

The Dominicans in Scotland, 1230-1560

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“In this year [1230], the Jacobine friars [...] enter Scotland for the first time.”¹ This laconic entry in the Cistercian chronicle compiled at Melrose Abbey records the first step in a process that saw the eventual establishment of sixteen Dominican convents within Scotland and, in the later 15th century, their constitution as a separate province of the order. That brief statement in the Melrose Chronicle apart, the circumstances of their introduction, the nature of their reception, and the processes by which they fixed their presence in the main urban centres of the kingdom, remain shrouded in obscurity. Indeed, the growth of the Dominican presence in Scotland in the half-century after 1230, its organisation and leadership, and the sources of the patronage necessary to sustain the communities, can be glimpsed only sketchily in the fragmentary historical sources. Few of the surviving materials were generated by the Dominicans themselves and many do not have the friars as their primary focus or purpose. Loss of record evidence remains a critical impediment in any wider exploration of the development of the order in Scotland down to the middle of the 15th century, with little surviving from most houses to cast any light on the internal operation of the network of Dominican convents or the part which the friars played in the wider spiritual and intellectual life of the nation. It is only in the closing decades of the 15th century, perhaps stimulated by the creation of a separate Dominican province, that the volume of surviving records increases in some quarters and is maintained down to the eve of the Scottish Reformation in 1560. Yet, despite the poverty of Dominican-generated sources, the surviving record is sufficient to demonstrate the prominent place held by the order within the spiritual life of the kingdom across the 330 years of their functioning presence in pre-Reformation Scotland. This present study explores three themes that illustrate that position: patterns of foundation and endowment; the Dominicans’ relationship with the kings of Scots; and the role of the order in pre-Reformation Church reform and the countering of heresy.

¹ *The Chronicle of Melrose* (facsimile edition), eds. Alan Orr Anderson and Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson (London: 1936), 80, under year m°cc°xxx°.

It is symptomatic of the wider state of the primary records for the Dominicans in Scotland that research into the early history of the order in the medieval kingdom has been bedevilled by the legacy of charter forgery and spurious histories concocted in the post-Reformation period. What little we do know is best summarised by Walter Bower, the Augustinian abbot of Inchcolm and compiler of the compendious *Scotichronicon* in the second quarter of the 15th century. He wrote that their introduction was achieved by King Alexander II, who held them “in great respect [and] helped them as their patron and special agent, assigning places to stay, furnishing and founding them”.² John Spottiswoode, the 17th-century Scottish church historian, however, attributed their introduction to Bishop William Malveisin of St Andrews (1202-1238).³ His authority for this claim is unknown but the fact that the majority of the order’s houses that are known to have existed by the 1240s lay in his diocese lends some small support to the suggestion that the initiative was his. A well-travelled diplomat who would have witnessed at first hand the impact of the Friars Preachers in England and on the Continent, Malveisin was well placed to facilitate their reception into Scotland and to have secured the support of King Alexander for their evangelical work. He was in France for a time in the late-1210s when Scotland was under interdict following Alexander’s intervention in the First Barons’ War in England and then returned there on missions in the 1220s and 1230s; he may well have been familiar with the convent on the Rue St-Jacques in Paris (from which the appellation “Jacobine” derived). There is, however, no certain evidence for his role in the process and it is perhaps significant that no Dominican convent was founded at his episcopal see before the middle of the 15th century and none of the 13th-century houses attributed their establishment to that bishop.⁴ Instead, the role of “founder”, meaning presumably the benefactor who provided them with the site upon which their convent was erected, was assigned to Alexander II at eight of the

² Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon*, ed. D. E. R. Watt and others, vol. 5 (Aberdeen: 1990), 145.

³ John Spottiswoode, *An Account of all the Religious Houses that were in Scotland at the Time of the Reformation*; printed in Robert Keith, *An Historical Catalogue of the Scottish Bishops* (Edinburgh: 1824), 383-480, at 441. More recent commentators fudge the issue, assigning the arrival of the Dominicans to the joint efforts of king and bishop: see, for example, Michael Brown, *The Wars of Scotland 1214-1371* (Edinburgh: 2004), 121.

⁴ Malveisin, on equally slender grounds, has also been identified as the initial patron and/or introducer of the Valliscaulian order of monks into Scotland in the same year as the Dominicans; S. R. MacPhail, *History of the Religious House of Pluscardyn* (Edinburgh: 1881), 62-63.

nine communities apparently established in Scotland by 1250.⁵ From the outset of their presence in Scotland, therefore, the order benefited from a strong bond with the Crown, a relationship that despite periods of looseness was maintained until the Reformation.

Mendicant tradition seems to have appealed very much to Alexander II's personal piety and devotional tastes.⁶ His commitment to the Cistercians and Valliscaulians as well as the Dominicans seems to point to a preference for austere and spiritually effective forms of organised religion. As the scale of his patronage to those two monastic orders demonstrates, he could indulge in extravagant displays of religiosity and it is unlikely that any cost-benefit analysis swayed Alexander in his decision to support the Dominicans. Indeed, the strongly *pro anima* purpose of much of his religious patronage points to a calculated choice based on the rapidly spreading reputation of the Friars Preachers for superior effectiveness, as proselytisers, confessors and intercessors. Unlike the enclosed monastic orders, whose communities were generally hidden behind precinct walls and located at a remove from centres of population, the Dominicans were an urban-based and publicly-visible order. Their perceived impact on the spiritual welfare of the populations amidst whom they were based won them the support of lay and ecclesiastical patrons from monarchs down to members of the emerging urban elites. For would-be patrons, driven by a desire to support good works, a simple measure of the benefit of their support for the new order could be seen in the high numbers who flocked to hear their preaching. Once Alexander had given the Dominicans his "seal of approval", their success in attracting further patronage from the new urban elites and old, established nobility of the kingdom was guaranteed.

Insufficient record evidence survives to allow us with any absolute certainty to identify which convent was the first to be established in the kingdom. Tradition ascribes that role to Berwick, apparently straightforwardly on the basis that it was the first Scottish burgh encountered by any travellers arriving on foot via the east coast route from England.⁷

Berwick is likely to have been one of the earliest Dominican houses on account not least of

⁵ The houses were those at Aberdeen, Ayr, Berwick, Edinburgh, Elgin, Inverness, Perth and Stirling: Ian B. Cowan and David E. Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses in Scotland*, 2nd ed. (London: 1976), 116-117, 118-119, 121.

⁶ For discussion of the king's engagement with the religious orders in his kingdom and his personal faith, see Richard D. Oram, *Alexander II, King of Scots 1214-1249* (Edinburgh: 2012), 213-223.

⁷ William Moir Bryce, *The Black Friars of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: 1911), 14.

the wealth of the merchant community there, its ability to sustain a mendicant convent, and the international connections of what was then Scotland's premier trading-port. Its foundation is attributed to Alexander in one later 15th-century chronicle-compendium and his personal support for the convent is attested in exchequer records of payments made to the brethren there by his gift.⁸ The earliest surviving reference to its functional existence, however, dates from March 1241.⁹ A strong alternative case can be made for Perth as the primary location, where the Dominicans were said to have been given a prominent site outside the northern boundary of the burgh on land formerly attached to the recently-abandoned royal castle. This act was said to have taken place in 1231, but the conventual church was dedicated only on 13 May 1240 and the first surviving grant to the Perth Dominicans dates from as late as 31 October 1241.¹⁰ A similarly early date has been advanced for the convent at Elgin in Moray, ranging from 1233 to 1235 in the main post-Reformation records.¹¹ It is unlikely that a convent would have been established at this northern burgh before the Dominicans had secured their presence in the larger and wealthier burghs of east-central Scotland, but as the locus for much of Alexander's religious patronage following his elimination of the last dynastic challenger to his kingship, the possibility cannot be discounted entirely. It was close to Elgin that he founded the Valliscaulian priory of Pluscarden and he was a generous patron of the new cathedral of the diocese of Moray that had been relocated to a site adjacent to the burgh in the 1220s. Likewise, 1233 is the date proposed for Alexander's foundation of Stirling Blackfriars,¹² but the purportedly earliest charter material relating to that house is demonstrably spurious.¹³ Edinburgh, too, is a possible contender for the site of a pioneering Dominican convent. An

⁸ *Extracta e Variis Cronicis Scotiae*, ed. W.B. Turnbull, (Edinburgh: 1842), 249; *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, vol. 1, ed. John Stuart (Edinburgh: 1878), 208.

⁹ *Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland*, ed. Joseph Bain, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: 1881), 277.

¹⁰ *The Blackfriars of Perth: The Chartulary and Papers of Their House*, ed. Robert Milne (Edinburgh: 1893), xvii-xviii, no.1. The king's gift of a "piece of wax" to the Friars Preachers of Perth annually from his ferme from the burgh is simply the earliest surviving record of the community after the notice of the dedication of their church and was clearly made to an established community. The dedication was recorded in a list of churches consecrated by Bishop David de Bernham (1239-1253), successor to William Malveisin, appended to the pontifical offices of St Andrews, which set out the offices for the consecration of churches, altars, cemeteries and crosses. The list is printed in *Early Sources of Scottish History AD 500 to 1286*, ed. Alan Orr Anderson, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: 1922), vol. 2, 520-526, at 520.

¹¹ Spottiswoode, *Religious Houses*, 444; MS Collections of Father Marianus Brockie, Scottish Catholic Archives, Special Collections, Aberdeen University Library, 1196; *The Records of Elgin*, ed. William Cramond, volume 1 (Aberdeen: 1903), 8.

¹² *Extracta e Variis Cronicis Scotiae*, 249; Spottiswoode, *Religious Houses*, 444.

¹³ MS Brockie, 1179; Cowan and Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 121.

undated charter records the gift to the brethren of a site on a valuable portion of royal property outside the burgh on its south side, which various sources speculate might have occurred as early as 1230.¹⁴ No surviving documents relating to Edinburgh Blackfriars, however, can be dated earlier than 1242.¹⁵ Similar uncertainty pertains in respect of the convents at Aberdeen, Ayr and Inverness, but in all three cases Alexander is linked directly with their foundation, either as “founder” or as a significant early benefactor, and all appear to have been operative by the early 1240s.¹⁶ The addition of Glasgow Blackfriars, said to have been founded by the bishop and chapter of Glasgow and certainly significantly advanced by 10 July 1246 when a bull offering indulgences to all who assisted in building operations was issued,¹⁷ completes the tally of houses of the order founded by the time of Alexander’s death in June 1249.

This rapid spread of the order in Scotland – nine new communities in a little over a decade – can on one level simply be regarded as a local manifestation of the remarkable efflorescence of the Dominicans throughout Latin Christendom in the first twenty years of their papally-authorised existence. On another, however, it points to the intimate association between the king, his inner circle of family and councillors, and the initial Dominican mission that arrived in Scotland in 1230. Linked personally with the foundation of eight of the communities, Alexander was clearly the lynchpin in this success. His significance is further underscored by the fact that the founder of Glasgow Blackfriars was his chancellor, William de Bondington,¹⁸ while at a tenth house, Montrose, whose foundation date can be fixed with no greater certainty than 1230 x 1275, the founder was apparently Alexander’s son-in-law and principal councillor as justiciar of Scotia, Alan Durward.¹⁹ The royal household link seems on this basis to be incontrovertible. But it is unlikely that these

¹⁴ *Registrum Cartarum Ecclesie Sancti Egidii de Edinburgh*, ed. David Laing (Edinburgh: 1859), no.79; Spottiswoode, *Religious Houses*, 441; Bryce, *The Black Friars of Edinburgh*, 16.

¹⁵ Cowan and Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 118.

¹⁶ *Extracta e Variis Cronicis Scotiae*, 249; *Charters of the Friars Preachers of Ayr*, ed. Robert William Cochran-Patrick (Edinburgh: 1881), no.1.

¹⁷ *Extracta e Variis Cronicis Scotiae*, 249; *Munimenta Fratrum Predicatorum de Glasgu*, in *Liber Collegii Nostre Domine. Registrum Ecclesie B.V. Marie et S. Anne infra muros civitatis Glasguensis MDXLIX. Accedunt Munimenta Fratrum Predicatorum de Glasgu. Domus Dominicane apud Glasguenses carte que supersunt MCCXLIV-MDLIX*, ed. Joseph Robertson (Glasgow: 1846), 145-231, at 148-49 (no.2). The bishop in question, William de Bondington (1233-1258), was Alexander II’s chancellor.

¹⁸ For an outline of Bondington’s career in Alexander’s service, see Oram, *Alexander II*, 211-212. For Montrose Blackfriars, see Cowan and Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 119.

¹⁹ *Extracta e Variis Cronicis Scotiae*, 249.

powerful men were simply moved by an inchoate urge to express their support for the Dominicans and we should probably look to the order for an influential figure who perhaps helped to secure Alexander's active support at the outset of the mission to Scotland.

Only one name emerges from the obscurity of the earliest days of the order in Scotland as a possible apical figure in the mission; Clement, the first Dominican to become a bishop in Britain and Ireland. The outline of Clement's early career has been established through the research of the Donald Watt and Archie Duncan, who identified him as a university-educated scholar and linguist of high reputation within the order and in the international scholarly community.²⁰ It has long been claimed that he was of Scottish birth, based largely on the unreliable witness of the *Analecta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum*, but other evidence supports this view.²¹ Educated possibly at both Oxford and Paris, it may have been in the latter city that he entered the order in the 1220s and from where he returned to Scotland. Although most modern commentators identify him as the probable head of the Scottish mission,²² no medieval source accords him that honour. Clement, however, from his later standing with the king, was evidently prominent within the mission and clearly made a deep impression on Alexander from the outset. Indeed, so positive was that impression that when the deeply troubled bishopric of Dunblane fell vacant in 1230 and languished without a pastor for over three years, it was Clement who was identified in 1233 as the man best-suited to rescue it from its manifold woes.²³ No evidence survives for any direct involvement of the king in securing Clement's election, which ultimately arose from the actions of the bishops of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Brechin as papal mandatories charged with investigating the condition of the see of Dunblane and implementing remedies, but the subsequent closeness between Alexander and Clement hints at an early and deep personal relationship.²⁴ Perhaps significantly in light of his otherwise unsubstantiated role in the introduction of the order to Scotland, it was Bishop William

²⁰ Donald E. R. Watt, *A Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Graduates to AD 1410* (Oxford: 1977), 99-102; A. A. M. Duncan, "Clement (d.1258)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: 2004), accessed online 23 May 2019: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/50018>.

²¹ James Hutchison Cockburn, *The Medieval Bishops of Dunblane and Their Church* (Edinburgh: 1959), 43, 63 note 3.

²² See, for example, Bryce, *The Black Friars of Edinburgh*, 14-15; Marinell Ash, "The Church in the Reign of Alexander III", in *Scotland in the Reign of Alexander III*, ed. Norman H. Reid (Edinburgh: 1990), 31-52 at 35.

²³ *Chronicle of Melrose*, 82, under year m^occ^oxxxiii^o.

²⁴ *Vetera Monumenta Hibernorum et Scotorum Historiam Illustrantia*, ed. Augustinus Theiner (Rome: 1864), 35.

Malveisin who consecrated Clement as bishop. For sixteen years after his consecration he was immersed in the business of salvaging the finances of his own diocese and then managing the organisation of the relatively new and similarly impoverished diocese of Argyll. Throughout that period, there is no evidence for any continued involvement in the affairs of his old order, but it is unlikely that he failed to use his closeness to Alexander II to advance Dominican interests down to the king's death in 1249. This alignment of Crown and order remained of vital importance to the Dominicans for the next three hundred years.

After the initial phase of rapid expansion and the deaths of both Alexander II and Bishop Clement, the spread of Dominican houses within Scotland slowed dramatically. Although King Alexander III (1249-1286), continued his father's support and confirmed his endowments, his personal devotion inclined more to the Franciscans.²⁵ In some ways, the second half of the 13th century was the "Franciscan Era" in Scotland after the earlier successes of the Dominicans. That, however, does not mean that new Dominican foundations and further endowments ceased entirely. A house at Wigtown in Galloway was apparently instituted around 1267 by Dervorguilla, lady of Galloway, and was certainly in existence before her death in January 1290.²⁶ One new 14th-century foundation was at Cupar in Fife, where in 1348 Duncan, earl of Fife, petitioned the pope for permission to establish a convent.²⁷ Never a substantial establishment, it struggled until 1518 when its few endowments were reassigned to the nearby St Andrews convent, which was then undergoing significant expansion (see below), and the remaining friars removed to there.²⁸ These exceptions apart, the later 13th century saw consolidation rather than expansion, with the established houses attracting further endowment from the Crown, from within their local burgh communities and from leading members of the regional nobility, but fresh gift-giving appears to have declined. Surviving charters suggest that Perth Blackfriars attracted most of Alexander III's patronage, which seems to suggest that it was regarded as the order's premier house at this date. This might also be reflected in the role that it already seems to have held from around this period as the locus for great gatherings of state. This role is exemplified by the gathering there in July 1266 for the confirmation of the Scoto-

²⁵ Ash, "The Church in the Reign of Alexander III", 35.

²⁶ Cowan and Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 121.

²⁷ *Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Petitions to the Pope*, vol. 1, ed. W. H. Bliss (London: 1896), 144.

²⁸ Cowan and Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 117.

Norwegian Treaty of Perth.²⁹ Alexander granted them the king's garden in Perth (another part of the abandoned royal castle site), the right to have a water-conduit to their buildings from the burgh's mill-pond, and exemption from payment of multures on fifteen chalders of grain milled in the king's mill,³⁰ significant enough grants on their own but on a much-reduced scale from the initial endowment made by Alexander II. Larger individual gifts, mainly in the form of annual rents, may have been made by Alexander III to the friaries in Aberdeen and Berwick, but at Elgin his gifts took the form of annual allowances of grain, while for Ayr he simply arranged a property exchange to enable the enlargement of the convent's cemetery.³¹

The quarter century after Alexander III's death presents something of a hiatus in the order's development, reflecting the wider national crisis of the first phase of the Wars of Independence. As part of his efforts to secure kingship, King Robert the Bruce projected himself actively as the patron and protector of the Church in Scotland and, once he had restored stability to the kingdom's heartlands, he resumed the by-then traditional role of patron. The Dominicans were beneficiaries of this need to emphasise and reinforce the legitimisation of the Bruce kingship. It was as heir to Alexander III that Robert was presented in the instructions to the chamberlain to resume annual payments to the convent in Berwick following the town's recapture by the Scots in 1318.³² Early beneficiaries were the Elgin and Inverness convents, the former endowed in 1313 with revenue from the royal thanage of Aberchirder, the latter from the burgh fermes, both awards possibly to pay for masses for the souls of those who had perished during the king's recent military campaigns through the Great Glen and Moray lowlands.³³ Glasgow, not a royal foundation, also received endowments from Robert in 1315.³⁴ At Edinburgh, the friary received confirmation in 1325 of the annual payment of five merks from the mill of Liberton toward maintenance of their

²⁹ *The Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland*, ed. T. Thomson, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: 1814), 420.

³⁰ *The Blackfriars of Perth*, no.V. This garden was the property later referred to as the 'Gylt Herbar'. *Regesta Regum Scottorum*, vol. 4.1: *The Acts of Alexander III*, eds. Cynthia J. Neville and Grant G. Simpson (Edinburgh: 2012), no.239 (hereafter *RRS*, 4.1).

³¹ *RRS*, 4.1, nos 154, 323, 329 and page 234.

³² *Regesta Regum Scottorum*, vol. 5: *The Acts of Robert I*, ed. A. A. M. Duncan (Edinburgh: 1988), no.545 (hereafter *RRS*, 5).

³³ *Ibid*, nos 35, 36.

³⁴ *RRS*, 5, no.61.

buildings.³⁵ Towards the end of his life, Robert I also made a number of new gifts to the order. Ayr, probably on account of a visit there from the king during his pilgrimage to Whithorn in 1329, received a grant of an annual payment from the burgh ferme and exemption from payment of multures.³⁶ As with Alexander III, however, it was the Perth convent that benefited most from Robert's patronage, receiving seven royal grants and confirmations between 1316 and 1323.³⁷ It is difficult to avoid viewing this volume of royal interest in the convent as arising from anything other than the unique role which it held in the political life of the kingdom as the place where Church and Crown were most frequently juxtaposed and combined.

Records of renewed royal endowment, however, are only part of the picture in the reinvigoration of the bond between the Dominicans and monarchy in the 14th century. It is clear that the friars enjoyed a very close relationship with the royal house and, indeed, were present within the household itself. In the early 1330s, before the exile of the boy King David II (1329-1371), Dominicans were part of the close household that gathered around him in Scotland and appear to have been involved heavily in his spiritual education as well as his formal learning of letters.³⁸ This early forging of a personal bond with the order perhaps explains why it was to the Dominican General Chapter at Milan that c.1340 David sent money to pay for masses to be said for his soul rather than to any other order.³⁹ Throughout this time and continuing after his return to Scotland in 1342, the king had a Dominican friar as his personal confessor, Walter Blantyre, who later became one of the intermediaries between the captive David in England and the government of Robert the Steward in Scotland.⁴⁰ From around 1355, Blantyre was succeeded by another Dominican and university graduate, Adam of Lanark, who like his predecessor acted as David's envoy whilst in English captivity before in the late 1350s becoming proctor for the king's chancellor, Patrick of Leuchars, bishop of Brechin, at the papal court in Avignon. A close confidant and councillor of David's, he secured his reward in 1363 with his provision by the

³⁵ *Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scotorum*, vol. 1, ed. John Maitland Thomson (Edinburgh: 1882), appendix 1, no.23 (hereafter *RMS*, 1).

³⁶ *RRS*, 5, nos 364, 368.

³⁷ *Ibid*, nos 91, 173, 207, 217, 227, 228, 229.

³⁸ Michael A. Penman, *David II, 1329-71* (East Linton: 2004), 39.

³⁹ Penman, *David II*, 79.

⁴⁰ *Rotuli Scotiae in Turri Londinensi et in Domo Capitulari Westmonasteriensi Asservati*, ed. D. Macpherson, vol. 1 (London: 1814), 707-715. For Blantyre's career, see Watt, *A Biographical Dictionary*, 54.

pope to the bishopric of Whithorn.⁴¹ But for all this personal attachment to the order, in terms of material support, David's greatest contribution was the establishment of an oratory of four Dominican friars within the church of St Monans in Fife.⁴²

Behind this slowing momentum in terms of new foundations and endowments can be seen a shift in patterns of elite religious patronage. This movement saw a switch, never total, of noble patronage from the Dominicans (and other mendicant orders) towards a new emphasis on colleges of secular priests as the 14th century progressed.⁴³ The trend towards chantry endowments represented by such new collegiate foundations, however, also saw significant endowment of friaries with similar *pro anima* purposes, arising from high-status interments within them in the later 14th and 15th centuries. The following are illustrative examples of continuing noble patronage of the order in respect of mortuary endowments, some of which represented one-off acts of especial significance while others were sustained across several generations and formed the basis of close patron-beneficiary relationships. The first example occurred at Ayr, where the social *arriviste*, Malcolm Fleming, 1st earl of Wigtown, was a generous patron of the Dominican convent, which lay close to one of the principal centres of his political influence in Carrick. Shortly before 1344 he paid for a new chapel dedicated to St Mary to be erected at the convent and endowed it on 6 July 1344 with six merks annually, to be paid from his own coffers.⁴⁴ He replaced this annual cash payment on 3 May 1346 with an annual rent of 100 shillings from properties in King's Kyle and land outside the burgh.⁴⁵ His building of the chapel and endowment *pro anima*, for the souls of himself, parents, ancestors and successors, indicates that he probably intended to be buried there, creating a new dynastic mausoleum for his family following his entry into the top echelon of the Scottish nobility, emphasising symbolically their close association

⁴¹ Watt, *A Biographical Dictionary*, 325-326.

⁴² Cowan and Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 120; Penman, *David II*, 216. The king's patronage of the order included: confirmation of payments due from Crown lands to the friars of Aberdeen (*RMS*, 1, no.124); confirmation of his father's grants to the convent at Ayr (*Regesta Regum Scottorum*, vol. 6: *The Acts of David II*, ed. Bruce Webster (Edinburgh: 1976), no.74 [hereafter *RRS*, 6]); confirmations and inspections of grants by his father and King Alexander III to Elgin (*RRS*, 6, nos 199, 436, 439; *RMS*, 1, no.245); a letter of protection to Glasgow Blackfriars (*RRS*, vi, no.273); inspection of his father's grants to Inverness (*RMS*, 1, no.290); and two letters instructing renewal of payments of annual rents and two confirmations of charters to Perth Blackfriars (*RRS*, 6, nos 83, 214, 466, 470).

⁴³ For the trend towards collegiate churches, see Richard D. Oram, 'Scottish Collegiate Churches, c.1320-1546: Ancestry, Ambition and Social Arrival', in *Places of Worship in Britain and Ireland 1350-1550*, ed. P.S. Barnwell (Donington: 2019), 126-51.

⁴⁴ *Charters of the Friars Preachers of Ayr*, no. 8.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, no. 6. This charter, granted by Malcolm as earl, is wrongly dated to 3 May 1336.

with the region. Malcolm, however, may have been the only Fleming earl to be buried there, as his grandson and successor lost the lands and title and died in obscurity.

The second case dates from the same period and relates to long-term links between the Stewart family and Perth Blackfriars, which were forged following Robert the Steward's (the later King Robert II) acquisition of the earldom of Atholl in 1342 and his progressive acquisition of properties in the burgh's hinterland.⁴⁶ A personal tie was cemented when Elizabeth Mure (d.1355), Robert's first wife, was entombed in the friary church.⁴⁷ It was not until December 1405, however, fifty years after her death and fifteen years into his reign, that her son King Robert III (1390-1406) made a grant to the convent of the chapel of St Lawrence in the burgh and all income derived from it. This grant should be seen in the context of Robert III's attempts to reassert his authority in the district around Perth where his younger brother, Robert, duke of Albany, exercised significant political influence, rather than a belated commemoration of his mother.⁴⁸ At the time of Elizabeth's death, the Stewarts had been simply one of several magnate families with important local connections who were securing burial within the convent; by 1405, that fact provided a convenient vehicle through which Robert III could counter his brother's stranglehold on power, using his mother's burial there as the rationale for cultivation of a personal relationship with the politically influential Dominican community.

A third example of what could be styled politically symbolic burial was that at the Inverness Blackfriars in 1436 of Alexander Stewart, earl of Mar, cousin of King James I, who had used his patronage and protection of the convent as an expression of his political power in a region where his authority was under challenge.⁴⁹ Earl Alexander, like Malcolm Fleming, had intended to establish a dynastic mausoleum there, but his line ended with him. The final illustration is again from Perth, where another family, the Hays of Errol, cultivated a relationship with the friary that extended back into the 13th century. A charter of 1452 by William Hay, earl of Errol, recording the burial of several of his ancestors at the Perth

⁴⁶ Stephen I. Boardman, *The Early Stewart Kings: Robert II and Robert III, 1371-1406* (East Linton: 1996), 93-94,

⁴⁷ *The Blackfriars of Perth*, 38.

⁴⁸ See discussion in Boardman, *The Early Stewart Kings*, 283.

⁴⁹ *Calendar of Scottish Supplications to Rome*, vol. 4: 1433-1447, ed. Annie I. Dunlop and David MacLauchlan, (Glasgow: 1983), no.282. For his death, see Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 8, 293.

Blackfriars and formalising arrangements for commemorative masses there,⁵⁰ provides a powerful example of how association with the Dominican community over several generations served to stress one noble family's powerful lineage and deep roots in the local community. But we must also be cautious about over-reading the "political" dimension of these acts. Fundamentally, every one of them reflected deep faith in the redemptive power of the mortuary services offered by the Dominicans and their effectiveness as intercessors through *pro anima* masses.

It is the political functions of the Perth Blackfriars' convent, however, that come to the fore in the later 14th and 15th centuries. King Robert II (1371-1390) and his heirs forged a new and closer relationship with that friary following the Stewarts' elevation to the Scottish throne, through their inheritance and use of the royal lodgings attached to it. It is not known exactly when the kings of Scots began to develop the residential complex appended to the Perth Blackfriars' precinct that came to be known as the King's House. It was certainly in existence by the middle of the 14th century and Alexander III's decision to host the Norwegian delegation there for the 1266 treaty confirmation suggests that some substantial residential provision already existed on the site, suitable for the reception of high-status foreign dignitaries. Similar royal apartments were developed at the abbeys of Holyrood, Dunfermline and Scone through enlargement of the guest provision; a similar development may have been the case at Perth. It stood on parts of the land on the north side of the burgh connected with the former royal castle, which had been given by Alexander II as the site for the Dominican friary. It was probably for this reason, plus the potential meeting-space afforded by the friary church, that the convent became a regular gathering place for Scottish parliaments and general councils from at least the 1350s. In January 1365, for example, thirty-five of the leading men of the kingdom gathered at Blackfriars for a general council, the record of a further council meeting there in July of the same year noting that the assembly had gathered in the convent's church.⁵¹ In 1370, the councillors gathered for judicial proceedings in the king's hall "at the Friars" during the Perth parliament of that

⁵⁰ *The Blackfriars of Perth*, no.XIV. The grant was made with the stipulation that the friars were to maintain the chapel building and continue to perform services within it. Payment of the annuity from the chapel to the friars was noted as suspended in 1429, 1430 and 1431, until such time as the buildings were repaired: *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, volume 4, ed. George Burnett (Edinburgh: 1880), 488, 523, 549.

⁵¹ *The Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707*, eds. Keith M. Brown et al. (St Andrews: 2007-2019), 1365/1/6, 1365/7/2. <https://www.rps.ac.uk/> last accessed on 26 May 2019.

year,⁵² indicating that tribunals and panels of parliament were spilling out into the royal residential parts of the complex. It was at the doors of the church of the Blackfriars at Perth, moreover, that Alexander Stewart, earl of Buchan, infamous as the “Wolf of Badenoch”, made his formal submission following his burning of the cathedral at Elgin in June 1390, before receiving absolution from his excommunication at the high altar of the church.⁵³ His submission was made in front of his brother, King Robert III, and what appears to have been the core of the king’s council, who were presumably gathered at Perth for a meeting in the King’s House and friary; the location of this very public act of humiliation was by no means serendipitous.

It is James I (1406-1437) with whom the royal residence in the Perth Blackfriars is most commonly associated, it being there that he was assassinated in February 1437. James held the majority of the parliaments of his reign at Perth Blackfriars and from the records of these assemblies we gain some graphic images of how the political community intruded upon the innermost religious workings of the convent. Walter Bower, and eyewitness of many of these meetings, describes how in 1433 King James met an English delegation during the parliamentary session, seated in front of the high altar in the choir of the friary church.⁵⁴ The implication from this arrangement is that the choir-stalls were occupied by the principal members of the king’s council.⁵⁵ During full parliamentary sessions, therefore, the clerical community would have been unable to perform their regularly scheduled devotions in their church and must have found alternative venues for the celebration of mass and other services at these times.

While the closeness of the relationship between the king and the Perth Dominicans undoubtedly brought benefits to them and the order in Scotland more generally, it also brought costs in terms of its impact on the wider religious life of the community. The 14th-century record hints at the presence of a substantial establishment distinct from the main

⁵² *The Records of the Parliaments of Scotland*, 1370/2/6. Last accessed on 26 May 2019. The modern translation refers to the room as the king’s chamber but the late is *aula domini nostri regis* (the hall of our lord king). There is no justification for identifying this label as being applied to the friary church or the conventual refectory, as suggested in John G. Dunbar, *Scottish Royal Palaces* (East Linton: 1999), 108. The parliamentary record makes it explicit when meetings took place within the church.

⁵³ *Registrum Episcopatus Moraviensis*, ed. Cosmo Innes (Edinburgh: 1837), 381-82.

⁵⁴ Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 8, 289.

⁵⁵ Richard D. Oram, “Community of the Realm: the Middle Ages”, in *The Architecture of Scottish Government: From Kingship to Parliamentary Democracy*, ed. Miles Glendinning (Dundee: 2004), 15-81, at 47.

conventual buildings but evidently within the same series of enclosures that formed the wider precinct. Household departments, such as the Wardrobe, overseen by the chamberlain, seem also to have been located within the King's House,⁵⁶ and there are references also to storage facilities for coal and wine for the king's use. Collectively, these elements indicate that lay use of the precinct was significant and growing. By the 1430s, it is clear that the King's House had become an even larger complex within the friars' precinct,⁵⁷ capable of accommodating a substantial household during the periods of royal residence and upon which King James and Queen Joan spent considerably. In 1431, for example, payment was made for the carriage of glass from Dundee to Perth for the windows of the queen's chamber in the King's House,⁵⁸ while accounts of James's assassination also reveal the presence of a tennis court adjacent to the royal chamber-block.⁵⁹ Although he appears to have lavished money on his and Queen Joan's personal quarters, there is little evidence that his patronage extended to the convent more generally. Although there was a marked falling away of use of the King's House after 1437, it remained as a royal residence and as late as 1531 there was expenditure on building and maintenance work there.⁶⁰

Crown support for the Dominicans once again revived during the reign of King James III (1460-1488). Following his attainment of his majority, James began to display strong personal interest in the affairs of the order and in the 1470s he worked closely with the Scottish vicar-general to secure the enlargement of some lesser Dominican establishments into full convents (see below @@). Some of his support for the order can be seen in a purely political light, particularly where it aligned with his wider views on the status of his kingdom and his kingship, reflected most clearly in his embracing of the philosophy of "fre impire", i.e. Scotland's sovereignty and utter independence from external domination.⁶¹ In Church matters, this position was manifest in his assertion from 1469 onwards of control over election and provision to benefices within his kingdom, reinforced by parliamentary

⁵⁶ *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, vol. 3, ed. George Burnett (Edinburgh: 1879), 418.

⁵⁷ In 1450, payment was made from the Exchequer to the prior and convent for 'repairs to the *hospitium* of the lord king within the monastery of the said brethren': *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, vol. 5, ed. George Burnett (Edinburgh: 1882), 377-378.

⁵⁸ *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, vol. 4, 533.

⁵⁹ John Shirley, "The Dethe of the Kynge of Scottis", in *Death and Dissent: Two Fifteenth-Century Chronicles*, ed. Lister M. Matheson (Woodbridge: 1999), 1-59, at 39.

⁶⁰ *Accounts of the Masters of Works for Building and Repairing Royal Palaces and Castles*, vol. 1, 1529-1615, ed. Henry M. Paton (Edinburgh: 1957), 111.

⁶¹ Norman Macdougall, *James III*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: 2009), 88.

prohibition on seeking provision at the papal court.⁶² Although James himself had not sought the elevation in 1472 of the bishopric of St Andrews to archiepiscopal status, once he had asserted his control over the new metropolitan see in 1474 he embraced this symbolic spiritual manifestation of Scotland's fully independent identity. It is, then, surely no coincidence that it was around this time that James began to take a keen interest in the status of the Dominican community within his kingdom. For James, the anomalous position of the Scottish Dominicans as a vicariate within the English province was an affront to his philosophy of "fre impire". A legacy of the era of Anglo-Scottish peace during which the order had entered Scotland, it had never been resolved following the Wars of Independence (1296-1357).⁶³ Although the Scottish Dominicans had acted as an independent grouping within the wider order since that time, their institutional status vis-à-vis the English Province had remained unaddressed. James turned his diplomatic efforts on that problem in the late 1470s and secured the resolution which he sought in June 1481, when the General Chapter at Rome acceded to his request that the Scottish vicariate should be elevated to the distinction of separate provincial status, finally formally independent of the English Province.⁶⁴ While there were perhaps no immediately obvious consequences of this institutional change, the creation of a Scottish Province gave the men who held the office of provincial new authority to drive forward the processes of reform which were then underway within the order internationally.

Always mindful of the fragmentary state of the parchment record for most of the order's Scottish houses, the surviving material seems to indicate that there was considerable revival of interest in the Dominicans amongst burgh and minor noble patrons from the later 1450s. At Edinburgh, the second half of the 15th century saw a steady flow of new endowments, mainly in the form of annual rents payable from properties in the burgh and more widely throughout Lothian.⁶⁵ Although some substantial gifts came from the king and senior ecclesiastical figures, the bulk came from members of Edinburgh's merchant-burgess elite and from knightly families from the burgh's hinterland. Most were simply to support the good works of the friars, but several were for provision of lights at the principal altars in

⁶² Ibid, 101-102.

⁶³ Brown, *The Wars of Scotland*, 128.

⁶⁴ For the text of the act, see Bryce, *The Black Friars of Edinburgh*, 83 (no.25).

⁶⁵ Bryce, *The Black Friars of Edinburgh*, 80-84.

the friary church or even more specifically were *pro anima* endowments.⁶⁶ At Ayr, no less than eight such anniversary endowments were made between 1423 and 1515, underscoring the enduring popularity of the order amongst local burgesses, despite conflict earlier in the 15th century over payments to the friars from burgh revenues.⁶⁷ Such displays of lay faith in the order's reputation of care for the souls of the dead presents an important counterbalance to the dominant view of their significance as preachers to the living.⁶⁸ This fresh wave of endowment meant that the order was in a relatively healthy financial condition across the new Scottish Province, with the position of the smaller and precariously endowed houses being actively addressed just as the religious status quo began to face mounting challenges across Europe.⁶⁹

One key area where the order was seen as an essential provider of spiritual services was in the role from which their formal title derived; they were the Friars Preachers. In a post-Reformation context in which the sermon was a central component of services to both Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions it is perhaps surprising that few clergy, certainly at a parish level, preached. It had been to address that deficiency and the risks therefore posed by radical, heterodox ideas delivered to an otherwise uninformed laity by heretical preachers that the order had been established. In Scotland's towns, in common with the rest of Latin Europe, Dominican churches and preaching stations became the primary focus for lay-folk who were seeking a closer relationship with the Divine and a deeper comprehension of matters that can be labelled as spirituality, morality and soteriology. It was the effectiveness of Dominican preaching and the comfort that it gave to laymen in an age of profound social reconfiguration, political upheaval and socio-economic and environmental dislocation that won the order much of its new patronage.⁷⁰

Further signs of renewed support for the reinvigorated Dominicans from the middle of the 15th century can be seen at St Andrews. Despite the role attributed to Bishop William Malveisin in the introduction of the order to Scotland and suggestions of a failed convent

⁶⁶ Ibid, 81 (nos 12, 14), 83 (no.27), 84 (no.30).

⁶⁷ Mairi Cowan, *Death, Life and Religious Change in Scottish Towns, c.1350-1560* (Manchester: 2012), 115, 116. For the *pro anima* endowments, see *Charters of the Friars Preachers of Ayr*, nos 31, 35, 37, 41, 48, 49, 50, 53.

⁶⁸ Cowan, *Death, Life and Religious Change*, 116-117.

⁶⁹ Alec Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation* (Manchester: 2006), 18.

⁷⁰ For large-scale analysis of the late 15th and early 16th-century revival of the Dominicans, see Janet P. Foggie, *Renaissance Religion in Urban Scotland: The Dominican Order, 1450-1560* (Leiden: 2003).

there, there was apparently no Dominican house at St Andrews before the 1460s.⁷¹ It seems, however, to have been one of Malveisin's successors who finally established the house, Archbishop James Beaton in 1525 referring to himself and his predecessors as "first and principal foundatouris" of the convent there.⁷² What was first established seems only to have been a small oratory or hospice, served by Dominicans, but by November 1464 it may have become a larger establishment headed by a prior.⁷³ The most likely candidate for this development is Bishop James Kennedy (1440-1465), the founder of St Salvator's College within the University of St Andrews, who presumably saw an enhanced Dominican presence in the city as part of his wider drive to push up the quality of clerical education within his diocese. A move to formalise this evolution occurred in the later 1470s, when Pope Sixtus IV issued a bull in response to a supplication from King James III and the Scottish Dominican vicar-general for permission to give full conventual status to the "oratories or hospices" at St Andrews and St Monans.⁷⁴ Although the bull made no mention of any educational link, it gave permission to erect churches and conventual buildings at the two intended priories, made operative in December 1477,⁷⁵ a right which would have given the material foundation for the development of a Dominican presence at the University. Although it has been suggested that only "one or two friars at the most" resided there before the major expansion of the convent in the later 1510s, grants of rents in Perth "to the prior and convent of St Andrews" in 1492 indicate something more substantial was by then in existence.⁷⁶

Impetus for larger-scale development came in 1514 by the legacy of Bishop William Elphinstone of Aberdeen, who had been nominated to the archiepiscopal see of St Andrews shortly before his death in October that year, when the residue of his estate was given with the purpose of building a Dominican convent within the University at St Andrews.

⁷¹ Cowan and Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 119-120 offer a summary analysis of the 13th-century claims.

⁷² *Extracta e Variis Cronicis Scotiae*, 149; John Herkless and Robert Kerr Hannay, *The Archbishops of St Andrews*, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: 1910), 168-169.

⁷³ A prior of the house first occurs in a document dated 22 November 1464: *Liber S. Thome de Aberbrothoc*, vol. 2: *Registrum nigrum necnon libros cartarum recentiores complectens, 1329-1536* (Edinburgh: 1856), 160.

⁷⁴ *Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Papal Letters*, vol. 13.2: 1471-1484, ed. J. Twemlow (London: 1955), 571.

⁷⁵ Cowan and Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 120.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 120, citing *Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis. Ecclesie Cathedralis Aberdonensis regesta que extant in unum collecta*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1845), volume 2, 311-312. For the 1492 grant to the prior and convent of St Andrews, see *The Blackfriars of Perth*, 63.

Elphinstone, the founder of the University of Aberdeen and an active promoter of clerical education within his diocese, was here clearly identifying the Dominicans and their revived reputation as a learned order as standing at the forefront of efforts to drive up the quality of education within the clergy. He saw support for the Dominicans as a route to addressing lay hunger for a more meaningful spiritual experience and countering the risk of heterodox teachings filling that void. The order had been a key element in Elphinstone's plans within his diocese; the first doctor of theology at his new college in Aberdeen was John Adamson, who later became Provincial of the order in Scotland and under whose guidance important scholarly libraries were built up in most of Scotland's Dominican convents.⁷⁷ It was to the Dominicans of Aberdeen that Thomas Crystall, reforming abbot of Cistercian Kinloss, sent two of his monks for instruction to enable them to become tutors for their younger brethren, one in music and chant to improve the quality of the choir services and the other in theology.⁷⁸ These successes in addressing the need for improved clerical education within Aberdeen and Moray dioceses appear to have helped inform discussion at a meeting of the order's provincial chapter at Stirling in September 1516, where it was agreed that Elphinstone's endowment was to be used "for the fabric of the new convent of St Andrews, so that there [...] will be a convent of friars [...] engaged continually in the study of sacred letters..."⁷⁹ Significant material support for this development was in place by 1518, when an agreement between Adamson and George Hepburn, dean of Dunkeld, secured the financial arrangements to sustain five or six friars as students at the university.⁸⁰ Alexander Myln, canon of Dunkeld and author of the *Vitae* of the Bishops of Dunkeld, observed of Hepburn that he supported Adamson's efforts to reform the Dominicans in Scotland and named him as "founder" of the St Andrews convent,⁸¹ although his role in this arose in fact from his position as executor of Elphinstone's will. As Cowan and Easson observed, if anyone should be regarded as the refounder of the convent at St Andrews, it was John Adamson.

⁷⁷ Jane E.A. Dawson, *Scotland Re-formed, 1488-1587* (Edinburgh: 2007), 55; Jenny Wormald, *Court, Kirk and Community: Scotland 1470-1625* (London: 1981), 87.

⁷⁸ Giovanni Ferrerio, *Historia Abbatum de Kynlos: una cum vita Thomae Chrystalli abbatis* (Edinburgh: 1839), 80.

⁷⁹ *Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis*, vol. 2, 310-12

⁸⁰ Cowan and Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 120.

⁸¹ Alexander Myln, *Vitae Dunkeldensis Ecclesiae Episcoporum, a prima sedis fundatione, ad annum M.D.XV.* (Edinburgh: 1831), 55-56.

In the focus on the resurgence of support for the Dominican friars in this period as a manifestation of the order's efforts to fill a void in lay demand for greater spiritual engagement which heterodox teachers threatened to occupy, it is difficult to avoid seeing this trend in overwhelmingly male terms. Male lay patrons were prominent donors certainly, but women were almost equally active in this regard. Of the eight *pro anima* endowments made after 1423 at Ayr discussed earlier, for example, three were made jointly by husbands and wives and two solely by women, albeit with their partners' permission. It has long been recognised that women were as active in the quest for greater lay participation in organised religion as men and played a key role in the spread and growth of reformist thinking in the early 16th century.⁸² Their engagement with religion and hunger for more active participation, however, was also recognised within the Church despite the comparative poverty of formal provision in Scotland for the female religious. Scotland, in comparison to most other western European states, had few nunneries and most of those that existed were oriented towards the needs of high status women.⁸³ The Dominicans responded to that demand in the early 1500s through the foundation of a house for women outside Edinburgh, the largest urban population centre in Scotland at that time, an initiative that was apparently some years in the planning.⁸⁴ The foundation of the Dominican nunnery of St Katherine of Siena, which became known in Scots as Sciennes, was attributed in the papal bull of January 1518 which authorised its establishment, to three noblewomen of high status whose husbands had perished in the Battle of Flodden (1513), but the driving initiative behind it was John Crawford, a secular canon in the burgh's collegiate church of St Giles, who was aided in his ambitions by the Edinburgh burgess John Cant and Agnes Kerketil his wife.⁸⁵ Despite the status of the three widows whose efforts helped to secure papal authorisation for the nunnery, the women who can be identified as nuns at Sciennes

⁸² AudreyBeth Fitch, 'Power through Purity: The Virgin Martyrs and Women's Salvation in Pre-Reformation Scotland', in *Women in Scotland c.1100-c.1750*, eds. Elizabeth L. Ewan and Maureen M. Meikle (East Linton: 1999), 16-28.

⁸³ For discussion of nunneries, see Cowan and Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 143-156. Russell Andrew McDonald, 'The Foundation and Patronage of Nunneries by Native Elites in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-century Scotland', in *Women in Scotland*, 3-15. Kimm Perkins, 'Death, Removal and Resignation: the Succession to the Office of Prioress in Late Medieval Scotland', in *Twisted Sisters. Women, Crime and Deviance in Scotland since 1400*, ed. Yvonne Galloway Brown and Rona Ferguson (East Linton: 2002), 32-53.

⁸⁴ Another Dominican nunnery had been proposed at Glasgow c.1510 but, despite provision of a founding endowment by a bequest from the sub-dean of Glasgow, the project never progressed: *Liber Collegii Nostre Domine*, lxxii.

⁸⁵ *Liber Conventus S Katherine Senensis prope Edinburgum*, ed. James Maidment (Edinburgh: 1841), xix, no.11.

thereafter were clearly of burgess background and linked closely to important families within Edinburgh. The house prospered in its forty-year pre-Reformation lifespan, attracting some significant endowments and royal support from King James V (1513-1542),⁸⁶ but it was from within the burgess elite that it drew the bulk of its support and from whom it gained some protection in the 1540s and 1550s from the iconoclastic attacks of Reformers. The convent was, however, a victim of the general destruction of Edinburgh's religious houses in 1558-1559 and by 1567 the destitute prioress and convent were alienating their remaining endowment to provide for their basic needs "after the destruction of their place ... and their expulsion from it".⁸⁷

What role Adamson, as provincial, played in securing the papal authorisation for Sciennes is unknown. It is likely that throughout this period his primary efforts were focused on the male houses and the continuing establishment of mechanisms to counter heresy more generally. In that regard, he appears to have been the guiding hand behind a second large-scale foundation, contemporary with the developments at St Andrews, which occurred in Dundee. In September 1517, he petitioned at Rome for permission to found a Dominican house in the burgh, which was then Scotland's richest trading-port after Edinburgh/Leith.⁸⁸ Support for the foundation came locally from leading burgesses, headed by Andrew Abercromby, who before March 1521 had provided the necessary endowment for the new community.⁸⁹ Located in a major sea-port through which Lutheran influence was beginning to enter eastern Scotland, Adamson's efforts at Dundee can be seen as part of the wider Dominican challenge to the spreading heresy, a key dimension of what has been described as a pronounced effort at "Catholic reform".⁹⁰ Its effectiveness can perhaps be seen in the targeting of the convent by a Protestant mob in August 1543.⁹¹ Attacks on the urban houses of friars were, in fact, to become widespread from the 1540s and were a response by the small but politically influential and socially important Protestant groups within some burghs

⁸⁶ Cowan and Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 152.

⁸⁷ *Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scotorum*, vol. 4, 1546-1580, ed. John Maitland Thomson (Edinburgh: 1886), no.1980.

⁸⁸ Cowan and Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 117.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation*, 18; Foggie, *Renaissance Religion in Urban Scotland*, 35-54.

⁹¹ *A Diurnal of Remarkable Occurrents that Have Passed within the Country of Scotland, since the Death of King James the Fourth till the Year M.D.LXXV* (Edinburgh: 1833), 29.

to the effective alternative to reformist preaching which they offered.⁹² Not all of the reformists' response, however, took the form of physical attacks. Ironically, in view of Adamson's driving purpose behind his efforts to improve the quality of learning in his order, it was two renegade Dominican friars who were sent to Aberdeen in 1543 by Regent Arran to preach reformist thinking as part of his brief flirtation with Protestantism following the Treaty of Greenwich with Henry VIII of England.⁹³ The Dundee community had barely recovered from the 1543 riot when elements of the English army in Scotland in 1548 sacked the burgh, again burning the friary, a blow from which it never recovered.⁹⁴ One consequence of the failure of the Dundee convent was the strengthening of the Protestant position within the burgh and its establishment as one of the principal centres of lay support for reform in eastern Scotland.

When the full force of Reformation struck Scotland in the late 1550s, it was the convents of friars generally that were the first targets for the Reformers to end the counter-reformist challenge that the often university-educated Dominicans posed. The onslaught was presaged by the posting on the doors of the friaries of the so-called "Beggars' Summons", a tract influenced to some extent by the English "rabble-rousing, anti-clerical diatribe" *A Supplicacyon for the Beggars*.⁹⁵ As has been commented of the attacks on the Dominicans and Franciscans generally in 1559-1560, "iconoclastic violence ... was directed at the healthiest and best ordered institutions",⁹⁶ especially those in the most politically influential towns. Thus, while the remote and relatively unimportant convents in Elgin and Inverness escaped the violent attention of the Reformers, Perth, one of the largest of the order's friaries, was subjected to a violent "reformatioun" on 10 May 1559 in the rioting which

⁹² Edinburgh Blackfriars was attacked but escaped serious damage in September 1543; Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation*, 66. Perth Blackfriars was assaulted by a Protestant mob in May 1543; see Cowan and Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 119; and again in 1551; see Cowan, *Death, Life and Religious Change*, 164. It has been observed that Perth's 'reformist clique' saw the Dominicans as their principal opponents in the burgh: Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation*, 18. Cowan, *Death, Life and Religious Change*, 159, however, points to a sharp decline in *pro anima* endowments post-1540.

⁹³ Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation*, 57; Allan White, "The Impact of the Reformation on a Burgh Community: the Case of Aberdeen", in *The Early Modern Town in Scotland*, ed. Michael Lynch (London: 1987), 81-101 at 85.

⁹⁴ Cowan and Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 117-118.

⁹⁵ Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation*, 31. For the text of the Beggars' Summons, see *Scottish Historical Documents*, ed. Gordon Donaldson (Edinburgh: 1970), 117-118.

⁹⁶ Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation*, 19.

followed a sermon delivered by John Knox in the burgh's parish kirk.⁹⁷ Edinburgh and St Andrews were likewise ransacked in June 1559, the latter following another sermon by Knox.⁹⁸ In Aberdeen diocese the end was altogether more violent. The Dominican convent in the burgh was attacked, ransacked and burned by Protestants from the Mearns to the south who entered Aberdeen on 4 January 1560. It was later recorded that the convent of the Blackfriars was "was so industriously razed ... that now ther is nothing of that building to be seen".⁹⁹ Deprived of their bases of operation and resources to sustain them, the Dominicans began to disintegrate as an organised counter-reformation force and the end, when it came, was surprisingly rapid. On 17 March 1560, John Grierson, then provincial of the order, previously one of the leaders of the drive to root out heresy and enforce orthodoxy and clerical discipline, publicly renounced his allegiance to Rome and faith in the Mass.¹⁰⁰ Deprived of its intellectual and organisational leadership, the demoralised remnants of the order in Scotland drifted quietly into historical oblivion.

It is perhaps the greatest irony of the Dominican's history in Scotland that their own intellectual purity, rigour and adherence to their founding principles led so many of them down the path of reform. Introduced to address one of the voids in the spiritual care of lay populations through their teaching, their closeness to that population and continued dependence on it for much of their sustenance exposed them to the hunger for inclusion, for participation in devotions which moved beyond the passivity of the lay presence at the Mass, and recognition of the need to accommodate that demand before it turned to the lure of heterodoxy. Rigour in pursuing orthodox teaching and in engaging the urban population through sermons and services received reciprocal recognition, principally latterly in the form of renewed gift-giving. The financial stability those gifts brought, however, did not lead to a decline in standards, chiefly because it never matched the scale of endowments enjoyed by the monastic orders or the secular clergy and, consequently, it meant that few careerists entered their ranks in pursuit of benefices. The comparative

⁹⁷ Cowan and Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses*, 118, 119; *The Chronicle of Perth*, ed. Jonathan Eagles (Llanerch: 1996), 21.

⁹⁸ Bryce, *The Black Friars of Edinburgh*, 56-7; *The Works of John Knox*, ed. David Laing, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: 1846), 349, 366.

⁹⁹ James Gordon of Rothiemay, *Abredoniae Utriusque Descriptio. A Description of Both Towns of Aberdeen*, ed. Cosmo Innes (Edinburgh: 1842), 16.

¹⁰⁰ Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation*, 188.

poverty of the order ensured that right to the eve of the Reformation it was men with true vocations who became professed and that they were chiefly drawn from burgess or minor noble families; scions of magnate houses still looked to the better-endowed monasteries and collegiate churches for careers. This closeness to their own roots, however, introduced an almost irreconcilable tension with their university education that became evident in the apostasy that marked the closing decades of the Dominican's presence in pre-Reformation Scotland. Embedded in their native communities, many friars ultimately chose family over faith as the old hierarchy disintegrated around them.