in ecclesiis Palatinatus Belgii traditur* (Heidelberg, 1590), which is listed in *Catalogue of Books Printed on the Continent of Europe, 1501-1600 in Cambridge Libraries* (2 vols., Cambridge, 1967), i., 102. Note also the swift turnaround between continental and Scottish publication.

¹³ For the catechisms see H. Bonar (ed.), *Catechisms of the Scottish Reformation* (London, 1866). It is difficult to be certain which texts were used at parish level, since the session minutes very rarely specify the text, although for an exception see *RStAKS*, ii., 848, where it is ordained that the minister was to teach from 'Maister Calvins *Catechise*', while the children would answer from the '*Commoun Catechise*', which may have been an attempt to ensure genuine understanding rather than mere parroting. There were apparently other unofficial catechisms in use in addition to Melville's *Spirituell Propine*. For this phenomenon, which mirrored on a much smaller scale the profusion of catechisms in England but contrasted with the continental model of a few official catechisms, see McMillan, *Worship of the Scottish Reformed Church*, 134; Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion*, 190. For recent discussion of Scottish catechesis see especially Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 73-76.

¹⁴ See for example OPR 403/1, ff. 57v, 62v, 71, 79v, 84r (Anstruther); CH2/523/1, p. 114, 116 (Burntisland); CH2/77/1, ff. 33r, 57v (Culross); CH2/472/1, p. 100 (Kinghorn), *RStAKS*, ii., 839-40, 880, 890. Not all of these, however, were ignorant of all three elements: many knew the Lord's Prayer but did not know the Creed and/or the Commandments. The Lord's Prayer seems to have been easier to remember, as is probably still the case today.

instruction’, then we are dealing here with the most basic level: forcing parishioners, beginning, but certainly not ending with childhood, to learn and to repeat the three core texts of the Christian tradition.¹⁵ The many examples of parishioners failing to achieve this minimum level of religious knowledge show that this could not be taken for granted, although of course the many people who could repeat the texts properly appear less frequently in the session minutes. So simply getting people to memorise the three elements of the catechism was the first and most fundamental educational task of ministers and their kirk sessions.

But this is not to say that there was a complete disjuncture between the different levels of instruction, between the Creed, Commandments and Lord’s Prayer, and the more elaborate religious education attempted by ministers. One of the most fascinating ‘catechisms’ of the period was published by James Melville, his *Spirituell Propine* or gift to his parishioners.¹⁶ It contained a variety of elements, but as well as some basic instructional questions and answers there was a long poem entitled ‘A Morning Vision’. Once the narrative framework for this had been established, Melville presented three very lengthy paraphrases: of the Lord’s Prayer by the character ‘Devotion’, of the Creed by the character ‘Faith’, and of the Ten Commandments by the character ‘Repentance’.¹⁷ Melville thus provided his more advanced readers with a more subtle and detailed exposition of these basic statements.¹⁸ The basics of the Christian faith could be elaborated into more complex literary and moral discourses. The Commandments were in the sixteenth century a ‘relative novelty’, in the words of John Bossy, as across confessions they replaced the deadly sins as the core Christian expression of morality.¹⁹ So perhaps Melville felt that his readers needed a more detailed explanation of what they actually meant; indeed he treats them as entire moral codes rather than a simple set of rules. The prohibition on murder is thus expanded to include not just other physical violence but

¹⁵ Green, ‘Teaching the Reformation’, 156. Catechism was not just intended for children and the ignorant, with Luther remarking that ‘no-one...ever surpasses the catechism in wisdom’. Cited in Strauss, *Luther’s House of Learning*, 159.

¹⁶ In form the *Spirituell Propine* was unlike a traditional catechism, but Melville referred to it as such in his Autobiography: *JMD*, 12.

¹⁷ Melville, *Spirituell Propine*, 53-133.

¹⁸ Although this was a literary rather than an analytical exposition, it still had stylistic elements that were reminiscent of formal catechisms: for example in 3 quatrains, the first quatrain has ‘Lord’ in its first line, the second has ‘Christ’ in its first line, and the third quatrain has ‘halie ghaist’ in its first line. Thus the rhythmic structure of the poem indirectly recalls the logical structure of a catechism, even in a section which is not nominally explaining the parts of the Trinity. Melville, *Spirituell Propine*, 56-7.

¹⁹ John Bossy, ‘Moral arithmetic: Seven Sins into Ten Commandments’ in E. Leites (ed.) *Conscience and Casuistry in Early-Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1988), 215.

also ‘all murder of the heart, and tongue’.²⁰ For Melville, and he was unlikely to have been alone in this, the core elements of the catechism were fundamental to Christianity: he argued that the illiterate can be saved because they have the Word preached to them and ‘the whole substance’ taught to them ‘in the Commandes, Beleefe, and Lords prayer’.²¹ This perhaps explains the importance of these three elements in post-reformation religious instruction: they were essential for salvation, they were the first key pieces of information a Christian learnt, and they were also a set of moral codes that should inform the rest of his or her life.

Beyond these core elements, there was also a striking amount of common ground in the theological messages conveyed by ministers to the laity. In a variety of sermons and treatises, the basic narrative of salvation is described: God is fundamentally good, Man is fundamentally wicked, but saved through the undeserved gift of grace from God.²² A sermon on Ezekiel 22, recorded in the Auchterderran notebook, was split into two parts: firstly judgement and punishment of the people for their sins, secondly God’s offer of mercy to those who would turn towards him. This was reinforced in a following sermon on James 4 which stressed firstly God’s goodness to Man and secondly Man’s great offences against God, the two being reconciled through God’s unwarranted promise of salvation.²³ Similarly the opening pages of William Narne’s *Christs Starre* start by building up a description of sin before turning to the remedy, salvation through Christ alone.²⁴ It was perhaps James Melville who provided the most explicit statement of this basic Christian narrative of salvation, in the introduction to his paraphrase of the Song of Moses. The arguments of the song were fourfold:

1. The Goodnes of God
2. The wickednes of man
3. Righteous judgements
4. His glorie magnified in undeserved grace and mercie toward his elect²⁵

²⁰ Melville, *Spirituall Propine*, 126. See Burnett, *Teaching the Reformation*, 53 for a similar avoidance of narrow definitions of the Commandments in Oecolampadius’ Catechism.

²¹ Melville, *Spirituall Propine*, 44-45.

²² Ian Green has noted a broader pattern in Protestant preaching whereby the allegorical and moral tendencies in preaching were replaced by a narrower focus on the ‘essentials of salvation’: Green, ‘Teaching the Reformation’, 157.

²³ CH2/21/5, ff. 26r, 28r.

²⁴ William Narne, *Christs Starre* (London, 1625), 1-3.

²⁵ Melville, *Spirituall Propine*, 134.

This basic message could be put across more subtly and symbolically: in Melville's 'Morning Vision' the character of 'Faith' is stronger than her sisters 'Devotion' and 'Repentance'; she is 'victor over the world' and through her 'Christ...insinuates Himselfe into the saule'.²⁶ The intelligent reader is left in no doubt that it is faith, not adherence to the Commandments or the Lord's Prayer, that ultimately saves. In another Melville poem from the *Spirituell Propine*, 'The Feeling of Sinne and force of Faith for Salvation', Melville reinforces in verse the essential arguments he had extracted from the Song of Moses: 'Sa I transgresse incessantly/Thine halie law I mon confesse'. He continues:

But though I feare thine angrie face
Because of mine iniquitie:
Yet I take hold upon thy grace
Thy mercies greate and clemencie²⁷

This basic Christian teaching that underpins much of the religious information that ministers transmitted to laypeople may seem uninteresting because it is so deeply conventional.²⁸ But the fact that it was still so dominant in the seventeenth century raises doubt about the prior success of ministers in instilling Protestant understandings in Fife's laity (as opposed to the broad identification discussed in Chapter Three). And even assuming that the people at whom these works were aimed were already grounded in this soteriological narrative, the desire of ministers to reinforce it constantly suggests that perhaps the readers of these types of works were expected to transmit such understandings to the less well-informed around them.

As well as re-inforcing the core message of Christianity, religious instruction served the purpose of opening up scripture for the laity. Sermons and treatises sought to explain the meaning of passages from scripture, and much space was devoted to breaking down texts into their component parts and logically expounding them.²⁹ A main aim of the sermons recorded by the Auchterderran parishioner seems to have

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 70-71.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 140-41. See also Melville's poem 'A mediation of the love of Christ and effects thereof for thre thankfulnes', NLS, Adv. Ms. 19.2.7, ff. 97-102. Melville's emphasis on grace is discussed at greater length in Louise Yeoman, 'James Melville and the Covenant of Grace' in S. Mapstone (ed.), *Older Scots Literature* (Edinburgh, 2005), though the *Spirituell Propine* is not used in this article.

²⁸ The teachings of Fife ministers on death displayed in two *ars moriendi* treatises are also traditional and unsurprising. Melville, *Fruitful and comfortable exhortatioun*; William Murray, *A Short Treatise of Death in Sixe Chapters* (Edinburgh, 1631). See also the poem at the end of Boyd, *A cleare forme of catechising*, 116-7.

²⁹ See Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 50; Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion*, 39.

been simply to explain the scriptural texts as logically as possible by breaking them down into parts, although of course this may also be a result of the mediated nature of our text as the auditor might have imposed a more logical order on the sermons in his notation of it.³⁰ William Murray's *Nyne Songs* sought to introduce and explain some familiar and not-so-familiar biblical texts in a very detailed and logical way, providing paraphrases, summaries and even textual annotations.³¹ The paraphrases performed a valuable interpretative function, clarifying the scriptural text where necessary: for example in his paraphrase of Exodus 15, the rather subtle phrase 'the horse and his ryder hee hath throwne in the Sea' is given as the more literal 'God, hath drowned in the Sea *Phoroahs*, charets and horses with all his armie which persewed us'.³² Two other works focus on scripture in a rather different way, using an array of scriptural quotes to illustrate a particular theme, in both cases the importance of Christ.³³ But in any case the Bible lay at the heart of most religious instruction of which we have evidence.

The way in which the text of the Bible was used in these forms of instruction is interesting: in most works scripture was so integrated into the text that it would not be going too far to refer to the process as biblical intertextuality. In the work of the Dysart minister, William Narne, scripture and original prose co-exist so closely that the distinction between the two is barely sustainable. In *Christs Starre*, Narne's own text is in roman font while biblical quotes are italicised, but the quotations are thoroughly interspersed rather than the occasional quotation following a paragraph of prose. Even individual sentences could combine the two:

That this treatise (^b*By the hope of the Spirit of Jesus Christ*) may be a furtherance of our timous [timely] coming to him. [in the margin: ^b. Phil. 1.19]³⁴

³⁰ See for example CH2/21/5, ff. 17r, 26r.

³¹ Murray, *Nyne Songs*, 1, 6, 8.

³² Murray, *Nyne Songs*, 1. See also p. 19, where Deuteronomy 32:11 is supplemented with the clarification that the eagle was acting as a metaphor for God's protection: 'such care had God of his people'. The paraphrases sometimes added information not present in the original text: for example p. 17 where Murray adds to the injunction to listen in Deuteronomy 32:1 the warning that if you do not listen, 'the Heavens and earth, and all creatures other shall be witnesses against you'.

³³ Narne, *Christs Starre* (which, unusually, also contains a wide variety of supporting evidence from non-scriptural sources); Forrester, 'The Paithe Way to Salvation', which uses diverse scriptural proofs to point to Christ's supremacy, suggesting an attempt to convey a sense of the essential unity of scripture, that it all pointed to Christ. Similarly William Murray emphasised the analogy between the Virgin Mary's Song and the song of Mary, Moses' sister: *Nyne Songs*, 85

³⁴ Narne, *Christs Starre*, 3.

This is obviously going beyond the convention of backing up each argument with a set of Bible quotes: here scripture is woven into the book as a fundamental part of the text, the words of the minister being inextricably bound up with the Word. One sentence, addressed to the reader at the start of the book, was made up solely of nine short biblical quotations and one from Augustine: ‘Awake and arise, come and see, Take up and reade, Beleeve and remember, Doe good, and suffer, Strengthen others and praise God’.³⁵ Building the Bible into the text in this way probably did little to convey scriptural knowledge to the readers because there are simply too many references to look them all up, and because they are used as ornamentation rather than as documentation. Similarly James Melville’s exhortation for people to examine themselves before communion was backed up by four pages of scriptural quotations.³⁶ For Melville and Narne the intention was probably to convey a sense of the authority and centrality of scripture, and create an impressive atmosphere of biblical knowledge. The biblicism of the ministers in trying to educate the laity perhaps stemmed not just from a desire to explain the individual texts of the Bible, but also to create a culture where the Bible was the central authority, and where its presence was all-pervasive.

In terms of more practical approaches, the ministry used numbered lists and logical subdivision of ideas to communicate religious ideas to the laity. Margo Todd has already valuably pointed to the importance of numbered lists in sermon records like our Auchterderran sermon notebook, and it is worth re-emphasising the importance of the fact that the numbered lists made it into the auditor’s notebook.³⁷ Numbered lists in a preacher’s notes might be a useful aid to memory while in the pulpit, but if an auditor, albeit a diligent one, was recording the numberings then perhaps the minister was being very explicit in his ordering of points, perhaps even calling out ‘secondly’ and ‘thirdly’ before making each point. But in any case, the use of numbering was not confined to the pulpit. Treatises by ministers, which as we have already seen bear a close resemblance to sermons, also use numbered lists. Henry Forrester’s manuscript ‘The Paithe Way to Salvation’ exemplifies this technique: the various Old and New Testament proofs of God’s promise are arranged numerically, often with a

³⁵ Narne, *Christs Starre*, A1r. The texts are Ephesians 5:14, Song of Solomon 2:10, John 1:46, Augustine’s *Confessions*, Book 8 ch. 12, Luke 8:50, John 15:20, Psalm 34:14, Philippians 1:29, Luke 22:32, Psalm 147:12. He followed a similar practice in his *Pearle of Prayer* (Edinburgh, 1630), n.p., in the Epistle to the Reader, where part of Acts 2:40 is built into his own prose.

³⁶ Melville, *Spirituall Propine*, 34-38.

³⁷ Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 50. See CH2/21/5, ff. 28-29 for some examples.

sub-list, also numbered, within a general topic.³⁸ Some later seventeenth-century Fife sermons also have numbering within numbering.³⁹ William Murray used numbering extensively in *Nyne Songs*, a work intended to provide training for new preachers as well as education for the laity, perhaps trying to offer practical examples of how to do this. The use of numbered lists to aid memory could even be found in verse. James Melville's sonnet 'The Substance of Salvation', from his *Spirituall Propine*, offers five ('upon thy fingers tell') things to meditate on to help to achieve salvation.⁴⁰ That Melville suggested memorising these on the reader's fingers shows the level of pre-occupation with religion he expected of his flock, but also demonstrates the need for tailored religious instruction for those laypeople who were thought to be less capable of absorbing and retaining large amounts of information than their godly ministers and contemporaries.

As well as using numbered lists, ministers broke down their instruction into manageable chunks. Biblical texts were explained by being logically subdivided into their component parts. Murray, in his 'argument and analysis' of Exodus 15:1-18, writes that the Song has three parts. The first of these parts was the preface. This preface contained three elements, which he then lists. The second part contained two elements: the praise of God and prophecy. The praise of God contained eight things. The prophecy contained three. The third part of the song was the conclusion which, thankfully, had only one element to it, that the Kingdom of God is everlasting.⁴¹ This highly complex structure is perhaps more easily represented graphically (Table 5.1, below).⁴² It seems that this way of structuring an explication is comparable to the methods employed in theological theses at St Andrews University.⁴³ Whether or not this logical structure makes the text easier to understand is questionable: a reader who tries to work out in his head where each element belongs might find himself missing

³⁸ Forrester, 'Paithe Way', ff. 9-10.

³⁹ StAUL, DHF Box 60 (BX9178), Covenanters' Sermons.

⁴⁰ Melville, *Spirituall Propine*, Y1v.

⁴¹ Murray, *Nyne Songs*, 6-8.

⁴² The structure of this table might suggest Ramist influence in the organisation of material. A similar visualisation actually appears in a Scottish edition of one of the English Calvinist and Ramist Dudley Fenner's works, a book which like many of the Scottish works offers a series of sermon-style expositions (with logical subdivision) of scripture, the Lord's Prayer, and the Sacraments. Dudley Fenner, *Certain godly and learned treatises* (Edinburgh, 1592), 64-5, 99.

⁴³ I am grateful to Steven Reid for allowing me to consult his as yet unpublished analysis of these theses.

the whole point of the text.⁴⁴ It was for this reason that Table 5.1 was initially constructed. But Murray applied this same technique to each Song: even Song 8, consisting solely of Luke 2:14, is divided into three parts.⁴⁵ Perhaps this was to teach trainee preachers to apply the same techniques to all scriptural passages. William Narne used a similar technique when describing the various roles of Christ. He first lists the roles: king, priest, doctor, physician, and pastor. He then in turn describes the way in which Christ fulfils these roles.⁴⁶ That this logical structure was still used in a relatively diverse and exotic text like *Christs Starre* indicates its importance in the ministerial mindset, as does the highly logical narrative structure of Melville's 'Morning Vision', which was, after all, a poem.⁴⁷ So ministers sought, wherever possible, to divide texts logically into their constituents, in order to convey more easily their religious meaning to the laity.⁴⁸

This is not to suggest that religious instruction was attempted in a dry, expository fashion. William Narne drew on a variety of non-biblical sources for *Christs Starre*, and used exotic imagery, for example when he described the uses and beauty of various stones and pearls from scripture and also from Pliny: 'the Saphir is profitable against the stinging of Scorpions, and stayeth the fluxe of blood'.⁴⁹ The point of all this was to argue for the even greater utility and beauty of Christ, but Narne went about this in a far from straightforward or dryly theological manner. The Fifth minister who applied the most creativity to the task of educating the laity was probably James Melville. Despite the separate title-page, his 'Morning Vision' was not a totally separate work from his catechism, the *Spirituell Propine*, nor was it a mere literary appendix. It was 'the grounds of the doctrine of godlinesse and salvation, contryved in a peece of not unpleasand and verie profitable Poësie'.⁵⁰

As well as the more factual information conveyed pleasantly in 'Morning Vision', Melville uses his literary framework to convey religious material in a less straightforwardly textual way. In the narrator's account of his conversionary

⁴⁴ Burnett, *Teaching the Reformation*, 141, 193, makes a similar point in relation to a Basel theology professor's use of Ramist subdivision.

⁴⁵ Murray, *Nyne Songs*, 96. See also Boyd, *Two orientall pearles*, 8.

⁴⁶ Narne, *Christs Starre*, 24-32 and passim.

⁴⁷ This was essentially structured as follows: Narrator's introduction; Devotion's oration; the Lord's Prayer paraphrased (by Devotion); Faith's oration; the Creed paraphrased (by Faith); Repentance's oration; the Commandments paraphrased; narrator's conclusion.

⁴⁸ Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 49.

⁴⁹ Narne, *Christs Starre*, 9-10.

⁵⁰ Melville, *Spiritual Propine*, A2r.

encounter with the personifications of Christian values, the figure of Piety is introduced thus: 'I had no sooner set mine eye/On heaven to seeke his [God's] face:/When in came ladie Pietie/The mother of all grace'.⁵¹ The symbolism here is obvious: as soon as one turns faithfully to pray to God, piety is present, and the possibility of grace enters. The narrative device is again used to impart a religious message when Piety introduces the narrator to her daughters, who are to speak their orations and paraphrases of the catechism. Faith comes first, leading Repentance by the hand. Following them, but with both sisters at her command, was Devotion.⁵² So faith is the first element of salvation, naturally, and it leads to repentance. But both, fascinatingly for Melville's view of religion, are at the command of devotion, who is associated above all with prayer.⁵³ The symbolism is continued when the daughters present the narrator with books: Faith gives him the New Testament ('the store of Christ his grace'), then Repentance (who is 'sobbing sare') offers him the Law and the Prophets, before Devotion, the dominant daughter, gives him a copy of the Psalms, 'well set in musik sweete'.⁵⁴ This narrative is very revealing as to the nature of James Melville's view of religion; for all his concern with discipline in his Anstruther ministry, Melville gives higher status to faith and devotion than to repentance, and sets devotion and prayer above all. But it also reveals a mind that wanted to explain Christianity to his flock in a more literary, dramatic, and perhaps more memorable way.⁵⁵

Of course, there is more to the 'Morning Vision' than this, and the role of the actual paraphrases of the catechism was undoubtedly central. But Melville also offers moral guidance as well as instruction. In the early stages of the poem, which takes place early on a cold April morning, the 'sweet Ladie Lasines [laziness]', and her daughters Lust, Vain-Glory and Envy tempt the narrator to stay in bed.⁵⁶ He is only rescued from this by the intervention of the Lady Olitnes (eagerness, readiness), who

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 56

⁵² *Ibid.*, 57-8.

⁵³ See also *JMD*, 16-17, where Melville recounts his first encounter with a sense of spirituality (aged approximately 9), when he would 'pray going to bed and rising and being in the fields alan to say ower the prayers I haid lernit with a sweit moving in my hart'.

⁵⁴ Melville, *Spirituall Propine*, 58. Fascinatingly, by putting the Lord's Prayer first in the sequence of paraphrases, Melville diverges from the practices of Luther and Calvin in their catechisms. Luther, wanting to emphasise above all man's sinfulness, put the Commandments first, while Calvin placed the Creed first. See Ian Green, *The Christian's ABC. Catechisms and Catechizing in England c. 1530-1740* (Oxford, 1996), 281; Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning*, 161-2.

⁵⁵ Reading this part of the *Spirituall Propine* one cannot help thinking of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

⁵⁶ Melville, *Spirituall Propine*, 53-4.

warns him that Lasines ‘mother is of all mischeefe/Hir daughters deathes sting’.⁵⁷ Melville here offers more moralistic warnings on the temptation to laziness and the seductions of the flesh, once again demonstrating the diversity of his approach. Melville uses classical allusions from the very start: ‘When that the nightes rest was geane/and Phaebus cleer’d the ayre’.⁵⁸ His *Fruitful and Comfortable Exhortatioun anent Death* uses non-Christian imagery, like the phoenix, in its discussion of death and resurrection.⁵⁹ And indeed the very narrative structure of the ‘Morning Vision’ is a somewhat unorthodox medium for religious education. Women personifying virtues was far from unusual in more secular writings, but their precise status in the poem is unclear; are they perhaps angels? Melville did not follow traditional forms when he constructed his catechism, and although he was an atypically creative minister, his ‘Morning Vision’ certainly points to a more diverse and esoteric strand in the education of the laity. His approach was not entirely unpopular, as indicated by the accompanying sonnets to the *Spirituall Propine* by Fife ministers, including Robert Durie who answered a potential criticism of Melville by declaring ‘And poesie, it is na Paganisme’.⁶⁰

As well as the ‘Morning Vision’, Melville uses verse in other parts of the *Spirituall Propine* to convey religious material. A roundel entitled ‘The Seamans Shoute’ is essentially a sea-shanty, possibly composed with the work-songs which might have been sung by the fishermen and sailors among his East Neuk congregations in mind.⁶¹ With its regular responses after each couplet (‘Hail how’; ‘Stand be’), and its use of obvious nautical imagery (the church is a ship⁶², the captain is Christ, the mariners are ‘pastours all expairt’ and the passengers are ‘all the faithfull band’), the song must have been designed to appeal to the inhabitants of these seafaring communities.⁶³ Given that well-off, godly sea captains were among Melville’s flock, perhaps he

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 53. See also Murray, *Short Treatise of Death*, 2, for quotations from classical literature.

⁵⁹ Melville, *Fruitful and comfortable exhortatioun*, 50.

⁶⁰ Melville, *Spirituall Propine*, B1r.

⁶¹ Although John Purser, *Scotland’s Music* (Edinburgh, 1992), 101 suggests that Melville experienced ‘protestant guilt’ about his love of music, this only applies to secular, and in particular instrumental music. He displays no ambiguity about the value of music and singing in religious life in the *Spirituall Propine*.

⁶² Although as Purser notes this can also be understood as ‘the ship of the soul’. Purser, *Scotland’s Music*, 115.

⁶³ Melville, *Spirituall Propine*, 142-44.

hoped that those who came across the book might teach their crew to sing the song.⁶⁴ However, although the lyrical content of the song evoked a nautical air, the music to which the words were set was originally the tune of a love poem.⁶⁵ In any case, Melville showed a sensitivity to the form of religious instruction, something we can also see in his use of sonnets. There are several of these in the *Spirituell Propine*, and they were a good medium for conveying religious information. They are short, follow a fixed form, and the closing couplet provides an opportunity to sum up the message and/or offer a simple exhortation. We have already seen how the sonnet ‘The Substance of Salvation’ uses a familiar pedagogical technique: the reader is provided with five things to remember for salvation, and to remember these on his fingers – ‘upon thy fingers tell’.⁶⁶ James Melville, to an even greater extent than William Murray, William Narne and Henry Forrester, was an imaginative and creative communicator of essential religious information. The diet of instruction available by the seventeenth century was by no means limited to the catechism sessions in church on a Sunday and the official texts of the catechisms of Calvin and Heidelberg.

Audience and Dissemination

Of course, the forms of religious instruction we have surveyed here were not aimed at the entire population of lowland Scotland, and we need to be aware of the different audiences for religious instruction. While all sections of the laity were targeted for the kirk sessions’ catechetical efforts, the readers of instructional treatises were by definition part of the literate, relatively prosperous and committed portion of the laity.⁶⁷ As we have seen, the ministry’s efforts to inculcate Protestant doctrines were,

⁶⁴ See the contributors to Anstruther’s poor box, for example Andrew Richardson who gave in the collection from his ship’s last voyage to Norway in 1611: CH2/624/2, pp. 115-122.

⁶⁵ Purser, *Scotland’s Music*, 115-6. Purser’s analysis is based on a 1612 version of the song (broadly similar in textual terms), which was collected together in a manuscript with other roundels, possibly by Melville’s brother David. See G. Bantock and H. Orsmond Anderton (eds.), *The Melvill Book of Roundels* (London, 1916). Both the editors of this volume and Purser suggest that the lyrics might have been inspired by Melville’s dramatic escape to England in 1584, which is recounted in *JMD*, 168-70. While this is possible, as a minister in the East Neuk and a lifelong inhabitant of the East coast, Melville would hardly have been a stranger to nautical affairs without this experience. Purser suggested that the song was for ‘domestic consumption’, perhaps ‘in the parlour of some gentle divine’. This may have been the case with the 1612 version of the song, which appeared in a collection alongside a variety of secular songs, but the song in the *Spirituell Propine*, coming alongside a series of clearly instructional and exhortatory poems, was surely intended for a larger lay audience. I am very grateful to Jane Pettegree for these references and advice on the matter from a literary perspective.

⁶⁶ Melville, *Spirituell Propine*, Y1v.

⁶⁷ See Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, 138 for ministers’ promotion of reading godly books.

in Ian Green's words, 'multi-layered'; they aimed at both the most intellectually sophisticated and the most illiterate in society.⁶⁸ James Melville's *Spirituell Propine*, which was dedicated to the flock of Kilrenny, but especially the elders, is an excellent example of this. It contained, as we have seen, both questions and answers for use by children and the uninitiated, and a complex poetic exposition of Christian doctrine. Similarly, the substance that the auditor of the Auchterderran sermon notebook derived from preaching was almost certainly very different from what was taken in by the less literate and less committed portions of the laity, and the children present. And in an age before mass literacy and when book ownership was still limited, we must be wary of assuming too wide a readership for the religious treatises examined here. Certainly there was no Scottish equivalent to the healthy English trade in cheap and popular 'Godly tables' containing religious material, often in forms reasonably accessible to those with only basic literacy.⁶⁹

This is not to say that the effect of the religious instruction contained in books would only have been felt by literate book-buyers. The questions contained in Melville's *Spirituell Propine* would naturally have been read out by the householder or elder carrying out the examination, and the answers learned by the respondents, ensuring that the contents of the book were disseminated beyond its literate readership.⁷⁰ But even beyond this traditional medium of instruction, a supplement to what was carried out in church, there were other ways in which religious information would filter down below the book-buying elite. In Germany and Switzerland, a variety of vernacular texts intended for household instruction was made available alongside the official catechisms.⁷¹ This process, replicated on a smaller scale in Scotland, was described in detail by James Melville himself, who included instructions on the household use of the most sophisticated element of his book, the 'Morning Vision'. Based on his own family experience, Melville advised that on a Saturday evening (which in any case should be free for prayer and study) the householder should read out some part of the versified catechism to his children and

⁶⁸ Green, 'Teaching the Reformation', 156.

⁶⁹ Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety*, 217-253.

⁷⁰ For household catechising in England see Green, *The Christian's ABC*, 4, 204. It was also aimed at in Hungary and Transylvania, although apparently not until closer to the middle of the seventeenth century: Murdock, *Calvinism on the Frontier*, 147-148.

⁷¹ Steven Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), 163-4; Gerald Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning: Indoctrination of the Young in the German Reformation* (Baltimore, MA., 1978), 4-5.

servants. He would then question them on it on Sunday night and Monday morning after prayer, and get those that could read to sing ‘clearly and distinctly’ from it so that the illiterate might learn it more readily. On following evenings the children and servants would continue to learn the passage if they had not yet mastered it.⁷² So as well as being read for personal edification by the literate and godly elite, even such an advanced work as the ‘Morning Vision’ was intended to filter down to those most in need of instruction.⁷³

Melville’s work also appeals directly to different sections of the laity. At one point he specifically addresses the youth, discussing their career options and stressing the need for piety, whatever path they choose.⁷⁴ And as we have seen, the ‘Seamans Shoute’ was aimed at seafaring communities, like those Melville ministered to in the East Neuk.⁷⁵ The dedicatory sonnets contributed by other ministers are mostly in the vernacular, using relatively homely rather than literary language to put the book in context for an ordinary reader, and encouraging them to use it.⁷⁶ William Murray allocated psalm tunes to his metrical paraphrases of the *Nyne Songs*, enabling them to be sung in the household or at gatherings to some of the most familiar tunes in post-Reformation Scotland.⁷⁷ And most of the other works discussed here could be used in a similar way to Melville’s ‘Morning Vision’: a householder in possession of Forrester’s ‘Paithe Way’ could drill his family in the scriptural quotations used to prove the truth of Christ as well as simply reading the treatise himself, just as he could use the paraphrases and annotations of scripture in Murray’s *Nyne Songs* to teach his charges about the texts in more detail. That Melville was not alone in desiring this sort of household education is indicated by the attempts of kirk sessions to enforce household catechism, prayer and study sessions. Abercrombie session followed an act of the General Assembly in ordering, alongside weekly examination, a twice-daily family exercise, and the master to examine the household.⁷⁸ Anstruther kirk session was glad to enforce the similar order by St Andrews Presbytery in 1640 to ensure that

⁷² Melville, *Spirituall Propine*, 17-18.

⁷³ Of course, reading in early modern Europe was not exclusively the private activity which it normally is today: Andrew Pettegree: *Europe in the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford, 2002), 81.

⁷⁴ Melville, *Spirituall Propine*, 150.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 142-44.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, B1r-B2v. The exception, unsurprisingly, is Andrew Melville, although even his ‘Theocrene’ is given in translation as well.

⁷⁷ Murray, *Nyne Songs*, 13, 39, 60. The literary merits of this work are attacked, however, in Jamie Reid-Baxter, ‘The Songs of Lady Culross’ in G. Munro, S. Campbell et al (eds.), *Notis Musycall: Essays on Music and Scottish Culture in Honour of Kenneth Elliott* (Glasgow, 2005), 157.

⁷⁸ CH2/1056/1, f. 57r.

each household should have some scripture read in the morning and evening, as well as a prayer.⁷⁹ Although these references come from the end of our period, they seem to represent an attempt to bring actual practice into line with the desired standard rather than an entirely new approach to religious instruction. It need not be the case that the works discussed here only reached the most committed and literate levels of society, because they contained a diverse set of materials, and could be used in a diverse set of ways.

How many people actually came into contact with these works, even allowing for household dissemination? It is naturally very difficult to be sure of the size of print runs or numbers purchased, although we do have a helpful reference in James Melville's autobiography where he claims that he lost around 400 merks by the publication of his 'Catechisme'.⁸⁰ However, if the publication was funded by Melville rather than by a publisher hoping to make profit, then the loss of investment might not necessarily mean that only a small number of copies were sold: the intention might have been to subsidise what was always going to be a pious enterprise rather than a business scheme.⁸¹ The books by William Murray and William Narne from the seventeenth century might have enjoyed greater success, although Narne's *Christs Starre* was published in London and so may not have reached as much of the Scottish market as the other works, assuming that some copies remained in England. The book market was expanding during this period, although average real prices were also on the increase between 1603 and the start of the 1640s.⁸² But the readership of the books might not have been limited to those who bought new copies. We must not discount the possibility of book-borrowing, especially since ministers were part of the audience for the books, and may well have lent them to the more enthusiastic of their flock.⁸³ Some of the shorter material lends itself well to being copied down, such as the question and answer sections, prayers and sonnets.

On a similar note, the possibility of manuscript circulation should also not be discounted. David Mullan has noted this phenomenon among the ministry, and they

⁷⁹ CH2/624/3, p. 135. See also CH2/77/1, f. 61v (Culross).

⁸⁰ *JMD*, 12.

⁸¹ I am grateful to Philip John for advice on this matter.

⁸² Mann, *Scottish Book Trade*, 200, 207.

⁸³ See Hamilton's *Catechisme* for a precedent, and also the above discussion of the Old Testament texts in CH2/21/5.

may well have circulated their materials beyond their profession.⁸⁴ It was certainly customary to refer to this practice in prefatory material, perhaps stating that one had published the work only on the advice of others who had seen it.⁸⁵ But manuscripts also undoubtedly circulated of which we have no published record, one example we have already discussed being Forrester's 'Paithe Way'. Forrester may have hoped to publish this work, and he certainly did not write it for his own use, since it is laid out in book form, with even a book-style title-page and dedication.⁸⁶ Forrester himself indicated that the manuscript was intended for a wider audience than just its dedicatee, William Oliphant of Newton, when he expressed the hope that God would 'give a blissing to this wark in your lo[rdship's] hairt, and in the hairtis of all thois into quhais handes it sall cume'.⁸⁷ This tantalising quotation hints at possibilities for the dissemination of religious information of which we can have no record, but it does at any rate show that such forms of dissemination were at least aimed at by the ministry.

The laity, however diverse an audience they might have been, were not the only target of this religious instruction. Ministers also wrote for other ministers. William Murray's *Nyne Songs* was the most explicit example of this: he stated that the book was useful to two groups of people: 'good Christian men and women, who delyte to meditate in the Law of God both day and night' and 'yong students of Theologie aspyring to be preachers and Ministers of Gods word'.⁸⁸ He explained that he favoured 'the *open*, rather than the *cryptic*, style' in preaching, and this was certainly reflected in the text itself, which provided a model for preachers in how to explain the text clearly, using paraphrases to explain the 'Hebraismes and Hellenismes'.⁸⁹ The 'annotations' on the scriptural songs provide examples of how to explain textual issues to the laity.⁹⁰ And the very fact that exactly the same approach is taken to each scriptural text teaches preachers how to approach their text for the week: explain its

⁸⁴ Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, 14-15. See also Green, *The Christian's ABC*, 46 for English circulation of manuscript catechisms.

⁸⁵ Murray, *Short Treatise of Death*, n.p., in the Dedicatory Epistle; Melville, *Spirituall Propine*, B2v, in Melville's Sonnet to the reader.

⁸⁶ Forrester, 'Paithe Way', f. 1r. See Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning*, 164, for low survival rates of manuscript catechisms in Germany.

⁸⁷ Forrester, 'Paithe Way', f. 3r. See also NLS, Adv. Ms. 19.2. 7, f. 60r, for James Melville's 'Releise of the longing soule', a long metrical paraphrase of the Song of Songs, which was intended 'for memorie, and often meditation'.

⁸⁸ Murray, *Nyne Songs*, n.p., in 'To the Loving Christian Reader'

⁸⁹ Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, 61; Murray, *Nyne Songs*, 'To the Loving Christian Reader'.

⁹⁰ Murray, *Nyne Songs*, 8-11, for example.

meaning and any tricky language, make observations on the text and draw broader meaning. The expository parts of *Nyne Songs* could even be used rather like the English homilies as mini-sermons, or at least as the basis for sermons.⁹¹ *Nyne Songs* was not unique in this respect: Forrester's 'Paithe Way' and Narne's *Christs Starre* offer a wealth of quotations and cross-references, while Melville's *Spirituall Propine* offered resources in the form of prayers, exhortations, and perhaps simply the inspiration of the 'Morning Vision'. In the English context, Green has noted that catechisms were aimed at ignorant pastors as well as ignorant laypeople. But in Scotland by the seventeenth century, a work like *Nyne Songs* provided the aspiring minister not with the basic knowledge he needed, but with guidance on the communication skills he needed to transmit that knowledge to ordinary people. So works of religious instruction could filter down to the people through the preaching of other ministers as well as through private reading and more informal household dissemination.

Perhaps the biggest question we could ask about the attempts by the ministry to instruct the laity in the Christian faith and doctrine is: how successful were they? Yet this is also the hardest question to answer, because the evidence we would need to answer it safely is by definition not contained within the books and manuscripts we have surveyed. How enthusiastically did people absorb the information in the treatises, whether it was communicated directly to them through private reading or as part of a household study group? And although the Auchterderran parishioner who took such detailed notes on sermons was undoubtedly atypical in his recording technique, how typical was his enthusiasm for the material, and his capacity to absorb it? Kirk session minutes usually offer us only negative evidence for laypeople's levels of knowledge: they record individuals or couples who had failed to memorise the Creed or Commandments, but not those who did meet the sessions' minimum standards.⁹² We may, however, guess that there was a significant improvement by the seventeenth century, when parishioners were exposed to regular sermons and when kirk sessions fully enforced attendance at sermons and catechism sessions, encouraging and sometimes enforcing household religious instruction. This would certainly be in line with the trends found by Burnett in Basel and its rural hinterland.⁹³

⁹¹ On the homilies see Green, 'Teaching the Reformation', 159-160.

⁹² See above, n. 14.

⁹³ Burnett, *Teaching the Reformation*, 234-6.

Success may have been enhanced by the offering of incentives for good performance and disincentives for failure to recite the core tenets.⁹⁴ We may also point to increasing literacy and provision of schools as factors which may have produced laypeople more familiar with Christian faith and doctrine.⁹⁵

As we have seen, the early seventeenth century was the era when treatises imparting religious instruction began to be written and published in Scotland.⁹⁶ This must have had some positive effect on the people who bought, used, and came into contact with the material in these works. But the very fact that they were published is suggestive in itself: even highly enthusiastic ministers like James Melville would be unlikely to publish a book for which they feared there would be no market. These ministers seemed to have felt that there was a group of laypeople who had fully grasped the basics of the faith, wished to learn more, and perhaps wanted to school their own households as well. The ministers were, after all, leaders of their own congregations as well as authors, and the works they published must have reflected what they perceived to be the needs of their more godly and literate parishioners. The ministers were also perhaps aware of a more widespread religious taste: an appetite for music. In including simple score music for the 'Seamans Shoute', and allocating Psalm tunes for *Nyne Songs*, James Melville and William Murray showed that they thought there was a chance that people might wish to sing these texts in informal situations. The use of a pre-existing tune for the 'Seamans Shoute' was a common technique used by Protestants, and may have at least enhanced the song's memorability.⁹⁷ Unless we are to submit to the all too tempting, but anachronistic assumption that the ministers were disastrously quixotic in their aims, we may posit that there was by the seventeenth century a small but significant portion of the laity which was committed to learning and helping to disseminate doctrine, and perhaps a

⁹⁴ See for example the poor man whose pittance was to be increased from 16d per week to 2s if he could learn the Commandments. A major disincentive was the withholding of communion or marriage and baptism from couples and parents who could not recite the Creed and Commandments. OPR 403/1, ff. 71r, 104v; CH2/472/1, p. 100; CH2/77/1, ff. 33r, 57v; *RStAKS*, 439, 794, 809-10. One Burntisland man was ordered to learn the Commandments and Creed on pain of banishment. CH2/523/1, p. 116.

⁹⁵ R. A. Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe* (2nd edn., Harlow, 2002), 44.

⁹⁶ Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, 3.

⁹⁷ Purser, *Scotland's Music*, 115.

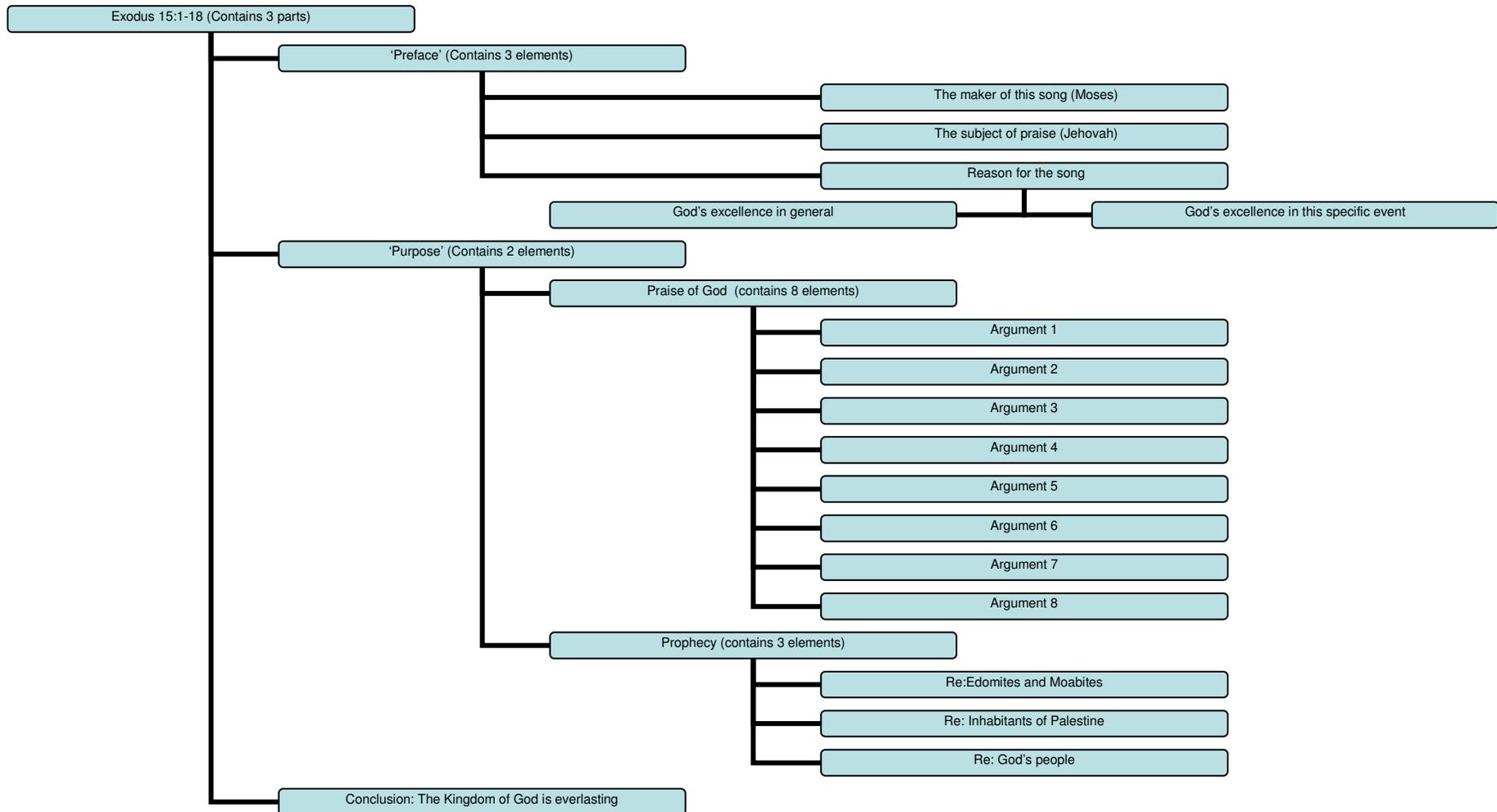
larger group willing to participate in communal religious activities like singing and informal catechesing.⁹⁸

Conclusion

From the 1590s onwards, Fife parishes had their own minister and for the most part a reasonably well-functioning kirk session. This era also saw significant attempts by the ministry to instil more religious knowledge in these developing Protestant communities. Fife ministers preached, catechised (with the support of kirk sessions) and in some cases wrote works designed to foster a deeper Protestant understanding of Christianity. Aimed at diverse portions of the laity, these efforts sought to emphasise key Christian doctrines, and to inspire piety in the people. We can not be sure how widely and how deeply they affected the congregations of Fife, and lay responses to them must have been variable at best. But it is becoming increasingly clear that by the seventeenth century the church in Fife was finally coming much closer to the ideals of the original reformers: it preached, it disciplined, and it sought to inculcate sincere and correct Protestantism in the laypeople it served.

⁹⁸ It has been suggested that in England there was a core lay market for religious literature: Marsh, *Popular Religion*, 143.

Table 5. 1: Structure of ‘The argument and analysis of this Song’ [of Moses at the Red Sea] (Murray, *Nyne Songs*, pp. 6-8).



Chapter 6

The Disciplinary Mission

The aim of this chapter is to provide a detailed analysis of the disciplinary activities of kirk sessions in Fife during the first four decades of the seventeenth century. We saw in Chapter 2 that not all kirk sessions were fully functional for all of this period, but it is in these years that we have our first substantial evidence from outside St Andrews and Anstruther, two parishes which have been treated in detail by Michael Graham and in the second chapter of this thesis.¹ Michael Graham's conclusions are sound, but are not necessarily applicable to the later period after about 1600, and the greater diversity of parishes sampled here will also allow for a fuller coverage of kirk sessions in the inland areas of Fife. The only other detailed discussion of kirk sessions in our period is provided by Margo Todd.² Todd's real interest is in the cultural and ritualistic elements of repentance and so her approach is naturally qualitative. A rather more serious drawback has been noted by Julian Goodare, who observes that most of Todd's evidence is drawn from urban areas, and that evidence from rural and urban areas is used without real distinction.³ The variations between even closely situated parishes make it essential that our understanding of discipline rests on detailed study of individual parishes before attempting to draw more general conclusions. A key concern here has been to avoid the traditional focus on St Andrews and the more advanced urban communities, but it should be stressed that there was not a clear-cut distinction between slow and ineffective rural kirk sessions and highly zealous burgh kirk sessions. The situation in Fife was rather more complicated than that, unsurprisingly when we consider that the distinction between rural and urban parishes is not a concrete one: burgh parishes had sizeable landward portions, and did not necessarily have larger overall populations.⁴ Terms like 'burgh', 'rural' and 'landward' are used loosely rather than concretely in this chapter.

While all of the surviving pre-1640 session minutes from Fife have been surveyed, the statistical analysis in what follows is largely based on four sample

¹ Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 77-97, 205-239.

² Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, esp. 127-182.

³ Goodare, *Government of Scotland*, 256; 'Review of Margo Todd's *Culture of Protestantism*', 375-77. Foster, *Church before the Covenants*, 75-76 offers a brief commentary on discipline in some seventeenth century parishes, sampling one year for each parish.

⁴ See for example the parishes of Ceres, Kettle and Markinch which in 1755 exceeded the populations of Anstruther and Burntisland. Kyd, *Scottish Population Statistics*, 38-41.

parishes: Burntisland, Monimail, Culross and Abercrombie (one from each contemporary presbytery). This was necessary for practical reasons, but also offers us the chance to look at each parish in its own local context, rather than attempting too great a degree of amalgamation. Within the sample parishes, Burntisland has the most voluminous minutes (as well as some of the most colourful popular behaviour) and so the examples taken from it are rather more numerous. Nevertheless, statistics cannot provide the full picture, and the approach throughout has been qualitative as well as quantitative. For the first three presbyteries, the parish selected was the one with the most substantial kirk session minutes surviving, and which seems to have been as representative as possible of the presbyteries' parishes.⁵ Within St Andrews Presbytery, both St Andrews and Anstruther have more substantial kirk session minutes than Abercrombie, but as these parishes have been covered by Michael Graham and in previous chapters, it was decided to use Abercrombie, a more typical rural parish, to provide a broader perspective.⁶ For each of these four sample parishes a database has been constructed of all the cases pursued by the kirk session.⁷ A combined database has also been constructed, containing all 1605 cases from the four parishes, but it has been used with caution, and only to supplement the more local statistics, since such amalgamation can seriously distort local variations when used simplistically. The minutes of other parishes have been used where necessary to confirm or contradict the patterns emerging from the main data, but this use has been

⁵ Within the Presbyteries of Dunfermline and Cupar, only Culross and Monimail have full session minutes extant. There is some kirk session material interspersed with births and marriages in the Old Parochial Records, but this is obviously unsuitable for systematic statistical analysis. Qualitative material from them, has been included however. See for example Balmerino (Cupar Presbytery, GRO, OPR 409/1), Torryburn (Dunfermline Presbytery, GRO, OPR 458/1), and Kennoway (Kirkcaldy Presbytery, GRO, OPR 440/3).

⁶ Despite having St Andrews as its hub, the parishes of this presbytery were every bit as rural as those of other areas, including Forgan, Dunino and Kemback alongside the prominent East Neuk burghs.

⁷ It should be noted that the method of counting cases used here differs from Michael Graham's, since we have rather different purposes. Graham's statistics (*Uses of Reform*, 77n) are based on counting each individual as a separate case, an appropriate technique for analysing popular behaviour. Since the concern here is with the practice of discipline itself, each individual disciplinary action has been treated as a case. Thus if three people are summoned together for a single act of sabbath-breach (for example if they were drinking together instead of attending church), then it is recorded in the database as one single case (although discussion of the numbers of individuals involved is also included). There is no reason to suppose that such a case offended the kirk session three times as much as a case involving a single slanderer. One possible distortion produced by counting individuals is that offences which by definition involve more than one individual (especially fornication) may appear more prominent than they really were. But there is no single correct way to interpret disciplinary statistics, and other historians will have their own preferences. Some other conventions should be noted: cases have been included even if the accused was found not guilty, or if they failed to compare, or if the case was mentioned but dropped out of the record. Again, this is because the kirk sessions' intentions are being measured, rather than patterns of popular behaviour. A case brought up again in a following meeting is not counted as a new case.

impressionistic rather than quantitative. Differences from, and similarities with the discipline of 1560-1600 covered in Chapter Two have been noted where relevant. As that chapter demonstrated, it is potentially highly misleading to read seventeenth-century evidence onto sixteenth-century parishes. So what follows should not be construed as applicable to the earlier kirk sessions of the second half of the sixteenth century, but as a study of the disciplinary system once the basic structures were up and running, at their various speeds across Fife.

The parish of Burntisland contained the royal burgh of the same name and the inland agricultural land to the north, most notably the lands of the lairds of Orrok. Like other parishes in Kirkcaldy Presbytery for which we have minutes, it was a coastal burgh, centred on trade and seafaring, and was especially prosperous during our period.⁸ Its precise population is unknown, but there were approximately 900 communicants in the early years of the seventeenth century.⁹ Monimail was a very different and more rural landward parish, like most of those in Cupar Presbytery. Its population is unknown but was probably below that of Burntisland.¹⁰ Culross was another coastal royal burgh at the height of its prosperous period. Its economy was based on the salt-making industry as well as trade and coalmining. Finally, Abercombie was a small parish centred on the inland village of the same name, although after our period the nearby fishing village of St Monans became included in the parish, and gave it its modern name.¹¹ It will be apparent from this that the burghs still occupy a disproportionately prominent place in the analysis; this is simply because so many rural parishes leave us no evidence. Monimail and Culross are the only parishes in their respective presbyteries with substantial kirk session minutes, while we have minutes for several parishes in those east coast presbyteries with the highest concentration of burghs, St Andrews and Kirkcaldy. However, the burghs sampled here were much smaller than the main towns of the realm, and hopefully were more representative of the lowland experience as a whole. With that

⁸ Kinghorn, Dysart and Kirkcaldy all have surviving minutes from our period, and being similar parishes all quite close together, Burntisland was selected for the simple reason that its minutes start the earliest, in 1602. The presbytery also contained inland parishes, of which Markinch has surviving minutes, but it was felt that the coastal burghs were such an important feature of this area that their minutes should be included.

⁹ CH2/523/1, pp. 82, 112, 128.

¹⁰ In 1755 its population was recorded at 884, well below Burntisland's 1390. Kyd, *Scottish Population Statistics*, 39, 41.

¹¹ More information on these parishes is available in Lamont-Brown, *Villages of Fife*, and *Fife in History and Legend*.

qualification, as much attention as possible has been given to the distinct rural and urban experiences of discipline.

What was punished? Disciplinary priorities

Which types of offence were the priority of Fife kirk sessions in the seventeenth century? It has normally been assumed that sexual incontinence was the main focus, an obsession even, for Scottish kirk sessions.¹² This is partly a result of the focus on the earlier period, and on the St Andrew kirk session minutes which are dominated by sexual offences, especially in the first few decades.¹³ We saw in Chapter Two that even during the period before 1600, kirk sessions were not uniformly focused on sexual sins. In Anstruther the sabbath, and in particular protecting the sermon, seems to have been the main priority. The more complex evidence from Fife parishes in the seventeenth century raises further doubts about the assumption that sexual offences were the main priority on the disciplinary agenda.

Burntisland kirk session pursued 931 cases between 1602 and 1640, an annual average of about 25, and investigated the behaviour of around 1400 individual men and women.¹⁴ Table 6.1 gives a detailed breakdown of the types of case pursued in Burntisland over these years.¹⁵

¹² This has normally been assumed in surveys like John Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1985), 130 and R. Po-Chia Hsia, *Social Discipline in the Reformation: Central Europe, 1550-1750* (London, 1989), 129. Although Graham has partially revised this general view, describing a shift from a focus on sex towards a broader range of offences, his overall data (numerically strongly focused on St Andrews) 'makes [kirk sessions and presbyteries] seem somewhat obsessed with the issue of illicit sexuality'. He also states that even once other categories of sin were targeted, sexuality remained the 'bread and butter of Scots discipline'. Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 281-286, 346.

¹³ See ch. 2; Parker, 'Kirk by Law Established'.

¹⁴ This represents the total number of individuals: allowing for repeat offenders the figure would be smaller.

¹⁵ The numbers in the following analyses add up to more than the stated totals because some cases involved more than one offence. For example, if a man was prosecuted for committing slander on the sabbath, the case would be counted separately under each category. This is unavoidable because it would be misleading simply to allocate these sorts of individuals to a single category, given that the aim here is not to describe the total number of cases, but the proportions of cases.

Table 6.1: Numbers of cases pursued by Burntisland Kirk Session, 1602-1640

Verbal ¹⁶	288
Fornication	266
Sabbath-breach	139
Drink	116
Violence	61
Disobedience	33
Scandalous carriage ¹⁷	31
Receiving forbidden persons	28
Adultery	20
Marital ¹⁸	20
Abuse of one's spouse	11
Witchcraft, healing and related offences	9
Sexual assault	5
Unknown	4
Child-death	3
Religious ignorance	3
Kirk-yard offences	2
Begging	2
Cross-dressing	1
Child abuse	1
Heterodoxy	1
Superstition	1
Theft	1

This shows the considerable range of offences prosecuted by a burgh kirk session, and it is worth emphasising that almost any public act that could be considered a sin was at some point considered for prosecution by the kirk session. But the size of this table can be misleading, since about half of the offences listed were only prosecuted fewer

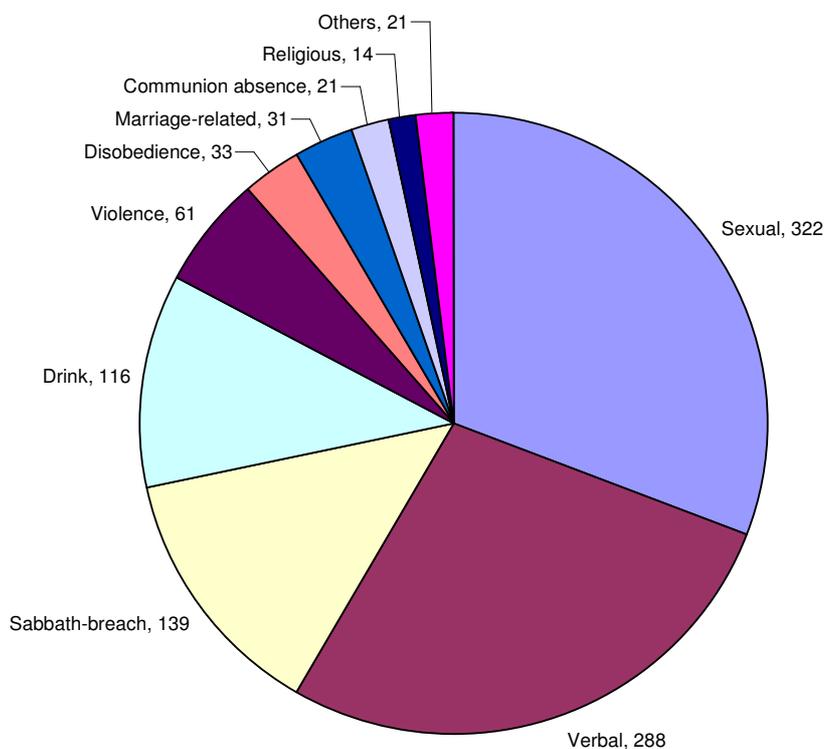
¹⁶ Slander, flyting (quarrelling) and all forms of swearing and blasphemy.

¹⁷ Sexual misbehaviour short of fornication or adultery.

¹⁸ Normally relating to marriage contracts, not adhering to one's spouse etc. Excludes all sexual misdemeanours.

than ten times in four decades. This becomes more apparent when we represent the breakdown of offences using broader categories (Chart 6.2).

Chart 6.2: Breakdown of offences in Burntisland using broad categories¹⁹



Although sexual cases (including fornication, adultery and scandalous carriage) are now seen to outnumber the nearest category, verbal offences are still strikingly prominent. A kirk session pursuing more cases of verbal offences than of fornication, and almost as many verbal cases as all sexual cases, can hardly be said to be obsessed with sexuality, or even to be focusing on sex as the main disciplinary target. Unlike in Anstruther, sabbath-breach occupies a fairly distant third category of offence, and is actually not much more prominent than cases relating to drink. So in Burntisland the focus was not just on sex, but also on sins relating to disorder like slander, flying, drunkenness and violence.

Why were these sorts of offences so prominent in Burntisland? Of course, in answering this sort of question, the possibility that the minister and elders were

¹⁹ The 'violence' category excludes sexual assault, which has been included under 'sexual' offences. The 'religious' category includes offences like witchcraft and healing, heterodoxy and superstition.

personally pre-occupied with these offences must be taken into account. But part of the answer may also lie in the nature of the settlement. Burntisland was a relatively small, compact burgh, in which getting to church was not normally a problem. However, living conditions would have been cramped, exacerbating social conflicts and increasing the likelihood of fornicators being caught (and perhaps offending in the first place). Many travellers and traders passed through the town, increasing concerns about disorder and moral laxity. Coupled with simple variations in the disciplinary interests of ministers and elders, local factors such as these may explain why patterns of discipline could be so different in Fife parishes.

Within the category of ‘verbal’ offences, 179 involved slander, 97 involved flyting and 41 involved swearing or blasphemy.²⁰ The slanders found in Burntisland were colourful and varied, although there were recurring motifs such as the curse ‘god let never sea nor salt water bear him’, a particularly potent suggestion in a coastal community.²¹ This standard threat was normally treated as slanderous and abusive rather than having connotations of actual witchcraft, but it could sometimes be built into insults with impressive verbal resonance: ‘harlot hur theiff huir loun queane theiff queane god let never siea nor salt water bear hir’.²² The basic insults of ‘whore’ and ‘thief’ were dominant in Burntisland, as elsewhere, but more striking language was sometimes used, including the insult ‘Jakis [latrine] bairns’.²³ One woman alleged that two other women had said ‘that sch[e] wer ane serpent quhome the devill had begottin’.²⁴ Naturally, this was not treated as a serious possibility by the session, but more everyday slanders like ‘whore’ and ‘thief’ also seem to have been treated as mere insults, and were not normally investigated as specific allegations (although there was one unusual case where the slander was of a specific case of theft).²⁵ Even a slander of witchcraft against a suspected witch was treated as a verbal offence.²⁶ All this would suggest that, in contrast to the findings of Laura Gowing on London and Elizabeth Ewan on medieval Scottish flyting, these prosecutions were not first and

²⁰ There was some overlap between these offences in practice.

²¹ CH2/523/1, pp. 41, 49, 206, 215, 300, 303.

²² CH2/523/1, p. 41.

²³ CH2/523/1, p. 125.

²⁴ CH2/523/1, p. 25.

²⁵ CH2/523/1, p. 188. This would ring true for modern insults: if one thinks of the most commonly used insults today it would seem obvious that few of them are seriously intended to be understood as based in reality.

²⁶ CH2/523/1, p. 194. Alison Hanham finds the same even in the 1650s in her *The Sinners of Cramond: The Struggle to Impose Godly Behaviour on a Scottish Community, 1651-1851* (Edinburgh, 2005), 39-40.

foremost about female reputations.²⁷ Rather they were about punishing ‘unchristian behaviour’. In Burntisland, although women were far more likely to be disciplined for verbal offences, men were almost as likely as women to be victims of verbal offences, which would also gravitate against the importance of sexual reputation in kirk session discipline. In Anstruther, where slanders of the sort described here (though usually less colourful) were also common, the session referred to such offences as ‘unchristiane abuse of godis creatures’, and so the element of punishing sin in slander cases cannot be ignored.²⁸ When discussing witchcraft allegations, Todd noted that kirk sessions were more concerned with communal harmony than any actual danger of witchcraft, and the same can perhaps be said of slanders in Burntisland, with the addition that we should not ignore the explicitly religious element of discipline, which was after all a mechanism for punishing sin.²⁹

It is not surprising that rather different patterns to those found in Burntisland emerge when we turn to examine the disciplinary caseload in Monimail. Parishes like Burntisland and Culross might deal with several hundred cases in a decade, but between 1629 and 1640 Monimail prosecuted just 60. This may be partly a result of its smaller population, but that would still not account for a difference of this scale.³⁰ The difference was not only one of scale though, as Table 6.3 demonstrates.

²⁷ Laura Gowing, ‘Language, Power and the Law: Women’s Slander Litigation in Early Modern London’ in G. Walker and J. Kermode (eds.), *Women, Crime and the Courts in Early Modern England* (London, 1994), reprinted in L. Hutson (ed.), *Feminism and Renaissance Studies* (Oxford, 1999); Elizabeth Ewan, ‘Many Injurious Words: Defamation and Gender in Late Medieval Scotland’ in R. Andrew McDonald (ed.), *History, Literature and Music in Scotland, 700-1560* (Toronto, 2002), 166.

²⁸ CH2/624/2, p. 5.

²⁹ Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 248.

³⁰ Markinch (CH2/258/1) seems to have followed a similar pattern, though it pursued more cases in the late 1620s and was more inclined to punish sabbath-breach.

Table 6.3: Numbers of cases pursued by Monimail Kirk Session, 1629-1640³¹

Fornication	33
Sabbath-breach	16
Unclear ³²	7
Adultery	1
Blasphemy	1
Kirk-Burial	1
Receiving beggars	1
Slander	1
Superstition	1

Monimail elders pursued a much more limited range of offences, and apart from fornication and sabbath-breach, all known cases were one-offs. In stark contrast to Burntisland there was just one case of slander, in 1640, and it was combined with sabbath-breach.³³ Admittedly, we only have evidence from the 1630s from Monimail, and in the 1630s Burntisland actually pursued a slightly lower proportion of verbal cases. By the late 1630s some more genuinely religious offences were punished, including playing on Yule day and blasphemy. But the discrepancy is still striking, and can only be satisfactorily explained by differing patterns of behaviour and disciplinary concern.

In a rural parish like Monimail, the population was more dispersed and so opportunities for social conflict would have been correspondingly rarer. It is also possible that it was harder for elders to detect verbal offences, whereas fornication was more easily detectable through pregnancy and child-birth. Clandestine drinking and disorder would also have been harder to detect. The concerns of the elders may also have played a part; perhaps the threat of illegitimacy was more worrying in a small rural parish with limited resources and fewer opportunities for

³¹ Again, the total in this table is more than 60 because of overlapping cases.

³² This normally occurs when a punishment is prescribed without indication of the offence committed.

³³ CH2/548/1, p. 21. From the admittedly limited evidence we have on another rural parish in Cupar Presbytery, Kettle, which survives as part of the Births and Marriages Register for the parish, a similar pattern seems to emerge. Most extant cases in the 1630s involved fornication, but there were cases relating to the Sabbath and flyting by 1635. OPR 435/1, ff. 10v, 12v-13r.

apprenticeships.³⁴ Michael Graham has suggested that sessions started off by pursuing sexual offences, which were not controversial, and then moved on to other cases when they were better established.³⁵ If this was happening as late as the 1630s then Monimail was developing as a kirk session about half a century behind parishes like Anstruther. But it is also possible that the elders of rural parishes like Monimail simply observed less disorder and unchristian behaviour in their parish, and so focused on the obvious sin of fornication. In any case, the differences between Monimail and Burntisland provide clear confirmation of Julian Goodare's suggestion that a more subtle understanding of patterns of discipline is required.³⁶

Culross kirk session was, in terms of overall numbers, more comparable to Burntisland than to Monimail, unsurprisingly for another coastal burgh. It pursued 473 cases between 1630 and 1640, an average of almost 50 each year. But it did not mirror Burntisland's disciplinary priorities, as Table 6.4 demonstrates.

Table 6.4: Numbers of cases pursued by Culross Kirk Session, 1630-1640

Sabbath-breach	229
Fornication	98
Verbal	65
Communion Absence	18
Receiving forbidden persons	15
Disobedience	14
Drink	13
Adultery	13
Scandalous Carriage	10
Religious ignorance	6
Violence	6
Kirk-yard/burial-related	4
Witchcraft and related	4
Unknown	4

³⁴ In Burntisland even the kirk session was involved in apprenticeships, taking steps to secure an apprenticeship for a young man in 1615. CH2/523/1, p. 154.

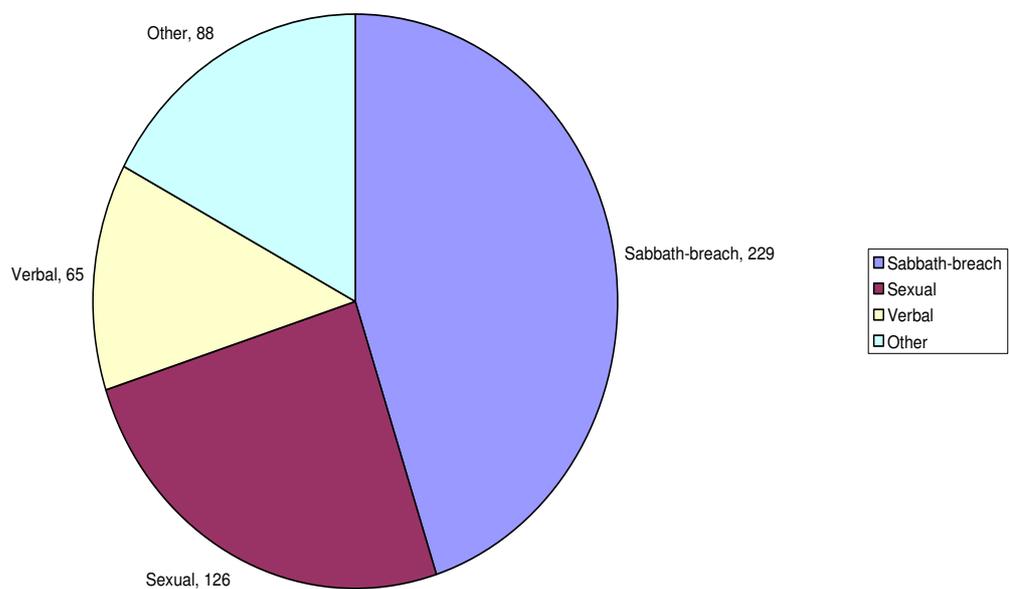
³⁵ Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 257.

³⁶ Goodare, 'Review of *Culture of Protestantism*'.

Marital issues	2
Child-death	2
Incest	2
Superstition	2
Sexual assault	1

As with Burntisland, a wide variety of types of offence were pursued, with several minor categories occurring a handful of times each. And as with Burntisland, the main three categories of sexual offences, sabbath-breach, and verbal offences dominate, albeit in very different proportions, as illustrated by Chart 6.5.

Chart 6.5 Breakdown of offences in Culross using broad categories



So in Culross, almost half of all cases involved sabbath-breach, and in fact 440 of the 840 individuals disciplined were involved in sabbath-breach cases, meaning that more than half of the actual offenders were sabbath-breakers. Again, the reason for this could be found in the pre-occupations of the Culross elders. Culross elders were

clearly keen to protect the sermon, which was mentioned in 130 sabbath-breach cases, more than half. One startling case from 1634 reveals the extent of the focus on the sermon: a man was drowned in the Forth, his two companions in the boat having been too drunk to save him. But the official delation of the men before the kirk session was simply for absence from the sermon and excessive drinking.³⁷

Some other possible factors should also be noted. Of the sabbath-breach cases, 124 involved absence from church, 67 involved working on the sabbath, and 137 simply involved a normally unspecified profanation of the sabbath.³⁸ Given that 72 of the profanation cases also involved absence, absence from church was the main reason one would be disciplined. This was bound to be more of a problem in a parish where the church (the old Abbey kirk) was situated well out of the centre of the burgh, up a steep hill. We saw in Chapter Three that the elders were aware of this problem. The nature of Culross' economy, heavily centred on the salt industry, must have also played a part: 31 cases involved men who had been working on the saltpans on a Sunday, and this is a minimum figure since the reasons for sabbath-breach prosecutions are not always made clear.³⁹ Burntisland's economy was more focused on trade and fishing, and men away at sea during Sunday would have been much less liable to prosecution for sabbath-breach.

The proportions within the category of verbal cases were similar to Burntisland: 44 slander, 20 flyting and 6 swearing or blasphemy. There is no obvious reason why Culross should have been a less strife-ridden community, or why its elders should be less concerned about verbal offences, but one or the other of these seems to have been the case. One possible explanation is hidden offences: in 1630 the minister 'promisit to deall betuixt' some unnamed people at variance.⁴⁰ But this did not amount to informal, non-disciplinary resolution of conflict, as they were still 'delated' as

³⁷ CH2/77/1, f. 40r. The only indication of the gravity of their offence was the tone used to describe their public repentance: 'in the presens of god and the whole congregation to confess their evil ex[ample] and fault', which is more detail than would typically be given for a case of sabbath-breach and drinking.

³⁸ These numbers add up to more than 229 because many cases involved both labour and absence, or absence and profanation.

³⁹ A further 17 cases involved the production or trade of commodities: 8 fish (mostly selling), 4 bread, 3 butter and 2 coal. The salt cases often involved men who had their pans 'drawing' in time of sermon. This means that they were probably absent themselves (rather than simply profaning the Lord's Day by leaving the pans working), since drawing was the process of shifting the water from the nearby cistern where it was kept before being 'drawn' into the pan itself, and would require their presence.

Christopher Whatley, *The Scottish Salt Industry, 1570-1850* (Aberdeen, 1987), 9.

⁴⁰ CH2/77/1, ff. 2r, 4r.

‘suspect persones’, and apparently fined.⁴¹ Culross provides even less support than Burntisland and Anstruther for the idea that sessions were ‘obsessed’, or even primarily concerned with sexual sins as the ‘bread and butter’ of discipline.⁴² It has been suggested that in the seventeenth century increasing success was being achieved in limiting sexual activity to within marriage, but although this is possible, it could never be proved from kirk session minutes because there would always remain the question of whether a drop in the number of fornicators might be due to a change in emphasis by the elders.⁴³ Still, it is possible that in the years prior to 1630 Culross kirk session at least managed to restrict the most notorious and offensive sexual activity, for of course kirk session minutes record the offenders which the elders managed to catch, and the kirk session may have forced sinners ‘underground’. For example, in the case of fornication, this might involve couples foregoing public displays of intimacy and taking more care to keep their liasons secret.

The parish of Abercrombie has minutes spanning the widest period, 1597-1640, although there are some gaps in the manuscript, the most serious covering the period 1618-28. This leaves approximately 30 years of minutes, in which time the kirk session prosecuted 141 cases. This is fewer per year than Monimail, although by the 1630s Abercrombie had caught up with Monimail, with about 60 over the decade. The cases pursued in Abercrombie are displayed in Table 6.6.

Table 6.6: Numbers of cases pursued by Abercrombie Kirk Session, 1597-1640

Sabbath breach	60
Fornication	26
Verbal	22
Unknown	16
Violence	14
Adultery	7
Drink	5
Disobedience	2

⁴¹ The page is heavily torn, but the words ‘ad pios usus’ are visible, which usually refers to the destination of a fine.

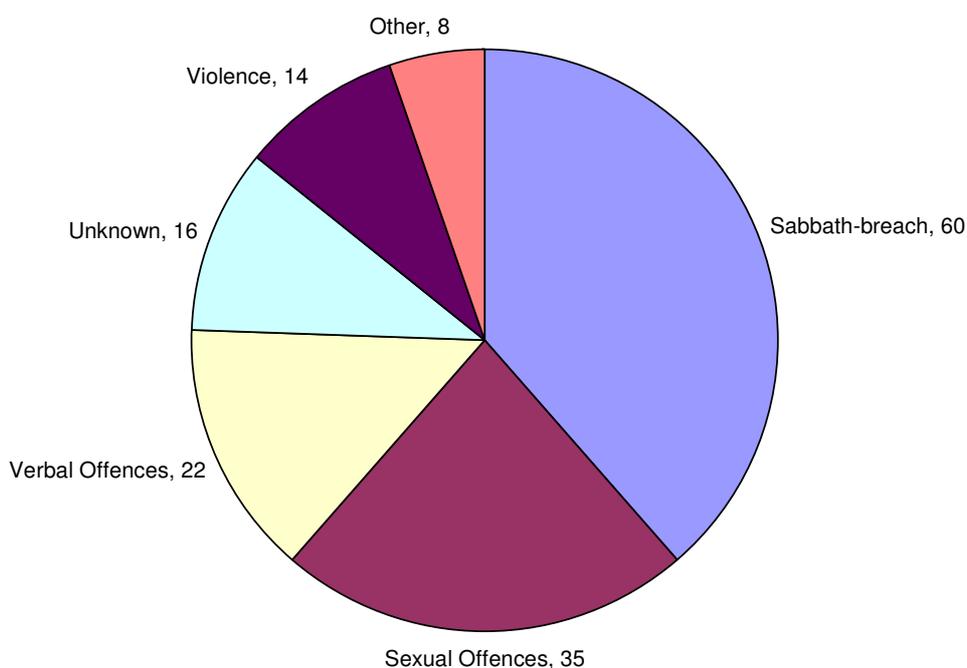
⁴² See n. 12 above.

⁴³ Mitchison, *Lordship to Patronage*, 9.

Scandalous Carriage	2
Theft	1

So although Abercrombie kirk session pursued many fewer cases than the other coastal burghs, the targets of its discipline seem to have been comparable to Culross rather than to Monimail. Here, again, sex was by no means the pre-occupation of the elders, and there were almost as many verbal offences as cases of fornication. Chart 6.7 illustrates these patterns using broader categories.

Chart 6.7 Breakdown of offences in Abercrombie using broad categories



This chart demonstrates a striking similarity with Culross kirk session. In Abercrombie, too, absence from church was the main form of sabbath-breach. There was a pattern of change over time: Michael Graham's model of a turn from sexual offences towards a wider range of sins seems to be borne out by the fact that sexual

cases were the largest category between 1597 and 1611, whereas by the 1630s, and especially the late 1630s, sabbath-breach was the largest category.⁴⁴

Some interesting patterns have emerged from this analysis of individual kirk session minutes. It is not true to say that sexual offences were normally the primary pre-occupation of kirk sessions, either in terms of numbers of offenders prosecuted or the number of ordinances relating to sexual misbehaviour, of which there were only 11 from all four parishes, in contrast to 37 on sabbath-breach, 19 on restricted persons, and 12 on issues relating to marriage. Protecting the sabbath, and punishing slanderers and flyters were generally just as important to sessions as repressing illicit sexuality.⁴⁵ There was, however, considerable variation, even between roughly similar types of parish, and even wider differences between parishes with different economic and social characteristics. On the whole, the coastal burghs were more active in terms of numbers of cases, to an extent that cannot be explained by differences in population. They were also less likely to be focused narrowly on sexual behaviour. However the variations cannot be explained entirely in terms of social and economic prominence and location: Abercrombie and Culross kirk sessions seemed to focus on sabbath-breach, and were less prone than the superficially very different Burntisland and Monimail to prosecute sexual offenders. There is no easy continuum of discipline with the most advanced burghs at one end and the most backward rural parishes at the other. This is probably because of both the patterns of behaviour and ease of detection within parishes (themselves dependent on social and economic structures) and because of the varying pre-occupations of varying groups of elders. But it is important that we bear in mind the subtleties of these variations when discussing discipline as a broad feature of the Scottish reformed church.

It will be clear from the above discussion that there are dangers in merging the results from such different parishes. But it is worth taking a brief look at the contents of the overall database compiled from the four individual parishes. The broad breakdown was as follows: there were 493 cases involving sexual offences (31%), 440 sabbath-related cases (27%), and 377 verbal offences (23%). Of the other categories drink (8%) and violence (5%) were the only statistically significant ones. Sexual cases were the largest overall group, but only with fewer than a third of cases. That sexual cases were the largest category of offence may seem surprising when we

⁴⁴ Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 286.

⁴⁵ Cf. Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 281.

consider that the only parish where fornication was the largest category was Monimail. But it was the second largest category in Burntisland, which provided the most cases to the amalgamated database. So this result should be treated with caution. What it does show is the total dominance of the main three types of offence.⁴⁶ It might at first seem obvious that these would be the dominant offences, but the absence of large numbers of cases of communion-absence, heterodoxy, superstition, open dissent or recusancy is striking.⁴⁷ After all, the job of kirk sessions was not just to punish sin but also to maintain the integrity of the reformed church. It might be objected that it was the job of presbyteries to deal with such matters, but it would have been kirk sessions who first encountered these problems. What may at first appear to be the story of a failure on the part of the reformed church, the ongoing existence of a large body of sinners, may actually reflect rather well on a church which was seemingly facing very little open opposition, and enforcing attendance at communion (if not every sermon) reasonably well. Most offences involved human failings, rather than specifically religious disobedience.

Another category of offence notable by its absence, given its prominence in the historiography of late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century Scotland, is witchcraft and related offences.⁴⁸ Of course, our period ends in 1640, before the great witch-hunts of the mid-seventeenth century, and witches were in any case normally prosecuted by higher church courts and senior civil judges. But it is hard to imagine kirk sessions not taking an interest if it was suspected that demonic activity or malefice was present in a parish. As noted above, when a woman called another woman 'witch', the matter was treated as a slander rather than an accusation, which seems at odds with the suggestion that the impetus for witch-hunting came primarily from the church courts.⁴⁹ If there was suspicion about a local witch coming not from

⁴⁶ Within the broad category of sexual offences, fornication was by far the most prominent, with a few adultery cases and very occasional instances of sexual assault or incest (for exceptions see CH2/77/1, ff. 11v, 33v). Similarly, blasphemy was very rare within the category of verbal offences (CH2/548/1, p. 18 for an exception).

⁴⁷ Although see CH2/472/1, p. 110 (Kinghorn) for a rare case of an individual having their doctrine corrected, and CH2/523/1, p. 142 for an exceptional case involving papistry, although the offence committed by the Fife man, Richard Anderson, was simply the harbouring of an Aberdeenshire papist. Calderwood, *History*, vi., 380, 391, 465, also provides us with details on Mark Swinton, a papist in Inverkeithing in 1606. For the fairly limited evidence on recusancy in the pre-1600 period see Sanderson, 'Catholic Recusancy'.

⁴⁸ The literature on Scottish witchcraft is vast and this is not the place for its bibliography, but for Fife specifically see Stuart Macdonald, *The Witches of Fife: Witch-hunting in a Scottish Shire, 1560-1710* (East Linton, 2002).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 197.

a slander but a more reliable source, one would expect the kirk session to alert the presbytery or civil magistrate, and perhaps use rather more involved language. Even potentially suspicious imprecations such as ‘god let never sea nor salt water bear him’ were treated as examples of unchristian abuse rather than malevolent curses. References to the devil were bandied about by the people of Burntisland, but they seem to have been used rather like swear-words – to express extreme opinions or emotions - rather than reflecting any concern with diabolical or malevolent activity: ‘the devill ryve⁵⁰ the saulls of the dyverse of the town to hell’.⁵¹ The kirk sessions analysed in this chapter seemed entirely unconcerned with the threat of witchcraft in this period, although the parish of Dysart did see some cases in the 1620s, and Pittenweem, for which no contemporary session records survive, was nationally prominent as a centre of witch-hunting.⁵² In most parishes, most of the time, witchcraft and related activity was a secondary concern compared with the mission of religious discipline.

In the overall database of cases from Burntisland, Abercrombie, Monimail and Culross, a total of 13 out of 1605 cases make some mention of witchcraft or of something that could be construed as relating to witchcraft (excluding of course the numerous instances of the insult ‘witch’).⁵³ Neither did witchcraft play a significant role in the disciplinary ordinances produced by kirk sessions to codify procedure and punishments for specific offences. The cases in the database are unexciting; they mostly involved women ‘of skill’ giving drinks to cure diseases, but there was also one occasion when a woman’s husband and son went to petition a witch in Inverkeithing for her health.⁵⁴ The matter of fact way in which healers were dealt with suggests that they were not normally seen as full-blown witches.⁵⁵ These individuals were effectively committing the offence of engaging in or encouraging superstitious behaviour. This was taken seriously by kirk sessions, however infrequently it occurred. When in 1637 two Culross men were found to have gone

⁵⁰ This word normally means to tear, or to break; its precise meaning in this context is unclear.

⁵¹ CH2/523/1, p. p. 217. A Culross man also apparently invoked the devil, saying ‘hee wald be content to serve the devil to have amends of James Huton’. CH2/77/1, f. 49v.

⁵² CH2/390/1, pp. 38-42, 110-117; Macdonald, *Witches of Fife*, 17.

⁵³ This is similar to Graham’s findings for the earlier period, when 1% of cases before kirk sessions involved witchcraft or related offences, though his figure for presbyteries was higher, at 3%. Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 299.

⁵⁴ CH2/523/1, pp. 192-193.

⁵⁵ Indeed, only 4% of the witches listed in the *Survey of Scottish Witchcraft* database were involved in folk healing, which suggests that healing was not seen as a major characteristic of witchcraft. *Survey of Scottish Witchcraft*, <http://www.arts.ed.ac.uk/witches/introduction.html>, accessed 18 May 2007.

with another man ‘distracted in his wittes’ to a chapel in Strathearn, apparently seeking cures, ‘it wes judged a great scandall and offence’, and the men were punished relatively harshly with public repentance, a fine of half a dollar (about £1 Scots) and imprisonment for 24 hours. Their case was followed by an act ‘against all that sall use suspect means for ther health’.⁵⁶ But this was still treated as a normal, albeit unusually serious disciplinary case. Fife kirk sessions in this period seem to have been more concerned with the scandal and superstition involved in folk healing than with any threat of demonic or malevolent activity. And of course, even such cases of superstition, however tantalising for the light they may shed on popular folklore, were notable by their rarity.

A rather more important concern of the kirk sessions, but which also only plays a small role in the above analysis of cases, was the problem of sturdy beggars from outside the parish. In Burntisland it was noted in 1602 that ‘the haill inhabitants of the haill parochin’ were

heavilie trubled and overlyid be ane great number of strang and Idill uncouth beggars resorting thereto without ony stop q[uhair]by the puir and impotent of the said parochin sustenis great hurt and wants the almes that wald be bestowed vpon them gif the said uncouth begg[ars] wer haldin furth⁵⁷

It is noticeable that this was seen as a threat not just to the ordinary inhabitants but also specifically to the deserving poor. So perhaps people were bestowing alms on these poor, or alternatively the presence of the uncouth beggars might have discouraged charitable feeling among the parishioners. The reason that such concerns are not strongly reflected in the caseload of the kirk sessions is that the beggars were normally simply to be removed from the parish by a kirk session or burgh officer, and thus were not treated as offenders in themselves. Because by definition they were not inhabitants of the parish, they were not subject to discipline in the normal sense. But their removal was not always invisible in the records, because sometimes payments were made to the officers responsible for banishing them. Following the above act a Burntisland officer was paid 40s for banishing the beggars, and in 1630 a Kinghorn officer was to be paid 6s each week for ‘out holding strong and stuirde beggaris’.⁵⁸ It

⁵⁶ CH2/77/1, f. 55r.

⁵⁷ CH2/523/1, p. 15. See also CH2/77/1, f. 1r.

⁵⁸ CH2/523/1, p. 21, 254; CH2/472/1, p. 110. One beggar does appear to have been individually disciplined in Burntisland, for ‘Living ane Idill Lyff in begging and nott frequenting the kirk’, but the

was Burntisland that provided the fullest condemnation of those outsiders it considered a danger to the moral life of the parish, forbidding among others:

All personis vsing subbill craftie and unlawfu[ll] playes...all egyptians all that fainzeis [feigns] thame to haif the knowlege of charming prophecie and other abusit science all personis that usis to call weirdis fortouns [fortunes?] and sik fantasticall imaginations...all menstrallis, sangsteris, and...quha is not in service with barrones and gentelmen or comoun menstrails of burrowis [burghs] All feinzeit scollaris quha hes not licence of the dene of facultie of thair universitie to tak almes. All shipmen and mareneris alledgeing thame to be shipbrekin without testimoniall quhair thai landit...and schortlie all otheris persones vagane ydill quha hes nather land nor maisteris and hes na lafull tread to win thair livingis nor can give na reckoning how thay can gitt thair living lawfullie.⁵⁹

Unfortunately, few of these exotic offenders make it into the kirk session minutes, but the list certainly reveals the extent of the minister and elders' serious concerns about the potentially sinful outsiders threatening the parish.

One way in which concern about the behaviour of outsiders was reflected in the sessions' caseload was in prosecutions for receiving beggars, or otherwise giving support to forbidden persons. There are 44 of these cases in the overall database, including not just prosecutions relating to beggars, but also for lodging harlots, 'whoorish' women, and strangers, or simply for keeping a slanderous house.⁶⁰ In Culross a man was banished for keeping 'ane house for vagaboundes to abuse the town namlie in drinking upon the Sabboth'.⁶¹ Many kirk sessions, both in burghs and in inland rural areas, passed ordinances against subletting property without the permission of the session, against receiving servants or other strangers from outside the parish without a testimonial from the minister of their parish, and against receiving scandalous persons in general.⁶² The four parishes between them passed 19 acts of this sort, a figure only exceeded by acts on sabbath-breach (37). These were pre-emptive acts, forcing parishioners to go through preventive procedures to ensure

reference to sermon absence suggests that he was considered a parishioner rather than a strange beggar. CH2/523/1, p. 25.

⁵⁹ CH2/523/1, p. 2.

⁶⁰ For example CH2/523/1, p. 158, 260, 311; CH2/77/1, f. 52; CH2/548/1, p. 15; CH2/819/1, p. 10 (Kingsbarns).

⁶¹ CH2/77/1, f. 26v.

⁶² CH2/1056/1, ff. 63-64; CH2/210/1, p. 9 (Kilconquhar); CH2/258/1, p. 89 (Markinch); CH2/326/1, pp. 2-3, 8 (Scoonie); StAUL, CH2/150/1, p. 1 (Ferryport-on-Craig). Kirkcaldy even instituted fines of 6s for those lodging strangers (presumably with testimonials) if they did not make them attend church. CH2/636/34, p. 126. For a similar system of testimonials in the French Church at London see Murdock, *Beyond Calvin*, 93, and for restrictions on subletting in England, Marjorie McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior in England, 1370-1600* (Cambridge, 1998), 93-6.

that incomers were upstanding, rather than waiting until the outsiders began to cause trouble. As well as concern for the official parish poor, sessions were also concerned about the sinful spectacles which could arise from such persons. A Culross kirk session act against ‘travellers on the sab[bath] and sic as receipt them’ noted that

Certane mealmen fleashears and others marketmen did tary all night fra ther duelling houses and paroch kirks drinking all the Saturday over night till sonday in the morning. yea and till after noon upon the Lord his day drinking the whole tyme and so thereafter departing drunk to the great offence of god and his people⁶³

As well as making clear the explicitly religious (as well as social) concerns of the elders in such circumstances, this reminds us that it was not only ‘strange beggars’ who might come to a parish and threaten its religious health, but also members of theoretically respectable trades. Although such matters occupy less space in the session minutes than the main three categories of offence, they were deeply troubling to ministers and elders, for whom the disciplinary mission involved not just repressing sin among their own congregations, but also maintaining the moral integrity of the local community.

Who was punished? The Disciplined

The above discussion gives us some idea of the types of offence committed by those who appeared before kirk sessions, but it is worth looking more systematically to see what types of offender were most prevalent. A full social analysis of offenders is not possible in the absence of complete information on their background: in most cases nothing more than their name is recorded. Sometimes their trade might be mentioned, but only haphazardly and certainly not frequently enough for a viable analysis.⁶⁴ However the fact that names are given for offenders means that quantitative as well as qualitative analysis of gender patterns is possible, and it is also possible to make some qualitative comments on the social status of offenders.

⁶³ CH2/77/1, f. 34v. Sellers of drink to ‘such lyk outlandishe drunkards’ and ‘receptors’ of them were to be fined 40s for each offence, a substantial sum.

⁶⁴ Although some specific trades seem to have posed particular problems: for example the fleshers in St Andrews. *RStAKS*, i., 314, 349, 364-365, 478-481.

Michael Graham has argued persuasively that there was no real gender bias in late sixteenth-century Scottish discipline, and as we shall see the evidence from this later period would seem to bear out this conclusion.⁶⁵ But amalgamated disciplinary statistics can only tell us so much, and there is more to be asked than simply whether sessions were biased against women. As Graham says, there was no overall double standard, but there were also more complicated gender patterns to be found at the level of the parish. The focus has often been solely on sexual offences, but for which types of sinful behaviour were men and women most likely to be disciplined, and why?⁶⁶ Did different parishes display different gender patterns? Were men and women punished differently, and how did their treatment by kirk sessions reflect social assumptions about gender? While the role of women in Scottish history is an increasingly popular field, there has been relatively little work done on the lives of ordinary early-modern Scottish women, and the records of kirk sessions offer one important source of information, although they need to be treated with sensitivity to local context.⁶⁷

In Burntisland, there were 725 (52%) male offenders and 673 (48%) female offenders, as near to an even split as one could reasonably expect.⁶⁸ However, it is certainly not the case that women and men committed the same offences with the

⁶⁵ Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 289. For the opposing argument (although based on the seventeenth century as a whole, and evidence from Aberdeen in particular) see Gordon DesBrisay, 'Twisted by Definition: Women under Godly Discipline in Seventeenth-Century Scottish Towns' in Yvonne Galloway Brown and Rona Fergusson (eds.), *Twisted Sisters: Women, Crime and Deviance in Scotland since 1400* (East Linton, 2002). Here it is suggested that 'the war on sin was first and foremost a war on women', although the focus is exclusively on sexual offences (138). DesBrisay's view is more recently supported by Hanham, *Sinners of Cramond*, 13. The double standard concept was originally developed by the English historians Keith Thomas and Lawrence Stone. Keith Thomas, 'The Double Standard', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 20 (1959), 195-216; Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London, 1977), 501-507.

⁶⁶ Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 178-179.

⁶⁷ William Knox, *Lives of Scottish Women: Women and Scottish society, 1800-1980* (Edinburgh, 2006); T. Brotherstone, D. Simonton and O. Walsh (eds.), *Gendering Scottish History: An International Approach* (Glasgow, 1999). Some of the best work on early-modern Scottish women, including a chapter by Michael Graham expanding on his comments in *Uses of Reform*, can be found in E. Ewan and M. Meikle (eds.), *Women in Scotland c. 1100-c. 1750* (East Linton, 1999). See also comments on gender throughout Todd's *Culture of Protestantism*. For a sense of what has been achieved for England, see Christine Peters, *Patterns of Piety: Women, Gender, and Religion in late Medieval and Reformation England* (London, 2003).

⁶⁸ In the following analyses of numbers of *individuals*, the totals are larger than in the previous *case* analysis because of cases involving more than one individual. The totals are not precise, since in some cases an offender's name was not recorded or is unclear; or there is a simple reference to a group of offenders with the individuals unnamed. It should also be remembered that repeat offenders are counted each time they offend in these analyses, so they provide an indication of *proportions* of men and women committing offences, rather than the total number of sinners. Impressionistically, neither gender seems to have been especially prone to repeat offences.

same frequency, and therefore occur equally frequently in the minutes. The gender breakdown of fornication cases was strikingly even, beyond what might be expected, with 197 male fornicators and 199 female fornicators. Contrary to what we might expect, this was not because each case involved one man and one woman, since many cases involved just one offender, with the other apparently not pursued, summoned or even known by the kirk session.⁶⁹ But fornication was the only major offence where the gender breakdown was even. Sabbath-breach was committed by 156 (68%) men and 81 (32%) women. Verbal offences, on the other hand, involved 137 (33%) men and 284 (67%) women, an almost exact reversal of the sabbath-breach trend. Offences in the 'others' category involved 183 (69%) men and 81 (31%) women. Why did these discrepancies occur? Surprisingly, the male dominance of sabbath-breach was not a result of cases involving labouring on Sundays, which were actually only a small proportion of the total number of sabbath-breach cases in Burntisland. A more plausible explanation is that men were more likely to commit the sorts of offences which were considered the most serious profanations of the sabbath: drinking and fighting (these two also made up many of the prosecutions for 'other' offences).⁷⁰ Women, on the other hand, were more likely to be prosecuted for verbal offences. This could be because of a concern among kirk sessions with the danger of female scolds, or because of the desire of women to maintain their reputation by bringing slander allegations to the session, but was probably also a result of patterns of behaviour.⁷¹ This does not depend on any assumptions about innate gender traits, rather on the observation that most disputes between women remained purely verbal, whereas men were more likely to resort to violence, a separate offence.⁷² These

⁶⁹ That men were sometimes summoned alone for fornication would make it hard to justify the suggestion that the treatment of men in discipline 'amounted to collateral damage in relation to the judicial pounding inflicted on women'. DesBrisay, 'Twisted by Definition', 138. See also McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior*, 73.

⁷⁰ It was not unheard of for women to drink just as excessively as men: one woman 'was almost drounit in a dubb [puddle] and ane uther tyme in hir drunkenness fell over ane craig', and had smothered her own child. Another female drunk was punished for striking her husband. CH2/523/1, pp. 121, 29.

⁷¹ For reputation see Michael Graham, 'Women and the Church Courts in Reformation-Era Scotland' in Ewan and Meikle, *Women in Scotland*, 189; Elizabeth Ewan, 'Scottish Portias: Women in the Courts in Mediaeval Scottish Towns' in *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, 3 (1992), 27-43. Female reputation was not simply about marriagability, however, since some Burntisland slander victims were already married: CH2/523/1, pp. 106, 137, 266, 303.

⁷² In Culross a group of husbands and wives were reported for flyting on a Sunday, but a baillie reported that the men were not really to blame, so they were merely admonished while the women were ordered to stand at the market cross for an hour 'for exemples saik'. It would be easy to assume that this represents a case of gender bias: women were seen as prone to scolding, and had to be mocked to protect the social order. But it is also possible that the baillie was right. CH2/77/1, f. 19v.

disputes between women sometimes involved low-level bickering rather than serious sexual insults and major feuding: one man complained that Catherine Boswell had ‘injured’ his wife, by ‘drawin his wyfis kirkstool frome under hir she sitting thereupoun in the kirk’.⁷³ There were, of course, exceptions to this gender pattern; women sometimes engaged in violent behaviour, men were far from innocent of verbal offences, and often the two were combined, or even committed by a married couple together.⁷⁴ But it does seem clear that the Burntisland statistics superficially demonstrate gender parity, while masking rather more complex patterns of behaviour and punishment.

Raw disciplinary statistics suggest a lack of gender bias in Burntisland, but there is still more evidence lurking behind the numbers. In cases of fornication, the fact that men were sometimes summoned alone, or well before any mention of their partners, suggests that illegitimacy was not the primary concern of the Burntisland elders.⁷⁵ Women who appeared before the session alone were also sometimes ordered to bring their partners before the session.⁷⁶ This would seem to suggest that, as well as there being no gender imbalance, the kirk session was primarily concerned with punishing the sin of fornication, rather than any broader ideas about women as being especially prone to sexual lapses, or as temptresses.⁷⁷ Although there was one case where a woman was especially rebuked for ‘seducing of sic ane yoing boy to fornication’,⁷⁸ the kirk session seems to have been more concerned with the cases where men forced themselves on women. One woman complained that a man, apparently her partner, ‘wald have forcit hir bruising hir body with his kneis’. Another man ‘drew [the victim] violentlie frome hir service [her work] meaning thereby to have abusit hir as in tyme begane’, and when asked to leave by one of the victim’s friends ‘he ansuerit dispytfully quha wald or quha wald not scho suld not go till his pleasure was fulfillit’.⁷⁹ So the session was not inclined to see women as especially prone to sexual sins; it would have been incredible if they had, faced with such behaviour. The session was willing to take order with other forms of spouse abuse: a baillie was

⁷³ CH2/523/1, p. 149.

⁷⁴ See CH2/523/1, pp. 14, 39, 71, 171, 223 for examples.

⁷⁵ Cf. Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 266. There were at least 37 cases of men summoned alone for fornication, in addition to occasions when they compeared and were told to summon their partners.

⁷⁶ CH2/523/1, pp. 56, 59-60 for examples.

⁷⁷ Although for Scottish divines’ attitude to female sexuality see Mullan, *Scottish Puritanism*, 145-46.

⁷⁸ CH2/523/1, pp. 69.

⁷⁹ CH2/523/1, pp. 61-62, 79. See also pp. 103, 238.

involved in the case of a man's 'unchristiane and sclanderous misusing of his wyf in harling hir throw the streit', and the session did not accept his rebellious retort that 'Be godis wo[r]d I will do to my wyff as I please'.⁸⁰ Similarly the session naturally did not accept the excuse of a woman who was

accusit of hir contempt of the session be not obey[ing] the ordinar warningis... She ansuerit hir husband wald not permit hir to obey and that she wald obey hir husband befor the minister or elder or ony other quhom soeuer⁸¹

Kirk sessions were no doubt fully committed to a patriarchal society, but they would not let a husband's authority over his wife undermine their authority over all Christians.⁸² Such evidence is by its very nature fragmentary, but it lends further weight to the suggestion that sessions displayed no major gender bias, instead punishing sin where they saw it.

This is, of course, not to suggest that kirk sessions were gender-blind, or in any way 'enlightened'. As well as the obvious point that disciplinary records would not reveal much about the gender ideas of religious elites, there are indications in the session minutes that some aspects of the disciplinary regime reflected social assumptions about gender. The first of these is to be found in the 'Punishments' field of the Burntisland database. As well as the usual fines and public repentances in church or at the market cross, sometimes offenders (almost always guilty of verbal offences) were punished with a more severe humiliation, which might also incorporate physical punishment. These included being put in the jouggs (neck-irons, akin to stocks), or in the cuck-stool.⁸³ Although men as well as women committed verbal offences, albeit in smaller proportions, only two of the 34 individuals whose punishments involved these humiliations were men, and one of those was a fornicator

⁸⁰ CH2/523/1, p. 110.

⁸¹ CH2/523/1, p. 142.

⁸² Another case of this sort occurred when a man accused of striking his wife responded that she 'miscallis' [slanders, insults] him. The session did not investigate whether she was a scold or not, but simply 'exhortit [him] to luiff hir and to eschew all occasions of discord'. CH2/523/1, p. 38.

⁸³ This was presumably a version of the English 'cuckingstool' or tumbrel, in which scolds and disorderly women were tied, and sometimes ducked in water, although there is no mention of ducking in the Scottish examples given here. They had been used in Scotland for several centuries by this stage, the first reference being to a cuck-stool in Aberdeen in 1294. Ewan, 'Defamation and Gender', 175, 184n. The branks, an extremely unpleasant metal device placed on the head with a sharp bit in the mouth, were only used in Culross of the parishes sampled here. Similarly, they were more likely to be used on women than men, though there were exceptions: CH2/77/1, ff. 58r, 60r, 61r. For their use elsewhere in Scotland see John Harrison, 'Women and the Branks in Stirling, c. 1600 to c. 1730' in *Scottish Economic and Social History* 18 (1998), 114-131. For cuckingstools in England, see McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior*, 39, 64-5, 115.

rather than slanderer.⁸⁴ Neither of these men were actually placed in a physical restraining device: the serial fornicator was ‘to stand upoun the cross with his head shavin’, and the slanderer was threatened with standing barefoot in sackcloth for the duration of the sermon with a paper on his head if he relapsed (the paper probably would have stated his offence). In contrast, 32 women were punished with (or threatened with) extreme humiliations. In some cases where a man and a woman were disciplined, it was specified that a relapse would lead to the woman being put in the cuck-stool and the man simply fined.⁸⁵ But most cases involved women alone. Of course the cuck-stool would have been designed for slanderous women, but women were also much more likely to be put in the jouggs, or to have their public repentance involve a piece of paper on their head. Although these were still a minority of female offenders (and often were the most recalcitrant sinners), this might suggest that the attitudes of kirk sessions did reflect societal notions of female character, not in the offenders which they chose to punish, but in how they punished them.⁸⁶

That the kirk sessions were not blind to gender distinctions was demonstrated on one occasion in 1633, when Burntisland session noted that fornication was on the increase amongst ‘the puirer sort and namly of women’. As a response to this, it was ordained that male fornicators whose partners could not meet their punishments were to pay the girls’ fines for them.⁸⁷ Presumably this was to provide a disincentive for well-off men from having pre-marital affairs with girls of lower status whose reputations were already of less value than women of their own standing. This reveals an awareness of how gender distinctions interacted with and alongside economic factors, and should provide further warning against using notions of gender ‘bias’ or ‘parity’ too simplistically.

The evidence from Monimail points in roughly the same direction, though with perhaps more hints of a negative approach to female sexuality. Overall there were 50 male and 55 female offenders, again this is surprisingly close when we allow for

⁸⁴ CH2/523/1, p. 240 for the slanderer and p. 110 for the fornicator. The 34 individuals exclude normal cases of public repentance where sackcloth or similar was specified, but include those where a paper was placed on the head, as this was an unusual additional element of humiliation.

⁸⁵ CH2/523/1, pp. 91, 180, 182.

⁸⁶ The only other evidence found of gender variations in the severity of punishments comes from Dysart, where men were fined £3 and women £2. CH2/390/1, p. 71. This was probably based on ability to pay, which was taken into account in other parishes but not normally so explicitly. It was not unusual for men to pay both parties’ fines.

⁸⁷ CH2/523/1, p. 277.

statistical variation. Sabbath-breach was a more gender-neutral offence here than in Burntisland, due to cases of women washing clothes and selling ale on Sundays.⁸⁸ Of the individuals disciplined for fornication, 24 (44%) were male and 31 (56%) were female, a slight discrepancy but in statistical terms not hugely significant. However, on only two occasions were men summoned without their partners, while this happened to women nine times.⁸⁹ Moreover, in 1632 the session ordained ‘that nane within this paroch sal set ane cot-hows to ane singill woman that is under fowrtie yiers of aig under the pane of ten merks’.⁹⁰ The issue of sexuality is not made explicit in this act, but in a parish where fornication was the most frequently punished offence, the intention is obvious. The size of the fine (equivalent to £6 13s 4d), and the fact that this act stepped so far into the secular sphere reflects the degree of concern felt by the elders about illicit sexuality. This was a problem that seems to have been clearly linked to young single women in their minds. As we have already noted, illegitimacy seems to have been a more important concern in the more rural parishes sampled here, and perhaps this social concern led to more of a dual approach to gender and fornication than was prevalent in communities like Burntisland where sin, disorder, and unchristian behaviour were the dominant fears.⁹¹ This is in contrast to Michael Graham’s results, which suggested that the parishes where women were disproportionately disciplined tended to be in major towns like Edinburgh and Aberdeen.⁹² However, as usual things were not clear-cut: in semi-rural Abercrombie no cases of pregnancy were mentioned between 1614 and 1639.

In Culross we have a strikingly different pattern. There were 564 (67%) male offenders and 272 (33%) female offenders. This discrepancy is almost entirely due to the fact that sabbath-breach was involved in so many cases in Culross: there were 292 more male than female offenders in total, and 262 more male than female sabbath-breakers; in other words removing sabbath-breach from the equation leaves the figures more or less even. Around 80% of all sabbath-breakers were men, partly because of the prominence of profaning the sabbath with labour in Culross. The only major female activity which breached the sabbath here was selling ale to men. The men who bought the ale would then be disciplined for sabbath-breach as well,

⁸⁸ CH2/548/1, pp. 12, 13, 15, 54.

⁸⁹ One of the men was simply ordered to put away his woman, who was named but apparently not summoned. CH2/548/1, p. 17.

⁹⁰ CH2/548/1, p. 14.

⁹¹ See CH2/548/1, pp. 50, 60, for references to pregnancy in fornication cases.

⁹² Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 288.

meaning that their numbers were much higher, although both parties were committing an offence. The fornication numbers were evenly balanced here, as elsewhere, and again women were more likely than men to commit verbal offences, though there was less emphasis on humiliating punishments than in Burntisland.⁹³ There was one indication in Culross of male suspicion of female sexuality, but this came from an ordinary man rather than the session itself: he alleged that a woman pursuing him for marriage had also pursued a man in Dalmeny, and that she was ‘making a craft of whooring’.⁹⁴ The session took no interest in this claim and soon after he had his bans proclaimed, suggesting that the woman’s claim was successful.

In Abercrombie, as in Culross, male offenders (129, 60%) outnumbered female offenders (85, 40%). As elsewhere, the number of sexual offenders was fairly even,⁹⁵ while sabbath-breach was more likely to involve men (48 to 28 cases), and verbal offences were more likely to be committed by women (20 to 10). This provides further evidence that the gender breakdowns within different types of offence were roughly the same from parish to parish. So the variations in overall numbers of offenders arise from the variations we have already discussed in the prominence of certain offences in different parishes. Thus the figures on gender from the amalgamated database, which contains 1470 male offenders and 1090 female offenders, are a reflection not of an overall trend in gender but of considerable variation from parish to parish.

This evidence makes it hard to agree that ‘the war on sin was first and foremost a war on women’.⁹⁶ The question of whether the Reformation improved or worsened the status of women is now recognised as an overly-simplistic one, and in any case disciplinary records could not shed much light on it in the absence of comparable pre-Reformation records.⁹⁷ But the kirk session records do provide an example of how complex gender roles and interactions could be: there was no gender double standard, but nor was there gender parity, and in the varying and complex roles of women in

⁹³ The jouggs were mentioned in 8 cases, and do not seem to have been disproportionately used on women.

⁹⁴ CH2/77/1, f. 7r.

⁹⁵ Direct comparison is difficult, but the even gender breakdown in sexual cases seems to be in contrast to the pattern in sixteenth-century England. See Houlbrooke, *Church Courts and the People*, 76.

⁹⁶ Desbrisay, ‘Twisted by Definition’, 138.

⁹⁷ See Peters, *Patterns of Piety*, 1; Helen Jewell, *Women in Late Medieval and Reformation Europe 1200-1550* (Basingstoke, 2007), 130. For a concise assessment of the state of research, see Merry Wiesner-Hanks, ‘Reflections on a Quarter Century of Research on Women and the Reformation’ in L. P. Wandel (ed.), *History Has Many Voices* (Kirksville, Mo., 2003).

discipline the kirk sessions reflected the nature of society at large. On the whole, although ideas about gender may have influenced some of the kirk sessions' activities, their over-riding aim was to punish sin and to encourage virtue, and therefore they sought to punish sin wherever and in whomever they found it.

Was the same true of the kirk sessions' approach to different social groups? Some work has been done on the church's attempts to discipline the elite, most notably by Keith Brown and Michael Graham, and it has emerged that in the decades after the Reformation the church found it difficult to bring discipline to bear on nobles and lairds.⁹⁸ Much of this has been based on the work of higher church courts; the aim here is to ask how elites were treated by some ordinary kirk sessions after 1600. It is certainly the case that kirk sessions could not hope to deal with the beliefs and allegiances of nobles, but were they able to punish the sins they observed in those of highest standing in their congregation?

In the parishes examined here, there were some cases involving sins committed by lairds and their families, although in the absence of accurate population and demographic figures it is difficult to know whether there are as many of these as we might statistically expect. The more rural parishes were less likely to discipline lairds, although this may be partly a result of the fact that they prosecuted fewer cases overall. If rural parishes found it harder to prosecute lairds, lacking the support of the burgh oligarchy, perhaps they quickly passed on more cases to the presbyteries. However, even rural Markinch was able to get a laird to compare and confess to fornication straight away, just like any other offender.⁹⁹ But it was Burntisland which apparently experienced the most lairdly sin, the most frequent offences being of a sexual nature. In 1602 the Laird of Orrok's son William was accused of fornication with one of his father's servants, who sought baptism of their child.¹⁰⁰ William denied the offence, and Kirkcaldy Presbytery became involved in the matter. This was not necessarily simply because of the offender's elite status, but also because his denial (in itself unusual, since most people confessed) made the matter complicated and difficult to deal with. When this was the case, assistance from the presbytery was often sought whether or not the offender was of high rank. Testimony was taken from others, including the laird himself, who claimed that there was a slander on the

⁹⁸ Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 259-79; Keith Brown, 'In Search of the Godly Magistrate in Reformation Scotland', *JEH*, 40 (1989).

⁹⁹ CH2/258/1, p. 28.

¹⁰⁰ CH2/523/1, pp. 15-19.

woman with one of his male servants, while a witness to the birth claimed that the woman had consistently named William Orrok as father. It was not unprecedented for sessions to require several meetings and assistance from presbyteries to deal with unusual cases where there was such doubt over an offender's guilt. Perhaps part of the problem with disciplining elite offenders was not simply their high social standing, or that they stood outside the jurisdiction of sessions, but also their tendency to be more defensive and argumentative than the average offender.¹⁰¹

One reason for this defensiveness, apart from any sense that they should not be subject to the authority of men they considered to be their social inferiors, might in the case of fornication, at least, be related to children and marriage. Although the female servant in the above case did not claim support or petition for marriage, in another fornication case in 1609, when the laird himself was accused of adultery with a servant, he said that her claim was 'forgeit and feinzit'.¹⁰² This recalls the ordinary offender discussed above who claimed that his partner made a 'craft of whooring'.¹⁰³ Perhaps the laird was starting to feel, rightly or wrongly, that claims of fornication against his family were motivated by a desire to claim financial support. If a male offender confessed fornication, he might even be made to marry his partner, and while a session would have struggled to impose this on a laird's son and a servant, the possibility might have seemed apparent to them, whether he was actually guilty or not. Certainly it seems that lairds were more likely to deny fornication or adultery where a child was involved. The lairds might have also felt that they had more to lose in terms of reputation, and consequently been more inclined to deny guilt as long as possible.

Not all the men in this family chose to deny their sexual misdemeanours. Another son of the laird, Henry, confessed to fornication and offered to satisfy, although he was a 'yoinng boy', as the session's rebuke to his seducer indicated.¹⁰⁴ Yet another laird's son was pursued for fornication in 1610, and again he confessed and the case was treated exactly like any other case of fornication.¹⁰⁵ So elite offenders were not always difficult to discipline for fornication, and when they were it was not just a

¹⁰¹ See also CH2/77/1, ff. 59v-65v.

¹⁰² CH2/523/1, pp. 73-76. In both this case and the previous case, matters were further complicated by the fact that the servants were no longer resident in Burntisland, having moved to Aberdour and Kinghorn respectively.

¹⁰³ CH2/77/1, f. 7r.

¹⁰⁴ CH2/523/1, pp. 67-69.

¹⁰⁵ CH2/523/1, p. 88.

result of their status, but also of their very different attitude to most offenders, although this doubtless resulted in part from their status. It is worth emphasising that although in the 1609 case elders had to be dispatched especially to deal with the laird in person rather than bringing him before the session (his health was cited as a reason for this), these offenders were on the whole subject to the normal processes of kirk session discipline in the same way as other offenders.¹⁰⁶ So although the fornicating lairds of Burntisland were problematic in some respects, and the family itself was hardly living up to ideals of godliness, they were not beyond the reach of the kirk session.

Fornication was not the only sin committed by members of this difficult family. The laird and his family repeatedly failed to attend regular church services, and even communion. He claimed sickness as an excuse, which apparently left him 'not abill to sit ony space in the kirk', 'the quhilk excuse is thought lawfull be all'.¹⁰⁷ It is all too easy to see this as cynical, or as an acknowledgement of defeat by the session, but it was not unheard of for elders to let off absentees for such reasons, though admittedly not on such a long-term basis.¹⁰⁸ A few years later, the laird said that he would attend services 'gyf he may have a seat convenieat to ease him to go out quhen he hes ado'.¹⁰⁹ This seems more like special treatment, as does the case of a laird guilty of sabbath-breach in Kirkcaldy, who was given three Sundays public repentance as a punishment, but allowed a year in which to complete it, perhaps allowing for his travels.¹¹⁰ But as with fornication, although there were difficulties in enforcing discipline on lairds, and some concessions to their status, they were still subject to the same basic procedures as other members of the congregations. Inevitably, discipline could no more be blind to social distinctions than it could be to gender, but there seems to have been little conscious effort to treat lairds, who were after all members of the congregation, less strictly. Michael Graham found that the subjection of lairds to normal discipline was slow to develop in the late sixteenth century, but there are signs that by the first half of the seventeenth century the session was managing to incorporate elites within the body of those subject to discipline,

¹⁰⁶ CH2/523/1, p. 76.

¹⁰⁷ CH2/523/1, pp. 21, 114.

¹⁰⁸ CH2/523/1, p. 182; CH2/77/1, ff. 14v, 39v, CH2/1056/1, ff. 9r, 9v (communion-absence) and f. 11r.

¹⁰⁹ CH2/523/1, pp. 178-79.

¹¹⁰ CH2/636/34, p. 28.

although of course actually reforming their behaviour was another matter, as the ongoing delinquency of the Orrok family demonstrates.¹¹¹

Part of society which has received rather less attention in terms of discipline than the elite is the lower orders. This is a difficult term to define, but in what follows is used mainly to refer to residents below the level of burgesses or tenants, but not vagabonds or beggars without permanent residence. This would include groups like servants, petty traders and labourers, and in rural parishes cottars and farm servants. If kirk sessions sought to punish all sins, then the unchristian behaviour of the lower orders was as important as that of lairds and nobles. It might at first seem that the lower orders would pose no particular problem for kirk sessions, as they were the social inferiors of the elders, and were less articulate in defending their interests than the lairds. But the poor posed their own problems to the disciplinary mission: they were more likely to cause public disturbances in towns than lairds in rural areas, and the rhetoric of discipline was after all targeted on the most 'notorious' offences.¹¹² Servants lived in close quarters, and so opportunities for illicit sex and quarrels must have been greater. Traditionally, they answered in the first instance to their masters. And unlike lairds and the urban 'middling sort' the servants, petty traders and labourers who were disciplined had less in the way of reputation to lose, a major problem given that the kirk sessions' chief disciplinary weapon was public humiliation. There is limited explicit evidence on these groups in the session minutes, but potentially, at least, they were in their own way a hard-to-reach part of the congregation.

One of the main ways in which the poorer sorts are identifiable in the session minutes is when fines were revoked on account of the offender's inability to pay.¹¹³ This does not occur frequently, at least explicitly, but as fines for the same offence often varied for no apparent reason, it is possible that this was sometimes done without comment in the minutes. The fines were sometimes entirely revoked, but on other occasions, alternative punishments were specified. In Burntisland, two female flyters were ordered to spend 24 hours in prison because they could not pay their fine.¹¹⁴ A slanderer in the same parish had a fine of 20s revoked and faced public

¹¹¹ Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 279.

¹¹² See *FBD*, 167-168, where a distinction is drawn between private and public offences.

¹¹³ CH2/77/1, ff. 45r-46v, 61r; CH2/523/1, p. 229 (this offender seems to have later found the money to pay, p. 245).

¹¹⁴ CH2/523/1, p. 183.

humiliation instead.¹¹⁵ Given that those who could afford to pay fines often did so specifically to avoid public humiliation, the punishments replacing the fines can scarcely be seen as less onerous. Nevertheless, Culross was perhaps trying to provide a disincentive to claiming poverty falsely when it enacted, in 1636, that those who avoided discipline because they were too poor were to spend eight days in ward on bread and water.¹¹⁶ Few would have chosen that if they could have scraped the money together for a fine. So kirk sessions were alive to the problems of disciplining the lower orders, and adjusted their disciplinary practices accordingly. It should be noted that these cases do not really relate to those who were ‘poor’ to the extent of relying on alms, whose income would have relied on good behaviour.¹¹⁷ They do not seem to have been summoned before the sessions in the normal way, so presumably if they offended seriously enough they would simply be removed from the roll of the parish poor.¹¹⁸ As noted above, beggars and vagabonds from outside the parish were to be removed regardless of any actual offences, and so similarly do not appear in the records.

Servants were the largest category of ‘lower order’ to appear in the session minutes, although as we have seen occupations were not normally noted, and so the total of about 60 cases in the overall database is a minimum figure.¹¹⁹ Fornication seems to have been more prevalent among those offenders recorded as servants than in the body of the disciplined as a whole. This may not entirely be a reflection on their patterns of behaviour, since when servants broke the Sabbath their masters were often held responsible. For example, four master cordiners in Burntisland were disciplined for suffering their men to work on Sunday, but there is no indication that the men themselves were punished.¹²⁰ In Culross, Sir Robert Bruce of Blairhall was ordered to take order with two of his servants, ‘contemnars of the word and sacramentes’, and the master of a slanderer was to present his man before the session.¹²¹ Servants might

¹¹⁵ CH2/523/1, p. 176.

¹¹⁶ CH2/77/1, f. 50v.

¹¹⁷ One Culross man was referred to as ‘only’ having to pay a 12s fine because he was ‘poor’, if a ‘poor’ man could afford this then the session probably did not mean poor in the sense of relying on alms. Weekly alms payments to individuals averaged around 10s in Culross. CH2/77/1, f. 28v.

¹¹⁸ It would of course be misleading to treat all removals from the lists of parish poor as examples of this, because of deaths and departures from the parish.

¹¹⁹ This does not seem to have been a new seventeenth century development: in Anstruther in the 1580s and 1590s numerous servants were summoned. OPR 403/1, ff. 61v, 67-69, 83r, 94, 102r. This was to continue in the early seventeenth century, for which see CH2/624/2, pp. 26, 31, 69, 74-75, 157.

¹²⁰ CH2/523/1, p. 293. See also OPR 403/1, ff. 67r-68r.

¹²¹ CH2/77/1, ff. 39v, 66r.

excuse themselves of sabbath-breach on the basis that their masters had forced them to work.¹²² Still, it has been noted in a European context that fornication was prevalent among female servants, and as we saw above, Burntisland kirk session was concerned about the increase of fornication among ‘the puirer sort and namly of women’.¹²³ A similar act in Anstruther in 1586 had noted the ‘grait licence’ among ‘prentisses, servantes and uthers’.¹²⁴ As we saw above, testimonials were required for servants arriving in a parish, since the nature of their work meant that they might have moved between communities several times and so their moral character had to be confirmed. In this respect servants in urban areas were probably more suspect than cottars in rural areas, who would have been less mobile.

For kirk sessions, disciplining offenders of low social status was no less of a priority than disciplining the elite, and actually took up more of their time. As with gender, there appear to be no major discriminatory patterns in those who were disciplined, and it would be overly simplistic to see kirk sessions as ‘subversive’ or ‘revolutionary’ bodies focused on bringing the elite under discipline, or as oligarchies focusing on controlling the behaviour of their social inferiors.¹²⁵ Most of the offenders in the overall database are of unspecified social background, and many of these must have been drawn from the same social classes as the elders themselves: craftsmen, merchants and skippers. Certainly most of them could afford to pay the sometimes substantial fines imposed by the kirk session. Discipline was not an attempt to control any particular group of offenders; rather it was an attempt to uphold biblical standards of church government and behaviour as far as possible. Insofar as there are fascinating social and gender trends to be found in the session minutes, these are more a reflection of early modern Scottish society than of inherent biases in the sessions’ agenda.

¹²² CH2/624/2, pp. 74, 157.

¹²³ Merry Weisner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (2nd edn., Cambridge, 2000), p. 60; CH2/523/1, p. 277.

¹²⁴ OPR 403/1, f. 55r. This was explicitly related to fornicators, whose punishments were then stipulated.

¹²⁵ The terms ‘subversive’ and ‘revolutionary’ are used by Walter Makey, cited and challenged in Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 261. Murdock, *Beyond Calvin*, 101, rejects the notion of discipline as ‘an instrument of elite social power’, stressing not just its flexibility but also its acceptance by ordinary people, for which see below.

The effectiveness of discipline

How effective was the disciplinary work of the kirk sessions, and what light can it shed on the progress achieved by kirk sessions by the seventeenth century? These are difficult questions to answer, partly because the minutes do not provide us with detailed evidence even on most offenders' moral character, let alone their religious sensibilities. But the question is also distorted by setting too high a standard for the sessions. As we have already discussed, the impossibility of removing sin from society was probably accepted by the sessions. Their job was to punish sins, especially the most notorious and offensive ones, and to encourage Christian moral standards as far as possible. So we must consider how effective the punishments imposed by the sessions were, and how strong were the sessions' 'teeth'. Did the punishments at least provide serious disincentives to unchristian behaviour? And turning to the more general question of the progress made by the church in the seventeenth century, the attitudes of offenders to the disciplinary mission may give us some clues as to how far the church had inculcated Protestant values in the laity, although by their very nature disciplinary records only give us an insight into the lives of those who sinned, and whose sins were noticed.

So what punishments were imposed by kirk sessions on the disciplined? The Reformation was followed by some parliamentary legislation stipulating extreme punishments for purely religious offences, including the death penalty for adultery, incest and witchcraft.¹²⁶ Unsurprisingly, these were only very rarely enforced by the civil sword, and much has been made of the fact that the church had to rely on 'symbolic punishments', with the subsequent conclusion that the church found it difficult to 'enforce its will on the wayward and stubborn'.¹²⁷ It is certainly true that the focus on the published St Andrews minutes has given a distorted impression of close co-operation between civil authorities and kirk sessions, who normally acted more independently.¹²⁸ But it is not clear that this lack of close co-operation was problematic for the kirk sessions. Leaving aside the question of whether all elders and ministers would have desired, even theoretically, to execute every adulterer that

¹²⁶ See Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 47-48 for a summary of the main legislation.

¹²⁷ Michael Graham, 'The Civil Sword and the Scottish Kirk, 1560-1600' in W. F. Graham (ed.), *Later Calvinism: International Perspectives* (Kirksville, Mo., 1994), 237. This article focuses on adultery, and in *Uses of Reform* more attention is given to the imposition of fines.

¹²⁸ Graham, 'Civil Sword', 245-246.

appeared before them,¹²⁹ the punishments imposed by Fife kirk sessions in the seventeenth century suggest that the sessions were able to impose discipline successfully without formal secular aid, and that punishments were feared and taken seriously.¹³⁰ That people continued to sin is more of a reflection on human nature than on the strength of spiritual punishments. Although this evidence comes from the seventeenth century, the punishments were broadly comparable to the more advanced late sixteenth century parishes like Anstruther and St Andrews. The situation was no doubt different in later sixteenth-century rural parishes, though as we saw in Chapter Two this was largely a result of problems in providing ministers and a lack of local ecclesiastical organisation rather than a failure of spiritual and civil co-operation.

Admittedly, very harsh punishments were infrequently imposed by kirk sessions. The ultimate spiritual sanction of excommunication was only mentioned a handful of times in the session minutes sampled for this chapter, and in even fewer of these cases was it actually imposed.¹³¹ It was not necessarily the most serious offences which led to this penalty, rather it was failure to comply with kirk session injunctions, even when the initial offence was relatively minor, such as drunkenness or slander.¹³² The aim of excommunication proceedings seems to have been not so much a punishment, but rather an attempt to get such recalcitrant offenders to co-operate and accept their real punishment. Burntisland kirk session continually hoped for the co-operation of Janet Murray, a contumacious adulterer, and Kirkcaldy Presbytery requested that she was given one last chance to appear there before she was finally excommunicated. In this case, excommunication seems to have worked; a few months later she had done her public repentances and was received back into the congregation.¹³³ But Murray was one of the most troublesome individuals appearing before the session, and excommunication was very much a last resort, and not at all a prominent feature of

¹²⁹ Although we do have one case where the Synod of Fife noted in relation to an incestuous man in Kirkcaldy that ‘the civill judge has spaired his lyf, quhairof be the law of god and of this kingdome he sould be deprieved’. CH2/154/1, pp. 25-26.

¹³⁰ For a rural parish with apparently less teeth than these Fife parishes, the example of Kilbutho in Peeblesshire is instructive. The minister, John Wemyss, wrote to the Earl of Morton, requesting assistance with discipline, and complaining that he ‘can do na mair bot rebuk syn and admonish offenders’. Of course complaints by ministers about indiscipline were standard in this period, but Wemyss must have felt strongly about the matter to have warned Morton that ‘god will imput the occasioun of misordour heir to your Lo[r]dship’. NAS, GD150/1790, John Wemyss, Minister of Kilbutho to the Earl of Morton (1597-1614?)

¹³¹ See CH2/523/1, p. 35-37, 81, 132, 298-99 for some excommunication proceedings. Sometimes the proceedings begin and then disappear from the minutes without stating whether the offender was excommunicated or the proceedings had been abandoned.

¹³² CH2/523/1, pp. 81, 209.

¹³³ CH2/523/1, pp. 51-56.

kirk session discipline.¹³⁴ Indeed, this seems to have also been the case in most continental reformed communities, with the exception of Geneva itself.¹³⁵

Alongside excommunication was the more frequently imposed or threatened penalty of banishment. Although this was technically a parallel secular punishment to excommunication and would have required the practical assistance of civil officers in its enforcement, it seems to have been decided on and imposed by the kirk session for religious offences. The session would then ask the magistrate to banish the offender.¹³⁶ As with the other more severe penalties, this was more likely to be threatened or carried out in Burntisland, but there were also some banishments in Culross, and one in Abercrombie in 1639.¹³⁷ The fact that it was sometimes actually enforced must have made it seem a very real threat even to those who were merely threatened that a relapse would entail banishment.¹³⁸ Even when the threat was relented after a relapse, it placed the offender squarely in the kirk session's debt.

Sessions sometimes imprisoned offenders, for ten days in the case of some persistent absentees from the sermon and communion in Culross.¹³⁹ In Anstruther the standard length of imprisonment for fornication was fixed at eight days in 1609.¹⁴⁰ Sometimes briefer spells were imposed: some youths in Burntisland who had profaned the Sabbath were to be imprisoned to 'affray thame not to do the lyk'.¹⁴¹ In Burntisland, where offenders were imprisoned in the tolbooth, secular involvement might have been required, although this was probably done informally through the baillies who sat on the session. In Anstruther though, imprisonment was in the steeple, and here the kirk officer or beadle must have been responsible for their imprisonment.¹⁴² As we saw in our discussion of gender, Burntisland kirk session also imposed some other harsh penalties involving the public humiliation and physical restraint of (mainly female) offenders in the jouggs or the cuck-stool. While such punishments were less prominent in other parishes, and only very infrequent in more

¹³⁴ This is again in contrast to the early St Andrews minutes, which saw several excommunication proceedings in the 1560s: *RStAKS*, i., 203; Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 85. Graham notes a similar pattern in St Andrews during this period to the later minutes discussed here, then too excommunication was imposed for disobedience, not just for the very serious offences.

¹³⁵ Murdock, *Beyond Calvin*, 97.

¹³⁶ See CH2/523/1, p. 119; CH2/77/1, f. 26v for the role of the magistrate in banishing offenders.

¹³⁷ CH2/1056/1, f. 54v; CH2/77/1, ff. 11v, 26v. The Abercrombie banishment was decided on later than the initial disciplining of the offender, as it is noted in the margin.

¹³⁸ CH2/523/1, pp. 148, 280; CH2/77/1, ff. 11v, 40r, 58r for threats of banishment.

¹³⁹ CH2/77/1, f. 16r.

¹⁴⁰ CH2/624/2, p. 6. They specified that the sentence included nights as well as days.

¹⁴¹ CH2/523/1, p. 115.

¹⁴² CH2/523/1, pp. 14, 21, 111; OPR 403/1, ff. 55r, 97r; CH2/624/2, pp. 68-69, 75, 76, 160.

rural parishes, it was not unheard of for kirk sessions to be able to impose severe physical penalties, and the threat of them may have re-inforced the deterrent effect of the more standard penalties.¹⁴³ Some of them were imposed on an ad hoc basis, such as the triple fornicator whose hair was to be shaved for her public humiliation.¹⁴⁴

The rarity in most parishes of severe physical penalties or banishment and excommunication does not necessarily mean that discipline had no teeth. The ultimate ‘symbolic’ punishment was public repentance, which involved standing before the congregation during services, occasionally in sackcloth or with head or legs uncovered. Margo Todd’s research into the cultural significance of ‘performing repentance’ implies, for our purposes, that this was not an easy or meaningless punishment simply because it did not inflict pain or financial loss. It was a ritual of great symbolic and dramatic importance, and in numerous cases offenders were to perform it on their knees.¹⁴⁵ More prosaically, our own internal reaction to the thought of standing up before our peers and confessing our faults should warn us against dismissing the significance of such punishments. Admittedly some laughed during their repentance, or attacked the minister and elders, but this in itself might represent a psychological response to the fear of humiliation, rather than a disregard for it. And as Todd notes, others wept.¹⁴⁶ But fortunately we do not have to rely on supposition to confirm that public repentance was treated seriously and feared by the disciplined. Two Burntisland men guilty of drunkenness chose to promise payments of £20 and £5 if they relapsed, rather than make public repentance for their offence.¹⁴⁷ These were significant sums of money.¹⁴⁸ This might be understandable if the offence had been of a one-off nature, like adultery or communion-absence, and they had not intended to commit it again. But the fear of public repentance must have been a substantial disincentive if it was worth risking these sums of money if they ever got drunk again. Some offenders even chose to pay actual rather than future fines in order to avoid public repentance. A female slanderer in 1633 paid a fine of 20 shillings rather than facing public repentance.¹⁴⁹ Another offender was threatened with fines of

¹⁴³ Beyond the sample parishes, Dysart saw a banishment in 1631 and the use of the cuckstool in 1632. CH2/472/1, pp. 127-132.

¹⁴⁴ CH2/523/1, p. 128.

¹⁴⁵ Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 127-182.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁴⁷ CH2/523/1, pp. 71, 77.

¹⁴⁸ Values are difficult to pin down in Scotland at the time, but a labourer’s wages for the day might be in the region of 6s. Gibson and Smout, *Prices, Food and Wages*, 11.

¹⁴⁹ CH2/523/1, p. 273.

6s 8d for his first relapse, 13s 4d for his second, and a public admonition for the third, revealing an interesting view of the hierarchy of penalties.¹⁵⁰ In Burntisland, the ability to pay extra money to lessen one's public humiliation was built into the disciplinary procedure: fornicators were to pay a fine of 24 shillings and appear at the cross on market day between 11am and 12am, but if they could pay a fine of 45 shillings (or just over a pound extra) then this very public humiliation could be avoided.¹⁵¹ If paying significant sums of money to avoid or lessen one's public humiliation was considered the preferred option by many, then it would seem odd to classify it as a less serious punishment or a soft option.¹⁵²

As with the other patterns of discipline we have discussed, there were differences between the coastal burghs and the more rural parishes. But interestingly, although rural parishes were less likely to impose the major penalties of banishment and bodily punishment, they tended to impose public repentance and fines in a similar way to other parishes. The various databases reveal that in all the parishes the normal punishments were a combination of public humiliation and fines. In Abercrombie fines for fornication were normally between 10 shillings and £2, while in Culross they were larger, normally ranging from £3 to £6. Monimail, the most rural of our sample parishes, fined most fornicators £4 each plus their public repentance, while in Burntisland the norm was between £2 and £5.¹⁵³ So there was no clear pattern in terms of the size of normal punishments, which in any case varied from offender to offender, as well as from parish to parish. This would suggest that rural sessions were generally as strict in intent as the burgh sessions, lending further weight to the suggestion that the differences in numbers and types of cases result from social and geographical patterns rather than any systematic differences in zeal.

All this is not to suggest that all those who appeared before kirk sessions were punished in a severe manner. Leaving aside those found not to have committed an offence, or those whose excuses were accepted, there are many cases in the database

¹⁵⁰ CH2/523/1, p. 86.

¹⁵¹ CH2/523/1, p. 181. For examples of this in action see pp. 209, 213, 258, 260. When people paid the 24 shillings we cannot be certain whether this was because they could not afford the larger sum or because they preferred to keep their money and go to the cross.

¹⁵² See also Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 175-176. The notion of ecclesiastical penalties as a soft touch has also been criticised in Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage*, 335-37.

¹⁵³ There was clearly some confusion in Monimail, where the (frustrated?) elders had to clarify 'that is to say the man fowr Libs and the woman fowr libs'. CH2/548/1, p. 22. In Kettle, the fine for fornication seems to have been a total of £4 for the couple, although some individuals only paid £1. OPR 435/1, f. 10v.

where the punishments are unrecorded, or where offenders were simply ‘admonished’ or ‘rebuked’ in front of the kirk session rather than the congregation. The unrecorded punishments were not all necessarily simple admonitions, and sometimes we simply have a record that someone was to satisfy ‘conform to the order’, which was often along the lines of a fine and one Sunday of public repentance.¹⁵⁴ But those cases where the offender was simply rebuked or admonished by the minister must have ranged from gentle encouragement to stern rebukes; indeed in a few cases the minutes specify that an offender was ‘gravely’ rebuked.¹⁵⁵ The more gentle rebukes would not be so explicitly recorded in the minutes, but even the firebrand David Black advocated a more compassionate ‘loving censure’, on some occasions, so that ‘the offender would rather be ravished with the admiration of Gods grace in us, then eyther scoffe it or grow into a choler, as many doe’.¹⁵⁶ Simple admonition might on the face of it be perceived as a fairly toothless punishment, an indication of a failure to impose strict discipline. But when it is considered alongside the imposition of fines, public repentance and even the more severe punishments outlined above, it seems to be a confirmation that Margo Todd’s argument that in general kirk sessions acted flexibly and sensitively can be applied to their disciplining of sinners.¹⁵⁷

Given the nature of punishments imposed by these kirk sessions, and what we have already learned about the scope and extent of discipline, one question remains to be asked: did people accept it, and if so, why? Alison Hanham has argued that in the period after ours, the lower orders resented godly discipline as an unwelcome imposition.¹⁵⁸ It would be grossly anachronistic to apply modern values of privacy and liberty to the period, but although kirk session discipline did not create many new offences, it represented an unprecedented level of interference in parishioners’ everyday lives.¹⁵⁹ Did they object to this? In the period studied here, there were few

¹⁵⁴ CH2/523/1, pp. 31, 60, 219; CH2/77/1, ff. 49r, 55v.

¹⁵⁵ CH2/523/1, pp. 22, 24; CH2/77/1, f. 15v.

¹⁵⁶ David Blak, *An Exposition upon the thirtie two Psalme* (Edinburgh, 1600), 7-8. For his reputation see *DNB*.

¹⁵⁷ Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 22-23. Another interesting example of flexibility is to be found in Culross, when in 1632 the case of a man selling fish on the Sabbath led to an enactment that those doing so will be additionally punished by having their fish given to the poor. The same was to apply to those selling bread. CH2/77/1, ff. 14v, 16v.

¹⁵⁸ Hanham, *Sinners of Cramond*, ix, 1-2, 7, and *passim*.

¹⁵⁹ The medieval background to discipline is touched on in ch. 2, but of course fornication, failure to attend church and slander were all punished in pre-Reformation Europe, alongside more specifically Catholic offences such as non-observance of holy days.

explicit objections to kirk session discipline.¹⁶⁰ Unsurprisingly, the dissent that did occur was not self-consciously or formally expressed. More often it involved disobedience, and sometimes striking defiance of the session, and even the minister himself: a Burntisland woman, accused of slandering another as a witch, took the unusual step of insisting, when challenged, that the woman was indeed a witch, saying ‘I callit her a witche and still will call her a witche bot I will not preuf her a witche’. She also took the even more unusual step of accusing the minister of knowing the woman to be a witch.¹⁶¹ Excommunication was considered, but it seems that even this recalcitrant offender, who was also pregnant, was obedient again a few weeks later. A few years later a baillie, his wife, and the whole kirk session were slandered by a woman who said that the new elders were not worthy to stand at the church door and collect the alms.¹⁶² Another Burntisland woman, Helen Harvey, said that ‘quhen the sessioun is convenit the devil stand up amongst thame’.¹⁶³ It is notable that these cases all come in the late 1630s, at the time of John Michaelson’s refusal to subscribe the covenant and eventual deposition, although it is difficult to assign these slanders to any particular group.¹⁶⁴ Another example can be found in 1605 when it had been recorded that a trilapse fornicator had ‘with ane verie impudent face desyris the magistrat to banische hir according to the act of parliament’.¹⁶⁵ But in any case, these sorts of outbursts are notable by their rarity. This does not prove that discipline was popular, but it does suggest a lack of explicit discontent, given the many hundreds of individuals disciplined.

Turning to a more statistical approach, there is further evidence that discipline was broadly accepted. Simple no-show statistics can be misleading for this purpose because they mask offenders who might turn up, but not co-operate, or offenders who might fail to compare initially but for genuine reasons. Of the 1605 cases in the overall database, fewer than 100 involved some mention of disobedience, contumacy, or failure to compare. Many of these were cases where an offender did not compare before the session when first summoned, and some had to be summoned several

¹⁶⁰ As we have seen, evidence is limited for the pre-1600 period, but apart from the heterodoxy in St Andrews in the 1560s, there seems to have been little dissent or dissatisfaction in the Anstruther and St Andrews minutes.

¹⁶¹ CH2/523/1, pp. 298-99.

¹⁶² CH2/523/1, p. 314.

¹⁶³ CH2/523/1, p. 300.

¹⁶⁴ See above, ch. 4.

¹⁶⁵ CH2/523/1, p. 48.

times. Some showed minor signs of defiance or used ‘unreverent’ language.¹⁶⁶ Most of these calmed down relatively quickly. Over and above these offenders, others sometimes denied their offence, though it would be unfair to classify this as disobedience given the possibility that they were telling the truth (a possibility sometimes accepted by the sessions).¹⁶⁷ So roughly 15 out of every 16 offenders before these kirk sessions basically accepted their fault, showed no signs of resistance, and did not contest the fact of their punishment, though some petitioned to have it reduced.¹⁶⁸ Although such figures mask a wide variety of different responses to discipline, from the humble and truly penitent to the truculent, the overall impression one gets from the minutes is of a striking degree of compliance. In Abercrombie, one offender’s excuse for Sabbath-breach was deemed acceptable, but they paid their fine anyway to set a good example.¹⁶⁹ Margo Todd has noted that some sinners even voluntarily confessed, and while the format of the minutes studied here makes it difficult to tell in most cases whether offenders were summoned or appeared of their own accord, it was certainly the case that many offenders confessed without requiring any interrogation, or proof of their guilt.¹⁷⁰ Todd’s research suggests that some parishioners had even internalised Calvinist conceptions of sin and discipline, and this notion receives some support from the case of a man in Burntisland who reported a case of fornication he had witnessed in the fields, with the comment that there is ‘meikill filthenes about our selffis’. He mentioned that the woman’s children had been baptised in the church, and perhaps this heightened his sense of disgust at the uncleanness which was to be found in the community.¹⁷¹

The acceptance of discipline could be a result either of an acceptance of the principles of Calvinist discipline, or simply of fear of the kirk session, given its tendency to punish the disobedient more harshly. Such fear, and the element of coercion in discipline should not be ignored, but it should be placed alongside the many benefits provided to parishioners by kirk sessions, discussed recently by Margo

¹⁶⁶ CH2/548/1, pp. 22-23; CH2/77/1, f. 7r.

¹⁶⁷ For offenders found to be innocent see for example CH2/523/1, pp. 25, 103, 180; CH2/77/1, ff. 17r, 53r.

¹⁶⁸ We cannot be sure in every case that fines were duly collected, but the sessions rarely mentioned any problems with this.

¹⁶⁹ CH2/1056/1, f. 3v.

¹⁷⁰ Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 170-171. Proof was normally only needed in verbal cases, and came in the form of witnesses.

¹⁷¹ CH2/523/1, p. 42. Martin Ingram has claimed that the English church courts created and maintained a popular internalisation of morality. Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage*, pp. 280-81.

Todd.¹⁷² In a wider European context, Graeme Murdock has argued that Calvinist discipline was not simply a system of ‘social control which was ultimately imposed from above and which most ordinary people must have resisted as far as was possible’, instead suggesting that it ‘relied to a large extent on popular acceptance of reformed norms’.¹⁷³ This last point is suggestive, especially when we consider that for public repentance to be an effective and feared punishment the audience must be at least broadly in sympathy with the goals of discipline.¹⁷⁴ After all, as we have already noted, there are very few instances of recusancy, ideological dissent, or even of religious ignorance in the session minutes.¹⁷⁵ Kirk sessions would have been very alive to the possibility of these problems, and so if they existed in significant quantities they must have been well-hidden. On the admittedly negative evidence of the session minutes, there does seem to have been a broad acceptance of the disciplinary mission. In that, the kirk sessions can claim to have been effective, despite their inevitable failure to reform human nature.

Conclusion

In 1612, a drunken wife-beater in Burntisland was ‘gravely admonishit to leif mair christianely and not to geif slander to the gospell’.¹⁷⁶ Such explicitly religious language was not always used in the often formulaic kirk session minutes, but instances such as this should warn us against viewing church discipline simply as part of the phenomenon of ‘social control’.¹⁷⁷ Of course, the religious sensitivities of the

¹⁷² Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 22-23, chs. 5-6. For a similar point made with regard to the the French and Dutch communities in London, see Andrew Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London* (Oxford, 1986), 184.

¹⁷³ Murdock, *Beyond Calvin*, 100-101. Robert Kingdon has suggested that in Geneva the Consistory arose not from a vacuum but from ‘a need felt by the Genevan community’ in the context of centuries of lax moral discipline. Robert Kingdon, ‘The Control of Morals in Calvin’s Geneva’ in L. P. Buck and J. W. Zophy (eds.), *The Social History of the Reformation* (Columbus, Ohio, 1972), 4, repr. in R. M. Kingdon, *Church and Society in Reformation Europe* (London, 1985). See also Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage*, 163-65.

¹⁷⁴ Dawson, *Scotland Re-Formed*, 219. See Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 163-168 for the role of the congregation in the ritual of repentance.

¹⁷⁵ For cases of religious ignorance see CH2/523/1, pp. 116, 122; CH2/77/1, ff. 47v, 57v.

¹⁷⁶ CH2/523/1, p. 131.

¹⁷⁷ Although Michael Graham acknowledges the religious elements of discipline, the conclusions he draws when generalising tend to relate more to disorder than to sin, and he suggests that while ministers and the more zealous laymen were pre-occupied with sin, the elders had a more worldly fear of disorder at the front of their minds. Graham, *Uses of Reform*, 345, 347. Murdock, *Calvinism on the Frontier*, 198 emphasises that discipline was central to the Calvinist mindset, ‘rather than a free-standing mission of social control’.

elders may well have been combined with various social concerns, and indeed it is not possible to separate the two, since the sinfulness of humanity was viewed as a major factor in the social afflictions faced in the parishes. In 1640, Burntisland kirk session recorded that a nationwide fast was to be observed, partly as a result of ‘the threatning of the land be the wreath of ane angrie king God’. Later in the year another was held, ‘intreating god to be mercifull to this haill land and to pardoun our sinnes universally and not to punish us accordingly’, as well as for the success of the Scottish troops in England and for ‘a blissit harvest’.¹⁷⁸

But although we cannot fully separate religious from social motives for discipline, it does seem that the patterns observed here can only be fully explained with an emphasis on sin. There was no narrow obsession with sex, or the social problems arising from fornication, and a comprehensive range of offences were targeted. In some parishes the focus was on the ‘unchristian’ behaviour of slanderers and flyters, while in others it was on those who profaned the Sabbath in various ways. These variations can only result from the varying moral pre-occupations of ministers and elders, and also perhaps from varying patterns of behaviour and detection in parishes with differing social and economic structures and geography. There was no absolute or predictable pattern dividing the more rural and the more urban parishes, but any discussion of discipline must be aware of the significant variations between types of parish. The parishes sampled here seem to have been fairly representative of most Fife parishes, although detailed study of the minutes not sampled would doubtless reveal other subtle differences. And patterns outside Fife may have varied, and more comparative work would be needed before we could claim to have a comprehensive account of seventeenth-century church discipline.

The question of the relationship between kirk sessions and the society from which they were drawn has been raised on occasion, but never satisfactorily answered.¹⁷⁹ There has been insufficient space for a full discussion of the social background of elders, but it seems that there was a close association of the eldership with figures in burgh administration, and many of the elders in burghs were part of what we might call the upper reaches of the urban ‘middling sort’: skippers and

¹⁷⁸ CH2/523/1, pp. 316, 318. Although there was a great deal of fasting in response to the Bishops’ Wars, fasting was not a new phenomenon in the late 1630s, and it did not require national emergencies for fasts to be held. For previous examples in Burntisland see CH2/523/1, pp. 203, 212, 223, 242. These often included political elements (such as the safe return of Prince Charles in 1623), but do not seem to have occurred as direct responses to national events.

¹⁷⁹ James Kirk, ‘Review of Michael Graham, *Uses of Reform*’, *EHR*, 113 (1998), 1305-1306.

merchants.¹⁸⁰ There was, however, no decisive pattern to who was disciplined; both men and women from the lairdly classes down to lowly servants and cottars were disciplined, although the landless underclass of sturdy beggars and strangers to the parish were effectively outside the congregation and so subject to on-the-spot removal rather than restorative Christian discipline. Although there were some interesting social patterns to discipline, these seem to have reflected social trends rather than kirk sessions' pre-occupations, and again, the focus was on dealing with sin where it arose and was detected. By the seventeenth century, although they still faced problems, kirk sessions were going some way towards living up to the prescriptions of the early reformers. They may not have eliminated sin, but they were doing their best to 'repress vice and nourish virtue'.¹⁸¹ That both the elders and the disciplined seemed to accept the broad values of this disciplinary mission may actually reflect rather well on the progress of reformation in the parishes of Fife by this period.

¹⁸⁰ To take one example, in Burntisland in 1608, 14 of the 15 session members for the town part of the parish also sat on the burgh council. NAS, Burntisland Burgh Council Minutes, B9/12/2 (page prior to foliation); CH2/523/1, p. 68. Analysis of testaments in the Commissary Court records of St Andrews (NAS, CC20/4) and Edinburgh (NAS, CC8/8) also points to a preponderance of merchants and skippers on the kirk sessions of the coastal burghs. See also Foster, *Church Before the Covenants*, 69-70; Todd, *Culture of Protestantism*, 8-9.

¹⁸¹ *Scots Confession*, 44.

Conclusion

In his survey of *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England*, Christopher Marsh noted that ‘the problem of explaining majority acquiescence in an unwanted religious transformation is an acute one’.¹ This conundrum is one that equally faces historians trying to understand the long-term success of the Scottish Reformation, although north of the border we are dealing with a single overnight transition from official Catholicism to official Protestantism rather than the bewildering series of shifts in royal policy experienced during the middle decades of the sixteenth century in England. Few would argue that large numbers of ordinary laypeople became committed Protestants in Scotland before 1560, or even engaged in the kind of ‘collaboration’ that Ethan Shagan has recently portrayed as so crucial to religious change in England.² Equally, few would argue for the existence of widespread surviving Catholicism in the Scottish lowlands. So how are we to reconcile these two patterns? The cynical explanation would be that the Scottish laity were not particularly interested in whether their official religion was Catholic or Protestant. While it is important to stress the common ground between the two, and that many must have simply thought of themselves as Christians, this explanation would be out of keeping with much of what we know about other European laities. While they were rarely theological experts, and straightforward conversionary experiences were not necessarily the norm, religion mattered deeply to people.³

Although this thesis does not claim a final answer to this conundrum, especially in the absence of comparable research on other parts of the Scottish lowlands, the focus on a specific area in greater detail has revealed some important patterns. The provision of ministers to parishes was a gradual process, even in a relatively central and prosperous county like Fife, and for several decades there were insufficient ministers to provide the sort of preaching in every parish desired by the reformers. Similarly, the establishment of thorough church discipline, the third of the marks of a true church, did not take place overnight, even in St Andrews. So for the first few decades after the Reformation, we need to temper our assumptions about the centrality of preaching and discipline in religious culture, and perhaps more critically,

¹ Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England*, 198-99.

² Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation*, 5-13.

³ *Ibid.*, 6; Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion*, 4-5.

about the success of the Reformation, at least in the reformers' own terms. However, this thesis has sought to avoid a straightforwardly revisionist interpretation of this period, in part because the practice of sharing ministers meant that there were few parishes with no access to reformed worship, but more importantly because it is not at all clear that the failures in ministerial provision and the imposition of discipline led to a failure for the Reformation. There is virtually no direct evidence on the progress of the Reformation in ordinary people's minds, so our conclusions must be based on the perspective of the church, and on intelligent extrapolation. But if there was significant dissent, or even passive opposition in Fife by the turn of the century, we would expect to see much more evidence of it in kirk session minutes. Indeed, it was argued in Chapter Three that the gradual spread of preaching and discipline may have inadvertently aided the reformers, by 'softening the blow' of Reformation. By the time there was a preaching minister in every pulpit and a strict kirk session in place, laypeople had already had time to adjust to a gradual transition in religious belief and practice, rather than an overnight revolution. This may not have been what the reformers wanted, but it may have made for a more lasting and ultimately successful Reformation.

So a more complex narrative of the development of the reformed church up to about 1600 has emerged, and certainly the evidence should challenge any tendencies to conceive of the Scottish Reformation as a swift and thorough revolution in religion, and remind us that for all the dramatic events of 1559-60 and 1567, and the kirk and crown tensions of the final decades of the sixteenth century, religious change at the parish level was a slow affair. But the evidence from the second half of the thesis, where a relatively well-functioning church emerges in the seventeenth century, should warn us against too negative a tone. The Fife ministers who took on the task of further inculcating Protestant principles in the laity were well-educated, especially when compared against the English ministry. In Chapter Five we saw hints of a vibrant religious culture that was far from austere, and the role of psalms, prayer and in some cases poetry may have been at least as important in spreading Protestant doctrines and values as the more familiar methods of preaching and catechism. By the seventeenth century, the church was also imposing a comprehensive and strict programme of discipline, albeit with sensitivity to local context. And although the behaviour of many laypeople left much to be desired (to the eyes of ministers and elders), it is important to remember that failure to live up to a moral code does not

necessarily imply dissent from that code.⁴ There was surprisingly little hostility to the disciplinary agenda, and some evidence that people accepted the need for the system, even if they were not always so happy when they were the ones to have offended. By the 1620s and 1630s, most of the features of a reasonably healthy reformed church were in place, allowing for an inevitable continuance of sin and ignorance in some quarters.

Although this may seem a very long timescale to achieve such religious change, the evidence from other parts of Europe should help us to place Fife's Reformation in a more contextual and positive light, although naturally time and space have not allowed for comparison with primary material from other countries. The most important comparisons, for the purposes of this thesis, are not to be found in Geneva, or in voluntary Calvinist communities in France and the Netherlands, but in those areas where official Reformation was followed by an attempt to bring around a nominally converted population to a deeper Protestant commitment.⁵ Even a brief glance at the literature on European parochial reformations indicates that in its gradual development, the church in Fife was hardly unique or backwards in a European context: rarely were laities reformed overnight. For example, C. Scott Dixon's classic study of the Reformation in the rural parishes of Lutheran Germany concludes rather negatively, finding that reform was slow, and that 'the Lutheran faith had not been embraced by the subject population'.⁶ The sort of opposition to the church found by Dixon does not seem to have been replicated in Fife. Amy Nelson Burnett's recent study of Basel and its surrounding parishes shows that the first generation of clergy were pre-occupied at first with establishing a well-trained ministry, 'before they could turn their full attention to the laity'. For Burnett, the fact that religious transformation was achieved within the century after 1529 is evidence of an ultimately successful Reformation.⁷ As we have already seen, the English church faced greater difficulties in providing educated ministers to parishes, and Haigh's *Plain Man's Pathways to Heaven* has recently given some sense of the diversity of religious attitudes in parish

⁴ Tessa Watt makes a similar point, in the context of popular balladry in her *Cheap Print and Popular Piety*, 71: 'dislike of the self-styled 'godly sort' is no evidence that those who danced under maypoles never worried about their souls'. This is also implicit throughout Haigh, *Plain Man's Pathways*.

⁵ Cf. Graham, *Uses of Reform*, ch. 9. David Mullan has valuably made the case for some close similarities between the spirituality of French and Scottish Calvinists, but his focus is very much at the level of divines, and on the later seventeenth century. Mullan, 'A Hotter sort of Protestantism?', 45-69.

⁶ Dixon, *Reformation and Rural Society*, 203.

⁷ Burnett, *Teaching the Reformation*, 64-5, 254-59, 262.

communities, while shying away from the author's previous emphasis on a 'slow reformation'.⁸ In this context Fife does not emerge either as an example of Scottish backwardness, or an unusually swift and successful Scottish Reformation. In its complexity, it was comparable, despite the obvious local peculiarities, with local Reformations all across Europe.

Inevitably, a number of questions remain that could not be fully addressed in this thesis. Perhaps most significantly, as with any local study, the question of typicality remains. This is especially important as one key theme to emerge from Fife is of local variations, even at the parish level. Paradoxically, this may actually act in favour of Fife as reasonably representative, since the main distinctions are between types of parish, rather than regions. Nevertheless, equivalent research on other areas would doubtless throw up different patterns, although it is unlikely that many areas of lowland rural Scotland would have experienced a swifter provision of ministers than Fife. Equally, some themes were too large to address in full in this thesis, and in particular the reformed ministry as a group remains woefully under-researched, despite some interest from social and economic historians, if not so much from reformation historians.⁹ There was insufficient space to provide a discussion of ministerial finances, or of the membership and functioning of kirk sessions. Chapter Five was only able to provide a brief window into the interactions between literary and religious culture, and figures like James Melville, and outside Fife, Alexander Hume, need to be familiar to historians, not just literary scholars. There was no space to deal with religious attitudes to, and provision for the poor, and despite Rosalind Mitchison's work on the old poor laws, much more remains to be done in this area.¹⁰ What this thesis has hopefully demonstrated, however, is that when these sorts of questions are addressed a full awareness of local context and parochial variations must be kept in mind. Despite the groundbreaking work by Margo Todd and Michael Graham in the last fifteen years, the sources still hold a great deal of promise for those seeking a deeper understanding of religion in early modern Scotland.

After the initial establishment of the Reformation, a Protestant church developed in Fife in a far from straightforward manner. Nevertheless, the difficulty for the

⁸ Haigh, *Plain Man's Pathways*.

⁹ Whyte, 'Ministers and Society'; Sanderson, 'Service and Survival'.

¹⁰ Rosalind Mitchison, *The Old Poor Law in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2000).

reformers was not over questions of theology, or church government. Neither did the spectre of Catholicism, either as a survival or as a new threat, pose much danger to the church. The challenges were more practical, but no less important for that, in a society where much depended on the local community, and on the parish. The task of Reformation took decades rather than years, but this was not unusual, and certainly does not imply failure. The church in Fife was ultimately reformed, but in a much more complex, and interesting way than the architects of the revolution of 1559-60 would have hoped.

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