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'Church' and 'People' on the Eve of the Reformation

Patterns of Social and Religious Change in Lowland Scotland

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(by research)

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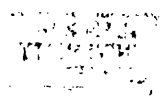
Abstract

The Reformation in Scotland is understood as primarily caused by social changes. In this dissertation we firstly describe the general conditions of the social system on the eve of the Reformation. Thus the importance of the Church for the everyday life of the people is analysed, and we analyse a growing influence of laymen on the local church. The Church is, as we will see, in an institutional and in a practical way deeply interwoven with the everyday reality of the common man and the communities in both rural and urban areas.

The focus of the analysis of social changes are the changes within the religiousness of the people on the eve of the Reformation. We firstly investigate general means of religious education, the way in which the common man got his religious knowledge. Secondly we deal with changes within the system of religious instruction in order to analyse the changes in popular conceptions of religion.

The changes within the religiousness of the people express the changes within society as a whole, and only a changed religiousness amongst the people made the Reformation in its events possible.



37, 500 words.

I owe thanks to many people without whom my research period in Scotland and the proceeding of this dissertation would have been less easy.

Only the most important people are mentioned here.

To *Dr James Kirk*, who supervised my work expertly and critically.

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J.C.K

Contents

Introduction

The Reformation in Scotland can be politcally analysed as caused by a struggle for power of different strata of Scottish society and supported by a general weakness of the Scottish crown after the death of James V in 1542.
The events of the Reformation can also be interpreted as caused by external "technical" factors like a widespread media revolution which, after the invention of printing, opened new ways of communication within societies. Due to the fact that education and literacy became accessible not only just to the clergy, large numbers of laymen could also change their conceptions of religion mediated by popular literature, for example.
Furthermore, the Reformation can be analysed within of the context of of the history of ideologies and thought. Within the context of Humanism and the rising protestant thought the Reformation manifests in this focus a new way of religious thinking which again influenced the political realities.

But none of these explanation patterns can claim to analyse the phenomenon of the Reformation sufficiently. It remains a most complex and multifarious area.

History, in our time and after the severe criticisms related to the "linguistic turn" and "structuralism" and "poststructuralism" in Philosophy and Social Theory, is going further and further astray from its old demand to be, as Jacob Burckhardt has claimed, a History of the past as it has been.[1] Today wide parts of History regard themselves as no more and no less than contemporary re-constructions of the past. And therefore History in our times is constantly approaching the social sciences. Even the Reformation has been recently and increasingly analysed through the eyes of modern social theories and within the wider context of changing societies.

Moreover, in this dissertation the Reformation in Scotland is primarily seen as a reflection of severe social and religious changes which shaped the Scottish society on the eve of the Reformation. It is most plausible to interpret the Reformation as caused not only by "political", "technical" or "ideological" factors, because these factors are also manifestations of the same changes within society which made also possible the events of the Reformation.

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[1] Jacob Burckhardt claimed to write a history of men "wie er ist und immer war und sein wird" (as he is and has always been and will be); Jacob Burckhardt, Welgeschichtliche Betrachtungen (Kröner, Stuttgart, 1935), pp. 5 - 6.

It is quite hard to put the vague field of social changes into sharper focus and in this dissertation the attempts to put it into concrete terms have to remain insufficient. Nevertheless it is attempted to show a part of the pattern of social changes which conditioned the Reformation in Scotland. The main focus of the investigation will not be based on the elite of Scottish society but on the ordinary people. We are especially interested in the people's religiousness in order to analyse possible changes within their religious conceptions at the time of the Reformation.

Before we draw the line which the investigation of social changes on the eve of the Reformation in Scotland will be following, we have to specify some concepts which will be frequently used in the course of this dissertation. The motivation for this proceeding is not to develop a system of definitions in a dogmatic way but to make the reader more sensitive to the point of view which is taken in this investigation:

Large parts of the investigation deal with the "church". For the purposes of this investigation we are writing about "church" not as an abstract conglomeration of organisational structures or dogmatic systems, but as a church which was experienced in the everyday life of the people. We are talking about a church which was a social key feature for both rural and urban communities in Scotland. This church accompanied the peoples' rhythm of life obviously not only by providing sacraments from birth to death, but also through the parish as both a basic organisational and social unit. It was a church which manifested its character very clearly in buildings, in religious customs, and in literature which dealt with religion in a wider sense.

With the concepts of "the people" or the "common man" we introduce a construction which cannot be found in reality. There is no such thing as an average inhabitant of a town or a burgh or an average peasant in rural society because each person has his or her own social background and lives in his or her special conditions. But nevertheless by using the terms of "the people" or the "common man" we are talking about a group of persons within a community which have general living conditions in common on the eve of the Reformation. With this general condition we refer to the system of rule they lived in, for example, and in which they appeared as people who are ruled. Another feature of these general conditions the ordinary people shared was the relation to the local church which had a corporately experienced importance for their everyday lives.

In contrast to the "common man" frequently we use the term "authorities" in order to specify the people or institutions who have the power to rule. There were obviously

different levels of authorities from the crown down to the authorities whose power was limited to a local level. Rule was defined by Max Weber as the chance to make a defined group of people obey a comand.[2] The power to rule is deeply connected with institutional power, for example the power of the administration of justice or the power to organise public affairs within a burgh. In pre-Reformation Scotland we furthermore have to distinguish between secular and ecclesiastical authorities because of the division between canon and secular law.[3]

Another concept we have to put into sharper focus are the "communities".With this term we are talking about a group of people who share the same general conditions of living. They are confronted with the same external factors, like the weather or the seasons. They share the same economical conditions, for example when depending predominantly on agriculture. They share the same system of rule by having the same lord and by having the same system of administration and justice. But these people also share the same living conditions of everyday life from sunrise to sunset from special events like feast days to threatening thunderstorms. These shared experiences bind the people together to a community, and this process works in a similar manner in both rural and urban surroundings.[4]

The social changes within pre-Reformation society in Scotland are analysed in this dissertation predominantly by investigating cultural changes. An analysis of the people's religiousness and the changes of popular conceptions of religion will help to understand the severe changes which shaped the society in pre-Reformation Scotland.[5] In this context we also have to describe the social background which believers have and the social system they are living in.
Therefore, in the first chapter of this dissertation the scene is set by analysing the standing of the pre-Reformation church within the society. The rôle played by the church in both rural and urban communities will be investigated, and it will become

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[2] Max Weber, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundriß der verstehenden Soziologie (J.B.C. Mohr, Tübingen, 1972), p. 28.

[3] This distinction also appears to be artificial in many ways, because the spheres of influence of the secular and the ecclesiastical authorities were deeply interconnected. This is most obvious for example in the legal system when the secular law dealt with ecclesiastical matters and vice versa; compare pp. 21 - 2.

[4] See for the concept of communalism Peter Blickle and Johannes Kunisch (edd.), *Kommunalisierung und Christianisierung. Voraussetzungen und Folgen der Reformation 1400 - 1600* (Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung, Beiheft 9, Berlin, 1989). This analysis of the German Reformation seems to fit as well for the situation of communities in Scotland.

[5] Religion is understood as a key feature of the cultural identity of a society. Compare also Machiavelli who considered religion to be a key factor for order and stability of a society; Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio* (Einaudi-Gallimard, Torino, 1997), pp. 228 - 239 (chapters 11 - 15).

obvious that there was not a clear division between ecclesiastical and secular lives and that the church accompanied the people's everyday lives not only in a explicitly religious way.
We will investigate to what extent secular and ecclesiastical structures were bound together in order to demonstrate the all-embracing importance of the church for the rural and urban communities. The key unit of the analysis will be the parish which bound together the people institutionally in many aspects of administration and jurisdiction.
In the first chapter we will also analyse the rôle the clergy played in the communities and within the structures of rule. In this context we will see that the clergy cannot be analysed as an homogeneous group, as there were huge differences within the educational standards of the clergymen. It appears to be plausible for our investigation that we do not analyse the clergymen who belonged to a well educated elite but the parsons, chaplains and friars who were close to the everyday reality of the common man.
Finally the first chapter will deal with the position the laymen had within the local church. We will investigate the increasing influence of wealthy laymen on the church lands. These people were not ordinary people but laymen who were authorities on a local level, they were social climbers within the structures of feudalism which still shaped Scotland on the eve of the Reformation. Although people who came to local power were socially of a higher standing than the common man, it is important to analyse their influence on the local church in order to complete the picture we will draw of the social setting of the pre-Reformation church in Scotland.

The second chapter of this dissertation will deal with the religious education of the common man. In order to analyse religious changes we have to investigate how the layman got his religious knowledge and what means of religious education were used. This is necessary because religious changes became manifest also in modifications within the means of religious education.
Firstly we investigate the means of religious education, that means the ways by which the common man got his knowledge in the basic elements of faith. This analysis will not be limited to Scotland as it takes into consideration the wider European context. This is because religious education worked in a similar way throughout the western church. The Scottish situation on the eve of the Reformation is, as we will see, for many reasons particular and different, from the situation in England for example. But nevertheless we assume that the mechanisms of religious education followed the same principles throughout the catchment area of the western church.

As we will see, the people learned the basic prayers via pieces of literature, songs or works of art, and in the same manner the biblical stories were illustrated. Moreover, the confession will be introduced as an important means of religious education.
In the second section of this chapter we put the means of religious instruction which have remained until this point more or less idealtypical into the light of the realities of religious life on the eve of the Reformation. In many cases a way to educate the people was not effective for quite simple reasons, illiteracy or lack of works of art in a poorly equipped rural parish church for example. In this sense the goals of religious instruction could have been also quite far away from the realities of religious life.
The final section of this chapter deals with the situation in Scotland more in detail. Through Scottish examples, like educational literature, works of arts and architecture, we attempt to reconstruct the situation of religious education on the eve of the Reformation in Scotland. In this discussion we have to distinguish the situation in urban communities, in towns and burghs, from the situation of the rural communities. The main problem of this focus is the source material which is not abundant in the Scottish case. But nevertheless it is possible to analyse from illustrative examples the situation of religious education on the eve of the Reformation in Scotland.

In order to describe social changes in Scottish society the third chapter deals with the changes within the layman's piety on the eve of the Reformation. As we assume that the events of the Reformation cannot be analysed just within political or ideological explanation patterns, we understand the popular conception of religion as a key feature to describe a changing society.
The field of popular beliefs is quite difficult to put into concrete terms. Therefore a section of the third chapter deals with methodological problems which might occur when treating a relatively vague subject like the one of beliefs. We also have to define the concept of beliefs more specifically in order to get a useful category for the analysis of social changes. Moreover, we have to define the sources which are valid for the analysis of popular beliefs.
In consequence the next section of the third chapter will trace the manifestations of popular beliefs on the eve of the Reformation in Scotland. For methodological reasons we will use especially literary sources which are for our purposes pieces of popular literature which deal with religious topics, like ballads and songs, devotional literature, pamphlet literature and plays. By analysing the manifestations of the people's beliefs from the example of popular literature we try to reconstruct the state of religiousness before the Reformation. In this context we will also have to discuss the methodological

problems which occur when using written sources as witness for people who were predominantly illiterate.
By analysing literature which also served purposes of religious education we might reveal a modified conception of religious education. Therefore the last section analyses the changes in popular beliefs which become manifest in popular literature. In this way we analyse the evolution of the literary genres, like ballads, pamphlets, devotional pieces and songs in order to find something out about the religious needs of the people. Already the fact that ballads, which in earlier times existed only in the oral tradition, but which on the eve of the Reformation become a litarary genre marks a change within popular conceptions of religion.

Before proceeding with the investigation we have to explain some limitations of this analysis in Scotland. As the title of this dissertation suggests we can talk in concrete terms only about Lowland Scotland.[6] On the one hand there is not a great deal of source material to analyse the popular conceptions in the Highlands sufficiently. On the other hand the situation in the Highlands was in many ways different from the Lowlands so this humble dissertation leaves not enough space for a profound investigation of both cases. One example of the huge differences is church administration which had to cope with a larger territory in the Highlands and so the people there could hardly receive the sacraments regularly.
Nevertheless we will talk in many cases simply about Scotland. This is for both practical reasons and because of the fact that some mechanisms, of religious education for example, would have worked in the same manner in both cases. But the reader should be aware that we can prove the main facts of our investigation only for the Lowlands of Scotland.

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[6] For a geographic overview on Highland- and Lowland-Scotland see McNeill, Peter G. B. and MacQueen, Hector L. (eds.), *Altlas of Scottish History to 1707*. (The Scottish Medievalists and Department of Geography, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, 1996. On page 213 it becomes evident that also the major part of the burghs was situated in the Lowlands.

Chapter I

Bells and Patrons. The Social Setting of the Pre-Reformation Church.

Approaching the "social reality"[7] of pre-Reformation society in Scotland is a multifarious task, because the whole concept of "social reality" is in itself multifaceted. This is especially the case when writing about the relation between the Church and the rural and urban communities in Lowland Scotland because this relation, as soon will be explored, was a most complex one.

In the first instance the Church was no more than a building which served certain quite practical functions for the communities. We will consider these functions in the course of this chapter.

So, by introducing the concept of the urban community as a small *corpus christianum* we will analyse to what extent, for example through the corporate exercise of piety, the Church provided a spiritual cohesion for these communities.

But thirdly the Church, as an omnipresent institution within the communities, was also shaped through organisational structures and a dogmatic system, and was experienced as such to some extent by the people in their everyday life.

The impact of the Church as a structured institution on the local communities is also to be analysed on the following pages. We will consider to what degree the Church on the eve of the Reformation, as interwoven in its structures with life on the local level, was also essential for the stability of these communities.

In this context it is also essential to explore to what extent the Church was open to the influence of laymen. Through the analysis of the standing of laymen in the Church we can go deeper into the question of the extent to which the church was interwoven with pre-Reformation society. It is necessary to investigate how far the local church, with its impact on the local communities, was itself an object of lay interest, for example in the sense that influential laymen tried to get more control over ecclesiastical affairs to increase their local power.

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[7] The concept of the "social reality" of the pre-Reformation society in Scotland is chosen very carefully in order to reconstruct the changes within this society. These changes are thought to originate primarily not from changes within a political situation or within intellectual concepts, for example, but from changes within the society itself which make other political or intellectual changes possible.

I. The Church and its Function in Rural and Urban Communities

In the rural areas of Lowland Scotland, as well as in the towns and burghs[8], the church as a building dominated the scene. In rural surrounding the parish set a contrast to the humble dwellings of the parishioners which had mostly only a single storey. It was the only building open to the public. The urban churches, normally more sophisticated in architecture, extension and equipment than their rural counterparts, were also the dominant feature within the burghs.[9] In towns and burghs the parish or a collegiate church could reflect the pride of the burgesses, and the foundation of additional altars by gilds and individuals could effect a more magnificent level of devotion. This fact alone demonstrates the integral part for the communities played by the church buildings.[10]

On the eve of the Reformation in Lowland Scotland many people lived within earshot of a religious house.[11] So for most of the people the bells and clocks in the churches were a very present feature, and the hours and quarters of the day marked by the church bell and the calls for prayer of the canonical hours structured the day of women and children, peasants and craftsmen. It is most obvious that the canon law stating that the church bell was to be rung for liturgical purposes only was freely interpreted, because the bells were also rung for such secular purposes as to welcome a distinguished visitor like king or bishop. A bell served as a signal calling for prayer as well as in case of emergency as a warning.[12] This was more the case for the urban parish while rural churches only gradually were equipped with towers and bells. In the burgh, where the church served to a greater extent as a timekeeper, the importance of this aspect is well expressed by the fact, that even after the Reformation, the former

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[8] Michael Lynch has pointed out that until the seventeenth century there was no sharp distinction between rural and urban society in Scotland. For most of the towns economy was still orientated to agriculture in the surrounding coutryside. Only with the increasing industrialisation and manufacturing long after the Reformation, urban communities tended to understand themselves as apart from the rural background and developed a genuine urban identity. See Michael Lynch, "Urban Society, 1500 - 1700", in: *Scottish Society 1500 - 1800.* Edited by R. A. Houston and L. D. Whyte (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989), pp. 85 - 117; pp. 110 - 114. On the other hand urban society in Scotland was in many ways different from rural society, as we will establish in the following chapters. There were huge differences in the sense of different customs and practises, in the legal system, expressed in institutions and lordship, and even the structure of society was different.

[9] A few burghs, however, like Edinburgh, Stirling, or Linlithgow had castles or palaces which were quite dominant in the scene, too.

[10] Over 20 collegiate churches were founded in fifteenth century Scotland Ian B. Cowan, *The Medieval Church in Scotland.* Edited by James Kirk (Scottish Academic Press, Edinburgh, 1995), p. 176.

[11] See Gordon Donaldson, *The Faith of the Scots* (London, 1990), p. 37. This statement seems to be true at least for the Lowlands where the density of parish churches was much higher than in the Highlands.

[12] See Denis McKay, "Parish Life in Scotland", 1500 - 1560, in: David McRoberts (ed.), *Essays on the Scottish Reformation 1513 - 1625* (Glasgow, 1962), pp. 85 - 115; p. 104.

sacristan was designated "keeper of the knock and kirk".[13] Furthermore the east-west orientation of every church in burgh or countryside alone made them serve as a sundial, and so also suitable for essential functions like weather forecast or determination of position and time.[14]

The rural as well as the urban church was first of all supposed to serve the religious needs of the parish community. The mass was celebrated frequently and it was also the place for individual prayer and devotion. The side altars gave more wealthy parishioners or corporations the possibility to let a priest say a mass for the specific salvation of, for example, members of a family or corporation.[15]

But apart from this, each church building served also many secular purposes. Normally the only public building for the parish community, it served for holding courts, and not only, as one could guess, for church courts judging on the basis of the canon law, but also for most secular trials.[16] It was also a common place for the transaction of other legal business. It served sometimes for example also as a kind of bank when money payments had to be made on a specified altar as an essential part of the transaction[17], and it was suitable for official meetings of the parishioners. Frequently in the church other secular activities took place, like playing games, dancing and even acting, which at the time was regarded as immoral or criminal, so that the episcopal function to reconsecrate a church which was polluted *sanguinis vel seminis effusione* became in some parishes almost an act of routine.[18] The church building served also as a central unit for the exchange of news and information: public notices were attached on the church door, and also pieces of propaganda, like the "Beggars' Summons", a pamphlet against the "Flockes of all Freires within this realme", was attached on the door of almost every religious house, especially the friaries.[19] The normal meetings of a parish community at the Sunday mass were also

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[13] *Registrum Secreti Sigilli Regum Scotorum*, 7 vols (Edinburgh, 1908 - 1960), vii, 1845, p. 301.

[14] Gordon Donaldson, *The Faith of the Scots*, p. 37. In this context the question arouses whether, especially in a predominantly rural society like in pre-Reformation Scotland, there was a different experience of time, more as a passage of days and seasons rather than of minutes and seconds as we choose to experience it.

[15] We will have to talk about this later when we are concerned with the piety of the individual.

[16] See for some exemplary cases, P*rotocol book of James Young, 1485 - 1515* (Scottish Record Society, Edinburgh), pp. 43 - 4.

[17] See for this and also for the general functions of a parish church: Denis McKay, *Parish Life in Scotland*, p. 85.

[18] David Patrick, *Statutes of the Scottish Church, 1225 - 1559* (Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1907) pp. 76, 283; *St Andrews Formulare 1514 - 1546*, edited by Gordon Donaldson, 2 vols (The Stair Society, Edinburgh, 1942 and 1944), i, p. 20, ii, p. 123. To picture the abuse of church and churchyard see (with further references) see John Dowden, *The Medieval Church in Scotland. Its Constitution, Organisation and Law* (James MacLehose and Sons, Glasgow, 1910), pp. 143 - 148.

[19] See Brother Kenneth, "The Popular Literature of the Scottish Reformation", in: David McRoberts (ed.), *Essays on the Scottish Reformation 1513 - 1625* (Glasgow, 1962), pp. 169 - 184, p. 179; the

the appropriate place for public announcements. Knights, barons, or the founder of the church had therefore the right to enter the chancel during the mass.[20]
To sum up, the church building "fulfilled the functions which today belong to broadcasting, the theatre, the newspaper, the local government offices, council chamber, law courts and social centre."[21]

It is obvious that in rural parish communities the degree of cohesion was reasonably high. There were ties of kinship through heredity and intermarriage as well as strong bonds of neighbourliness, expressed in joint actions in the form of agricultural operations, like ploughing. The economy of rural communities was highly homogeneous, because every household farmed some land on which it was depending: firstly for getting some money or exchange goods on the burgh markets, which allowed the tenants also to pay their teinds to the local landowners. On the other hand the people were dependent on the daily bread which came from the earth they cultivated. So the interest of the rural communities was predominantly focused on the state of the crops. Margaret Sanderson describes as one main feature of cohesion in the rural communities:

> a common way of life, dependent on the land, [which] held all sections of rural society together, making them dependent on one another, laird and farmer, craftsman and cottar, men, women and children.[22]

In a burgh parish the social and economic cohesion operated on an different level. Many burgesses, like their rural contemporaries, were also concerned with "external" conditions of weather and the state of the crops, for most of them (even if they were craftsmen) were part-time smallholders with their own land and animals.[23] The burgh itself was deeply dependent on the surrounding agriculture.[24]
In a rural parish the cohesion provided by institutions was not only present on an ecclesiastical level: secular institutions like the town council, burgh officers, the burgh court and gilds bound the people in a burgh together.

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text of the "Beggars' Summons" is in *John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland*, edited by William Croft Dickinson, 2 vols (Thomas Nelson and Sons, London, 1949), ii, pp. 256 - 7.

[20] See Dowden, *The Medieval Church in Scotland*, p.143.

[21] Gordon Donaldson, *Scottish Church History* (Edinburgh, London and Melbourne, 1985), p. 223.

[22] Margaret H.B. Sanderson, *Scottish Rural Society in the Sixteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1982), p. 169. The whole chapter in this book on "Rural social Life" (pp. 169 - 187) is most valuable for our discussion.

[23] In addition to this some burgesses were concerned with external factors like wind, which influenced the fortunes of, for example, shipping ventures.

[24] See footnote 8.

In consequence the cohesion of urban communities was more complex than in rural communities. In towns and burghs the identity of groups tended to take place on different levels, for society here was organised to some extent on the basis of different groups and corporations, like the gilds.[25]

But despite this the key unit for the individual to be integrated in the pre-Reformation society was the parish. On the eve of the Reformation every area of Scotland formed part of a definite territorial parish and every individual had his parish church and his parish priest.[26] In Scotland with a population of approximately 700, 000 people on the eve of the Reformation, there was an overall average of less than 700 men, women and children or about 150 households to a parish.[27] However, most of the burghs with a population larger than 700 were still contained within one single parish. So in Edinburgh, which had about 10, 000 inhabitants, St Giles' was the only parish church, even Dundee, Perth and Aberdeen with 3 - 4, 000 burgesses had only one parish, as did some smaller burghs with 1, 000 to 2, 000 inhabitants. In consequence many of the rural parishes, even in Lowland Scotland, must have had far fewer than 700 parishioners.[28]
So it appears that the parish, which was as an ecclesiastical unit essential for the social life of the people[29], played an important rôle for the integration of rural communities in Lowland Scotland.

In towns and burghs the example of the gilds also shows how many different levels were important for cohesion in the burgh communities. However it is easy to illustrate to what extent these corporations were connected with ecclesiastical affairs and the local parish:
The gilds had, without a doubt, most important functions connected with the organisation of a concrete craft. But moreover each gild also served obviously charitable and religious purposes. Most gilds had their own chapel or an altar in the parish church. The gilds were associated with pageants, plays and processions on

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[25] See Donaldson, *Scottish Church History*, p. 224.
[26] Donaldson, *The Faith of the Scots*, p. 31.
[27] Donaldson, *Scottish Church History*, p. 220.
[28] For an overview on the parish structure in whole Scotland see Peter G. B. McNeill and Hector L. MacQueen (eds.), *Atlas of Scottish History to 1707* (Edinburgh, 1996), p. 383. Here it becomes also obvious, that the territorial extension of the Lowland-parishes is relatively smaller than in the Highlands. The supply of religious service to the Lowland-population was accordingly higher.
[29] This is going to be further analysed in the course of this chapter.

certain feast days, and by financing chaplains who served their altars in the parish, they had a direct influence on matters of the local church.[30]

In both rural and urban communities before the Reformation in Lowland Scotland there was no clear division between the church life of the people on the one hand and a kind of social and economic life on the other.[31] Especially for the urban communities, where the cohesion, as noticed, was even stronger, it is obvious that they tended to see themselves as a small *corpus christianum*[32], which means on the one hand, quite abstractly, a salvation community with salvation provided of course by the Church and through their sacraments. The other side of this consciousness as a *corpus christianum* is the quite profane self-perception as a community whose corporate well-being was not solely dependent on the current economic situation. Rather we can interpret pre-Reformation society in Lowland Scotland as one, amongst whose means of production (even in a Marxist sense), apart from obvious factors like the weather or the time spent for production, there was also for the people the intrinsic importance of having good relations with higher authorities, in the form of God or the saints. These authorities were predominantly seen as able to interfere with and to influence the circumstances of living. This is perfectly expressed in the perception of saints as advocates in front of the authorities in heaven for matters of individuals or communities on earth. On the continent there is a good deal of evidence for the appeal to different saints to guarantee in case of emergency that one of them will really help.[33] In Scotland this becomes obvious through the popularity of pilgrimages to religious centres like St Andrews[34] or Glasgow.

Another noteworthy example to back up the understanding of the local community as a salvation community is the *black death*, which to some extent was seen as a divine punishment for individual or corporate failure in a community's life. In 1456, when large parts of the Scottish population were suffering from the ravages of the plague,

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[30] Donaldson, *Scottish Church History*, p. 224.

[31] McKay, "Parish Life in Scotland", p. 85.

[32] This conception of a town community which saw itself as a small *corpus christianum* is inspired by the German historian Berndt Moeller who, in his most influential book *Reichsstadt und Reformation,* examined the the free cities of the Empire in the time of the German Reformation. His analysis of the functions of the Church for the urban communities fit fairly well into the Scottish situation; see Bernd Moeller, *Reichsstadt und Reformation* (Gütersloh, 1962). Also Ian B. Cowan points out that even in theory there was a close relationship between church and people, and that the concept of integrated society was one of the basic principles of political theories throughout the middle ages; Cowan, *The Medieval Church in Scotland*, p. 170.

[33] See e.g. Hans-Friedrich Rosenfeld and Helmut Rosenfeld, *Deutsche Kultur im Spätmittelalter 1250 - 1500* (Wiesbaden, 1978), p. 277.

[34] For a description of the reclics in the St Andrews cathedral church see David McRoberts (ed.), *The Medieval Church of St Andrews* (Glasgow, 1976), pp. 67 - 70; for the extension of pilgrimage in St Andrews see ibid, pp. 96 - 104.

parliament passed an act, that "the prelates make general processionis throu out their dioceis twyse in ye wolk, for standing of the pestilence" and ordered that prelates "grant perdon to the priests that gangs in ye said processionis".[35] The *black death* was therefore experienced as a direct consequence of the religious state of a community, and so in the conception of pre-Reformation society the terrible situation could also be improved through the corporate exercise of piety.[36]

To put it in a nutshell, the conception of the urban communities as a small *corpus christianum* becomes manifest on different levels because the self appraisal of the urban community on the eve of the Reformation as a small *corpus christianum* had as it were a worldly and a heavenly dimension.
On the one hand the individual worship to saints and patrons was seen as an appropriate way to mould the individual's access to salvation. So, in other words, the practising of piety within the community provided for the individual an improved chance for a better life after death.
But on the other hand the corporate performance of a community's piety also became regarded as suitable to influence the temporal wealth of the community. So the corporate exercise in the faith was somehow essential for the concrete welfare of the community, for example in a burgh. This is again well expressed in one of the duties of a parish clerk, when he made his weekly tour of the parish with "holy water styk and stop" to asperse the parishioners in their homes.[37] Because of this duty the parish clerk among the people was known as *Aquaebajulus*.[38] The Church provided possibilities for the welfare in heaven and on earth of a spiritual community which was almost totally identical to the worldly community.[39]

But, as we will see in the following chapters, this whole social setting of the Church within communities changed before the Reformation. One explanation for this is the shifting conception of the piety of the individual and a change within the popular conception of religion.[40] One other possible explanation is a change within the close

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[35] *Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland* (APS), (eds.) T. Thomson and C. Innes, 12 vols., London, 1814 - 75, ii, p.46.

[36] The list of further writings on the plague is endless, in this context for contemporary perceptions of the plague is remarkable: Philip Ziegler, *The Black Death* (Collins, London, 1969), pp. 259 - 279.

[37] McKay, "Parish Life in Scotland", p. 94.

[38] David Murray, *Legal Practice in Ayr and the West of Scotland in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (James MacLehose and Sons, Glasgow, 1910), p. 75.

[39] There were always a few individuals who lived within the communities but were not part of the salvation community, for example Jews. But the fact that they were not part of the salvation community made them outsiders in the community.

[40] We will deal with this argument in the third main chapter of this dissertation when we are talking about the peoples' faith.

links between the organisation of the Church and the organisation of the communities. We have to investigate this on the following pages.

II. Ecclesiastical Structures and Local Realities

At both the rural and the urban level there was a close contact between the layman and the priest. This is primarily due to the fact that, as we have seen, the Church in its manifestations was fully integrated into the everyday life of the people.

In the rural parish, where the priest like most of the people farmed his glebe, the clergyman was integrated both socially and economically with the people he served.[41] But likewise in urban areas the priests were fully integrated in society. In particular, chaplains in burgh churches were in constant contact with the gilds and fraternities whose altars they served.[42] In towns where the proportion of priests to people on the eve of the Reformation was very high, like about one priest in forty people in Aberdeen[43], the clergy was most conspicuous in the daily scene.

But the great bulk of integration of the Church and its manifestations within the communities reveals itself also not only through several secular purposes the parish church served and through the standing of priests within the communities, but also through a high level of integration of ecclesiastical structures at the local constitutional level. This becomes obvious when we analyse the high degree to which priests served for the exercise of the authorities' power, for example in judicial transactions.

Despite the fact that the educational standards of the parish clergy were often the object of severe criticisms, in connection with pre-Reformation Church criticism in general,[44] this group had normally the highest educational level within the communities. Especially for the burgh churches we have a good deal of evidence that the priests were apparently well enough educated for their multifarious duties in the parish.[45] This again also made them qualified for matters which were beyond ecclesiastical affairs. Most of the priests had the ability to read and to write and this qualification alone, together with basic organisation skills, acquired through the duties they had in the parish, and a general trustfulness and a good reputation most of them enjoyed within the communities, meant they would also operate in many civic duties

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41 Cowan, *The Medieval Church in Scotland*, p. 173.

42 Ibid, p. 173.

43 Joseph Robertson, *History of the Reformation in Aberdeen* (Aberdeen, 1887) pp. 7 - 8.

44 See for pre-Reformation examples of these criticisms for example *John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland*, ii, p. 233. Knox judged that "the cause of heresy is the ignorance of them which have the cure of the men's souls". See for an example that also ecclesiastical authorities lamented the poor standards of the clergy's education David Patrick, *Statutes of the Scottish Church*, P. 110. Even to our day the discussion about the educational standards of the lower clergymen seems to go on. See for example Mark Dilworth: "Literacy of pre-Reformation monks", in: *The Innes Review* 24 (1973), pp. 71 - 72.

45 McKay, "Parish Life in Scotland", p. 92.

which were not directly connected with the cure of souls. For the communities this outstanding position of the local clergy manifests itself in the fact that priests frequently appeared in burgh courts as "forspeikers" or agents for the people.[46]
Enabled by their education some priests served as a kind of schoolmaster for the children of wealthy parishioners.[47] Another function priests could exercise through their qualification was the one of a common clerk through which they were in charge of the duty of keeping the burgh records in Latin. Indeed it appears that from pre-Reformation times it is only from the burghs that we have fairly adequate records, which enable us to talk about the development of society in this time. The fact that the records were to the major part kept by priests leads to the conclusion that in burghs and towns the qualification of the parish clergy was higher than it was in rural areas.[48]
One other reason for the higher qualification of the clergy in urban communities was also the fact that most of the major churches were situated there. A well qualified priest who was close to a major church could hope to get a benefice and to make a successful carreer for himself. A well educated clergyman would have tried not to end up in a rural parish.

The priest in a community could also serve as kind of notary in the process of legal transactions even if they did not fall into the sphere of canon law. This ranged from the simple function of witnessing of deeds executed in the parish church or elsewhere to the concrete conception and supervision of contracts. Most of the deeds in pre-Reformation times appear to be made out by these priest-notaries.[49]
It is no wonder that most of the notaries public in pre-Reformation Scotland were clergymen, for they obtained their licence to practise for many centuries usually from the pope or in some cases from the Roman Emperor.[50] There were also a few notaries appointed by both the Pope and the Emperor, like a certain Richard Gibsoune who designs himself in 1499 as "*clericus Glasguensis, pontificio, imperialique regali auctoritate notarius*". This double qualification enabled its holder to practise anywhere (*per mundum*), and not merely in one country or in one diocese.[51]

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[46] Ibid, p. 92.

[47] Another essential educational function the priest served lay in the catechising of the children of the parish, that means instruction in the basical knowledge of faith; see David Patrick, *Statutes of the Scottish Church*, p. 108. We are concerned with a further investigation of this topic in the second main chapter of this dissertation when we treat the ermergence of ecclesiastical instruction.

[48] See McKay, "Parish Life in Scotland", p. 92

[49] Ibid, p. 93.

[50] Murray, *Legal Practise in Ayr and the West of Scotland*, p. 7.

[51] Ibid, p. 8. For comparison see also Bernardus Van Espen, *Jus Ecclesiasticum Universorum* (1753), vol. ii, pp. 305 - 309.

It also appears on the eve of the Reformation that state authorities[52] tried to gain influence in the notarial business as in 1469 when the Scottish Parliament claimed that the sovereign, having "ful Jurisdictione and free Impire within his Realme", had also power to make notaries. In the same breath it was enacted that the instruments of such notaries should have full faith in all civil contracts within the realm.[53] However at the same time it was clear that Parliament tried not to interfere with ecclesiastical matters, and that instruments made by papal notaries should enjoy the same privileges as formerly.[54]

But later secular authorities tried to control more obvious notarial matters, for example when in 1504 Parliament complains:

> that it is dred throu thair falset that threw men sall not be sicker of thair heritage nor clerks of their benefices and in uther ciuile actiones quhilk may cause ane great diusion amang our Souerane Lordis lieges.[55]

Parliament therefore urged all bishops and ordinaries to examine the notaries within their respective dioceses upon the sufficiency of their knowledge. They should also make inquiry as to how notaries had come into their position and punish in the case of abuse of the office.[56]

The motivation of this was, generally speaking, the achievement of a certainty of the law throughout the realm through the control of individual "black sheep" among the notaries public. But it is obvious that these steps to control the notaries public must be seen more generally within the early efforts of state authorities to discipline the people and to make way for more centralised power. This and other aspects[57] show that social disciplining[58] started long before the Reformation[59] and that attempts were

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[52] Obviously the concept of "state" with its main characteristics embodied in centralised government of taxation system jurisdiction and general administration and with means which enable the central institutions to enforce their claims does not fit at all for the situation in pre-Reformation Scotland. A central administration system covered Scotland more as a kind of patchwork and in lots of affairs local authorities (often also the church) had proverbiallly the last word. Nevertheless the concept of ‚state authorities' will be used in this context to differenciate from "ecclesiastical authorities", also if frequently we cannot distinguish secular and ecclesiastical authorities and we can only talk about local authorities in general.

[53] *APS*, ii, p. 95.

[54] Murray, *Legal Practice in Ayr and the West of Scotland*, p. 9.

[55] APS, ii, pp. 250.

[56] Murray, *Legal Practice in Ayr and the West of Scotland*, p. 11.

[57] Other examples are the multiple efforts made by Parliament to prevent the reading of heretical (not canonised) literature; see for example *APS*, ii, p. 295, or APS, iii, pp. 488 - 9.

[58] See for the concept of social disciplining in a more European context for example Wolfgang Reinhard, "Gegenreformation als Modernisierung? Prolegomena zu einer Theorie des konfessionellen Zeitalters", in: *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 68 (1977), pp. 226 - 251.

[59] The process of social disciplining in connection with the reformed church is recently well described by Michael F. Graham, *The Uses of Reform. ‚Godly Discipline and Popular Behavior in Scotland and Beyond, 1560 - 1610* (Leiden, New York, Köln, 1996), pp. 73 - 129.

made to realise a certain degree of state control in the sense of centralised power[60] before the times of the religious struggles of the Reformation. The example of the notaries public shows also that state centralisation, even in pre-Reformation society, meant also to construct a consensus in religious affairs, in order to promote compromise between the different judicial systemes of canon and civil law.
This was especially necessary in pre-Reformation Scotland as ecclesiastical institutions were deeply interwoven with matters we would in our days class as matters of state. We may illustrate this now on the level of jurisdiction.

In pre-Reformation Scotland, like in the rest of Europe which was ecclesiastically dominated by the Roman Church, there was a dichotomy of two systems of jurisdiction which sometimes operated in strong contrast to each other: the civil courts which judged in the name of the crown and ecclesiastical courts which referred on the canon law. "The Church's jurisdiction", as Gordon Donaldson points out, "arose primarily from its responsibility for faith and morals".[61] But because of the fact that matters of faith were deeply connected with justice in heaven and on earth it becomes obvious that ecclesiastical jurisdiction interfered often with matters we would today assign to the secular sector only. So a marriage, which nowadays with all its consequences in the sense of taxation and possessional rights is primarily considered to be an act of civil law, within the pre-Reformation system was undoubtedly a matter of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, for it was in the first instance a sacrament, which provided individual access to salvation. And this was the case despite the fact that a marriage in late medieval society also touched civic matters of possessional rights and inheritance.
Another example is contracts: each contract, if fortified by oath, could be brought to an ecclesiastical court for enforcement by excommunication. And excommunication meant, literally, exclusion not only from the communities of believers but *ex communiis* of everyday life in general. In this sense the ecclesiastical jurisdiction affected directly the reality of a pre-Reformation community although ecclesiastical and civil law were separate.
Another area with which the ecclesiastical jurisdiction was concerned, was testaments. Already in the thirteenth century testaments had to be given up to the ordinary (that is the bishop), who had also power to administer in cases of intestacy.[62] Gordon Donaldson states that:

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[60] See footnote 44.
[61] Gordon Donaldson, "The Church Courts", in: Various authors, *An Introduction to Scottish Legal History* (The Stair Society, Edinburgh, 1958), pp. 363 - 373; p. 363.
[62] Ibid, p. 366.

> In 1420 it was declared that ,from so far back that there is no memory of a man to the contrary, bishops and those holding the jurisdiction of an ordinary have been wont to confirm the testaments of those who die *testate* in their respective sees and to appoint executors to those who die *intestate*.[63]

From this example we can imagine the highly influential position of the canon law even in civil matters. And while civil courts usually tended to check themselves when they attempted to interfere in spiritual matters, the Church courts on their side tended to draw to themselves causes properly civil.[64]
The latter was to some extent due to the fact that Church courts were better equipped with professional lawyers (who were normally clergymen) than civil courts were,[65] but is again an expression of the depth to which ecclesiastical institutions were interwoven with the judicial constitution of local communities.

Another level on which this close relationship between secular and civil authorities performed was administration. On the eve of the Reformation, and even for a long time afterwards, the parish was the key administrative unit of Scottish society both for ecclesiastical and for civil affairs. One reason was, as we already have established, that even a long time before the Reformation each individual who had a fixed abode belonged to a specific parish. Ian B. Cowan points out that:

> "The foundation of the parochial system due to such developments (foundation of new parishes), which in turn rested on the previous rudimentary organisation prevailing before twelfth century, made such headway that the system was virtually complete by the end of that (the thirteenth) century, and it was so by 1274 when the first taxation roll of Scottish benefices appears."[66]

This long tradition of ecclesiastical organisation, supported by documentary evidence, shows that the Church had at its disposal a much more elaborate administrative structure than state authorities had. This again is first of all due to the fact that the Church was able to employ a greater number of well qualified people, also because the educational system was predominantly controlled by the Church.
That this was the case in rural as well as in urban communities is expressed even at the highest level: in 1556, just a few years before the revolutionary events of the Reformation, the Scottish parliament passed an act which summoned each parish priest with his clerk to provide a list of parishioners for the census to be held by the lords of

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[63] Ibid, p. 366.
[64] Ibid, p. 363.
[65] This explanation is made by Donaldson, ibid, p. 363.
[66] Cowan, *The medieval Church in Scotland*, p. 9.

the Articles.[67] This list which no doubt intended to provide information for tax assessments obviously never materialised but already the fact that Parliament planned to use the parish level for basic public administration shows how deeply the civil and the ecclesiastical sectors were interconnected.

But even a long time before that, it was common practice that the teinds of the extensive church lands were collected by the parish administration. The payment was frequently enforced by the threat of excommunication, but in some situations this appears not to have been intimidating enough. On these occasions civil support was necessary, as already an early example from the time of the reign of Malcom the Maiden (1153 - 1165) shows: at the request of the pope a royal injunction directed "that if anyone presumes to detain the teind, the sheriff should amerce him of the king's forfeit (*fortisfactum*)".[68] But even on the eve of the Reformation it seems that the threat of excommunication sometimes had no major effects on the tenants. The constant use of this means of disciplining brought its power so into dispute that the general provincial council of 1552 ordered all priests to keep a register of excommunicated persons and to publish their names on the chancel rails and other public places.[69] In general, however, as Denis McKay points out, there is evidence that the "ordinary parishioner" tried to avoid the spiritual (and even the social) consequences of excommunication.[70]

The way in which state authorities tried to encourage matters which fell into the sphere of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, as in the cases mentioned of the payment of the teinds or in the case of the reinforcement of the excommunication, is remarkable for our discussion of the interwovenness of ecclesiastical and civil authorities. It is obvious that both civil and ecclesiastical authorities had a common interest in maintaining the political system which was based on feudal principles. The civil aid to enforce the payment of tenants on the church estates was also in the interests of civil authorities, like the crown or the higher nobility, who had their own tenants and had a natural concern for regular payment. And this again shows how close ecclesiastical and civil authorities in pre-Reformation times were bound together. Both of them were, for instance, depending on a regular income in the form of teinds, and the authority with

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[67] *APS*, ii, pp. 604 - 5.

[68] Dowden, *The Medieval Church*, p. 164. Dowden analyses the revenues of the church from its lands, in form of teinds and offerings: ibid, pp. 155 - 190.

[69] David Patrick, *Statutes of the Scottish Church*, p. 140.

[70] McKay, "Parish life in Scotland", p. 115; see also Robert Pitcairn, *Criminal Trials in Scotland from 1488 to 1624*, 3 vols William Tait, Edinburgh, 1833), i, pp. 365 and 375. In this cases people tried to receive the Holy Sacrament despite their excommunication.

which the one was collecting its revenues was also the base for the authority with which the other party reinforced the collecting of its revenues.

The parish had even in this institutional and constitutional sense a most integrative function for the people, because the clergymen and clerks served, as we have seen, as executors of ecclesiastical and civil authority. The people of the communities were in multifarious ways on an administrative level connected with their local church. One other example of this is the regular collecting of offerings the parishioners had to give. Partly the offerings were not regarded as voluntary, as the word would suggest, but as "dues". These offerings were expected on various occasions like Easter, when every parishioner had to give a certain sum.[71] These sources of income occur as *oblationes*, as the following quote shows:

> Specialiter vero loquendo dicitur Oblatio id quod in missa offertur sacerdoti, quae in praecipuis festivitatibus debita et necessaria est.[72]

But even the basic sacramental service in form of baptisms, marriages, burials, or confessions which were essential within an individual's life almost required a larger or smaller gift to the clergymen, although this was never officially institutionalised.[73]

This feature of the Church which the people of the communities experienced together also had to a large extent an integrative function. And all these functions made the local clergy deeply integrated with communities; and the judicial and administrative purposes they exercised for the authorities as well as for the people, for example by applying law in form of a contract, made the priests as the main body of the ecclesiastical structure thoroughly interwoven with the workings of the communities.

As we have already established, the organisation of the Church was used by the communities and local authorities to provide many services of public concern like education, care of the poor, public health, control of leprosy.[74] But on the other hand it becomes obvious that on the eve of the Reformation in Scotland civil authorities tried more and more to gain influence on affairs which were formerly deeply connected with ecclesiastical institutions. Attempts were made to curtail the ecclesiastical sphere of

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[71] Although it was restricted by canon law to sell "sacraments or sacramentals" or to refuse the sacraments to those who have not made their offering, it was sometimes the case that at Easter the priest retained the host in his hands till the payment was made; see Dowden, *The Medieval Church in Scotland*, p. 178. The system of offerings seems also to have worked within a context of social pressure the individual in the community was exposed to.

[72] Gulielmo Lyndwood, *Provinciale seu Constitutionis Angliae* (Oxoniae, 1679), lib. i tit. 3, p. 21.

[73] Dowden, *The Medieval Church in Scotland*, p. 180.

[74] See also APS, ii, p. 16.

influence, for example when Parliament in 1504 forbade the holding of markets and fairs within churchyards under pain of escheat of goods.[75]

We try on the following pages to prove and to illustrate that the old Church on the eve of the Reformation was confronted with the increasing influence of laymen and that many of the functions the Church provided for the communities were in some senses subsequently secularised.

III. Patronage and increasing Lay-Influence

As Ian B. Cowan noticed, the Church in late medieval times was subject to the increasing influence of laymen.[76] This is first of all closely connected with the development of the parochial system in Scotland. In the times of Norman penetration into Scotland in the twelfth century many lands which had previously pertained to the Church passed into lay hands. This is, as the documentary evidence shows, possibly correlated to the higher standard of protection noble families could provide.[77]

But on the eve of the Reformation the Church still had a most extensive area of land at its disposal.[78] On these possessions the ecclesiastical institutions lost a big part of their influence, which was connected with the huge social changes within the whole feuing system.

In this context we must be well aware that the Church lands were to a great extent held by ecclesiastical institutions, like monasteries or other religious houses and bishoprics.[79] But originally a piece of land was attributed to every parish. Following the logic of the feudal system, these lands were normally farmed by peasants who had to pay *teinds* (from tenth) and were therefore called *tenants*. Originally there was a distinction between the tenth of the parish's grain crop, which was nominally the property of the parson, and the so called *small teinds*, that meant the tenth of all produce like cheese, butter, eggs the young of the herds and flocks, which were reserved for the vicar in charge of the parish.[80]

But on the eve of the Reformation the whole system of the tenure of Church lands was the object of far-reaching changes because the majority of the parishes with their teinds became subsequently annexed to monasteries, cathedrals and other higher ranking

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[75] APS, ii, pp. 245, 252.

[76] Cowan, *The Medieval Church in Scotland*, p. 6.

[77] Cowan shows mulifarious examples of documental evidence in his first chapter, ibid, pp. 1 - 11.

[78] See, even for reference for a rough estimation, Dowden, *The Medieval Church inScotland*, p. 155.

[79] See also James Kirk (ed.), *The Books of Assumption of the Thirds of Benefices. Scottish Ecclesiastical Rentals at the Reformation* (Records of Social and Economic History, Oxford, 1995), pp. li - lxiv.

[80] Sanderson, *Scottish Rural Society in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 33.

churches.[81] From these institutions, which were often relatively far away from the lands, the teinds were frequently leased to local landowners who acquired the right to collect the teinds in return for an annual payment.

Because of the fact that the ecclesiastical institutions leased their land to people who could pay and because these institutions wanted to minimise inconveniences in the course of collecting the teinds, on the Church lands it became practice that the right of a so-called "tacksman" on a piece of land became almost heritable. In this sense the same families remained in possession of a piece of land one generation after another. The payment was the basis for the claims of the tenants for inheritance, but it was nothing less than a customary inheritance.[82] The lower tenants who farmed their piece of land and could not pay for a right of inheritance became in this time dependent on a new middle class which had, as we analysed, acquired almost exclusive possessional rights on the Church lands.

This development is closely connected with the changes on the parochial level, because normally the nominal parson of a parish was not a local resident. As we have said the major part of parish churches was appropriated to monasteries, cathedrals etc. As Denis McKay states:

> It is estimated that, of the thousand-odd parish churches which served the country, over nine hundred were appropriated, that is to say, they have been gifted to a monastery, a cathedral, or collegiate church, which was then regarded as the rector [or parson] and served the parish cure by appointing a vicar and sharing the teinds of the parish with him.[83]

In other cases the parson was frequently resident at one of the bigger churches and he paid for a vicar who served his duties.

But the collecting of the teinds in this normally long distance relationship between the nominal parson and his tenants caused many problems in practice. So also in these cases normally a local landowner acquired from the parson the right to collect the teinds for paying a rent to him, and this local landowner then normally also paid the pensions for the local parish clergy. These tacksmen were normally landowners or members of the local gentry because only they could pay to acquire the right to collect the teinds.[84]

These changes within the feuing system on the eve of the Reformation are most significant for the analysis of the increasing lay influence on the Church. The effects of

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[81] Ibid, p. 33.
[82] Ibid, pp. 57 - 8.
[83] McKay, "Parish Life in Scotland", p. 86.
[84] Ibid, p. 86.

this are multifarious: first of all the local tacksman became most influential with the local clergy. His duty to pay the rents of the parish clergy implied also a position of control and power over it. The local clergyman who was paid by a local landowner was, through economic dependence, almost in a relation of employment.[85] Although this does not become obvious in the sources, in the sense that we can trace a direct dependence, one can imagine the influence of the local landowner over the ecclesiastical affairs of the communities through the payment of the local clergy.[86]

We can try to trace the further influence of the tacksmen when we analyse a lay office in the local parish, the parish clerk.

By the middle of the fifteenth century, priests and people of every parish were required "by law and custom" to have an official assistant minister.[87] The parish clerk fulfilled various parochial duties he was in charge of the upkeep of the church and was responsible for the holy water and for the light within the church. When the parish had bells it was his duty to ring them and when the bells were combined with the function of a clock, he was normally also the appointed time-keeper for the community. The parish clerk served the people so in many ways, for example when he brought the holy water to people's houses or when he escorted the parish priest on sick calls, ringing the bell and carrying a light. When he was qualified enough the clerk could in addition to his duties also practise as a notary public.[88]

In many cases the parish clerk was officially elected by the parish congregation and approved by the competent ecclesiastical authority, normally the bishop. But this election was far away from being a democratic act (although sometimes even women were allowed to participate in the election). In burgh parishes the burgh council frequently nominated the clerk "*cum consensu et assensu communitatis nostre*".[89] Also normally there was only one candidate at an election, who was frequently the choice of the parish's patron, so that for the people it only remained to confirm through "election" the patron's choice. As McKay points out:

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[85] For ecclesiastical teinds see James Kirk, *The Books of Assumption*, pp. xl - lvi. For the topic of social dependences see ibid, pp. lxv - lxxxiv.

[86] The influence of local landowner, especially the lairds, on ecclesiastical affairs and so later also on the events of the Reformation in Scotland is stressed by several authors. See for example Ian B. Cowan, *Regional Aspects of the Scottish Reformation* (The Historical Association, General Series 92, London, 1978), P. 28. See also W.S. Reid, "The Middle-Class Factor in the Scottish Reformation", in: *Church History*, xvi (1947), pp. 137 - 153.

[87] Denis McKay, "The Election of the Parish Clerk in Medieval Scotland", in: *The Innes Review*, vol. xviii, no. 1 (1967), pp. 25 - 35; p. 25.

[88] For the multifarious duties of the parish clerk with further references to the source material see Denis McKay, "The Duties of the Medieval Parish Clerk", in: *The Innes Review*, vol. xix (1968), pp. 32 - 39. After the Reformation the office of the parish clerk dissappears quite rapidly.

[89] McKay, "Election of the Parish Clerk", p. 25.

> In practice, the people had not the right to reject the choice of the patron of the clerkship who might or might not seek their approval of his nominee.[90]

The patrons of a parish were sometimes also local landowners, and through the office of the parish clerk and the way he was elected they had another means to increase their influence on ecclesiastical matters: chief landowners who were in the local parish regarded as *principales* could often act as procurators for the general body of the electors.[91] But sometimes this was not necessary, because "tenants would vote in accordance with the tacit or expressed wish of the landlords".[92] This is also expressed in the fact that the office of the parish clerk tended to become heritable, and this again appears to have a certain logic when we see that patrons frequently used the clerkship to benefit members of their own family and friends. The documentary evidence shows that often a younger son of a patron or a local laird was appointed clerk.[93]

The office of parish clerk manifests the increasing influence of wealthy laymen on the local church. We can only speculate, but it seems most plausible that a clerk who came to a position of authority by the appointment of a patron was always connected with this influential layman through a bound of loyalty, and that this thankful and loyal clerk probably guaranteed the influence of his supporter on local ecclesiastical affairs in future.
Frequently the laymen who became most influential on the local church were lay patrons or new tacksmen, and sometimes they were both. In the same way in which the interconnection between ecclesiastical authorities and parishioners on the local level declined, because of the former functions of ecclesiastical authorities, so in form of the collection of the teinds, was more and more performed by local laymen. The old Church was confronted with an increasing influence of laymen.

As we have already observed, there were two different ways of patronage: firstly an ecclesiastical or civil institution, like a religious house or a town council, could act as a patron for a parish. Secondly it was frequently a laymen who performed the influential rôle of a patron. The latter system of lay patronage and the influence of laymen on the local church continued long after the Reformation. It gave the people reasons for discussion until the nineteenth century, for example when a certain John Knox, the younger, wrote a treatise about:

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[90] Ibid, p. 28.
[91] Ibid, p. 29.
[92] Ibid, p. 29.
[93] Ibid, p. 28.

> The first blast of the trumpet against the monstrous ursurpation of church - patrons in Scotland[94].

Another example of this preoccupation with the problem of lay-patronage is David Graham who in the eighteenth century undertakes:

> An attempt to prove, that every species of patronage is foreign to the nature of the Church..., by a friend to the natural and religious rights of mankind[95].

And enough propaganda material for the faithful of the last century concerning this matter seems to be provided by:

> The select anti - patronage library; consisting chiefly of reprints of scare pamphlets connected with lay - patronage in the Church of Scotland[96].

This system of lay patronage which was, as we have seen, even long after the Reformation an object of severe criticisms[97] developed in Scotland to its full extent basically in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It expresses the increasing influence of the laymen on the Church on the eve of the Reformation.

One way to gain influence and prestige as a patron was through the foundation of a new church which was called a collegiate church, because it accommodated a college of clerks and priests which was in charge of saying votive masses for the founder, his family and friends. Around forty such institutions were founded in Scotland during the course of the fifteenth century and early sixteenth century, and only two of them were established by the crown while the rest of them owed their creation to the piety of individual nobles, lairds and bishops.[98] Certainly only extremely wealthy individuals could afford to build and furnish such a church as a whole.

Partly a wealthy individual gained patronal rights when he paid for maintenance or refurbishment of a church building. But, as we have seen, a great bulk of influence was already gained through the lease of Church lands. This influence of very wealthy

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[94] John Knox, the younger, *The first blast of the trumpet against the monstrous ursurpation of church - patrons in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1833). The assimilation to the Scottish Reformer in name and polemic style is not just accidental.

[95] David Graham, *An attempt to prove, that every species of patronage is foreign to the nature of the Church..., by a friend to the natural and religious rights of mankind* (J. Gray and G. Alston, Edinburgh, 1769).

[96] *The select anti - patronage library; consisting chiefly of reprints of scare pamphlets connected with lay - patronage in the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1842).

[97] See for this topic also James Kirk, "The Survival of Ecclesiastical Patronage after the Reformation", in: *Patterns fo Reform* (T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1989), pp. 368 - 425.

[98] Cowan, *The Mediaval Church in Scotland*, p. 174. A whole overview on collegiate churches in scotland is provided in Ian B. Cowan and David E. Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses in Scotland* (Longman, London and New York, 1976), pp. 213 - 230. See also McNeill and MacQueen (eds), *Atlas of Scottish History to 1707*, p. 346.

parishioners who in practice paid the local clergy came very close to the original patronal rights of church founders.

In the burghs the Church was confronted with an increasing emancipation of the burgesses. In consequence many of the functions the Church performed in earlier times were taken over by laymen. This is also manifested, for example, on the institutional level: generally we can observe that the institutional influence of the Church on the communities in the sixteenth century is one of decline, or, at least, is not any more unquestioned or without concurrence of civil institutions. This becomes obvious for functions like the care of the poor which were increasingly served also by secular institutions like gilds, fraternities or the town council. These institutions were obviously in a very close way connected with the local church but they became more and more self-confident. And this becomes also obvious when we see the first lay notaries appearing around 1540 who fulfilled the same duties in the sector of civil law as formerly predominantly clergymen did.[99] We can observe this for example on feast days when the church was no longer responsible for the performance of religious plays, a function increasingly adopted by lay congregations like gilds.[100]
In the burgh church the parish clergy was more and more controlled by the burgh council which again was elected by the burgesses. At Linlithgow this led to the fact that the council approved the hours of services, regulated the number of lights to be placed on the altar and provided the regulations for the dress in the choir.[101]

Attempts to explain the increasing influence of laymen on the Church on the eve of the Reformation have also to acknowledge the complex relationship between the Church and society. The way in which the local church was integrated into the communities changed for various reasons, as we have established.
In the first half of the sixteenth century the Church was furthermore confronted with a general form of secularisation which is not to be mistaken for a decline of piety. As we will see in the following chapters, the popular conception of religion changed in the time before the Reformation. Also we can observe a change within the peoples' piety, which from our point of view seems to be increasing.

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[99] McKay, "Parish Life in Scotland", p. 93. See also *Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis*, 2 vols (Spalding Club, Edinburgh, 1845), ii, p. 323. There a certain Thomas Dalloquhy, laicus, is mentioned as a notary.
[100] The development of the religious play is traced in Donaldson, *The Faith of the Scots*, pp. 42 - 5. We will analyse the religious plays with more detail in the third chapter when we are dealing with the faith of the individual.
[101] McKay, "Parish Life in Scotland", p. 47.

With secularisation of pre-Reformation society we are talking about the decline of the power and influence exercised by ecclesiastical institutions on local communities. This was exemplified through the office of the notaries public[102] and through the increasing influence of laymen on the local church.

One possible explanation for this is the change within educational standards in pre-Reformation society. This is expressed for example in the foundation of three Universities in Scotland in the fifteenth century.[103] But on the local level the church also was confronted with an increasing literacy among laymen which made the people more and more independent from the doctrines of a local priest.

So, before approaching the changes of popular religion and the individual's beliefs, it seems appropriate to deal in more detail with the education of laymen, and especially with the area of ecclesiastical instruction on the local level.

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[102] Nevertheless most of the notaries until the Reformation were educated as clergymen. However also the few cases we know about might be used as an indicator for a general tendency of secularisation.

[103] St Andrews, 1411; Glasgow, 1451; Aberdeen, 1494.

Chapter II

"Common Men" and "Lord's Prayer". The Evolving of Religious Education.

When attempting to describe a changing society in Scotland on the eve of the Reformation through considering the relation between the Church and the people, we also have to investigate popular concepts of religion. Changes within society manifest themselves not only in a change within the relation of Church and people, but also in a change within the people's beliefs in general.

This chapter will deal especially with the way in which the people were instructed in basic elements of belief. The examination of the way in which ecclesiastical authorities tried to educate the parishioners and the degree to which religious education was adjusted to the spiritual needs of the people will enable us to place changes in the piety of the individual within their wider context.

Therefore in this chapter we firstly investigate general means of religious instruction. The analysis of these means of instruction will not be limited to Scotland but involves the wider context of the pre-Reformation Church in Europe. This is first of all because the manifestations of the means of religious education are, in their basic elements, similar throughout the western Church. One other reason is that in Scotland comparatively little source material has survived to enable us to discuss the ecclesiastical instruction of the people sufficiently.[104] Nevertheless we will, of course, deal in detail with the Scottish evidence in detail in the course of this chapter.

The second part of this main chapter tries to put the attempts at religious instruction in the context of the realities of religious life on the eve of the Reformation. This will enable us later to do more justice to the beliefs of the individual which sometimes, as we will see, were quite different from the goals of ecclesiastical instruction.

The third and final part of this chapter will treat in more detail the situation in Scotland. We will trace the means of religious instruction through elements of educational literature, like Archbishop Hamilton's Catechism, and works of art and architecture. Because parish life, especially on the rural level in Scotland, does not often appear to be expressed in a very sophisticated way, unlike for example in works of art or literature, as was the case in more urbanised areas of England, we might find ourselves in difficulty analysing the Scottish situation. Nevertheless we hope to

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[104] This is for example because of the fact that the Scottish Reformation was in comparison to the rest of Europe quite radical. Therefore many of the visual aids, like paintings, carvings, etc. which depicted the biblical stories and which helped within the churches to educate the people have been destroyed. Nevertheless, the few references we have in Scotland indicate that ecclesiastical instruction worked basically in the same manner as in the rest of the Brittish Isles.

establish, by introducing illustrative examples, that the mechanisms of religious change in pre-Reformation Scotland worked in a way which was similar to the English situation.[105]

I. Means of religious instruction

Not only in the times of missionary activity of early Christianity but also throughout the whole Middle Ages the ecclesiastical authorities were constantly committed to making their flocks familiar with basic elements of the Christian faith. These elementary features were either general confessions, like the Creed, confirming practically the constitution of faith, or obligations which could also strongly affect the everyday life of the people, like the Ten Commandments. The latter emphasis on a moral code meant that, for example, murder was not any more only a legal matter, but also referred to the religious state of a person.

The canon of faith and of knowledge a pious Christian was expected to know varied very little in the course of time. What was changing was the way in which the essentials were presented and the degree to which the instruction of laymen was encouraged.[106] The basis for pre-Reformation faith and in this sense a comprehensive guide to Christian belief and practice consisted basically in

> the Creed, the Ten Commandments and Christ's summary of these in the dual precept to love God and neighbour, the seven works of mercy, the seven virtues, the seven vices, and the seven sacraments.[107]

There is evidence that in some cases the laity was encouraged to distribute the common elements of faith: one example of this would be the inscription found on a fourteenth-century baptismal font in an English parish church:

> Pater Noster, Ave Maria, Criede,
> Leren de childe yt is nede:[108]

Obviously parents and godfathers were encouraged to influence the education of a child in a way that ensured that basic elements of faith were learned.

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[105] In many aspects though, England was the odd man out and Scotland, whose links to the continent, especially to France, were stronger, borrowed more directly from the continent. The general means of religious instruction however remained basically the same from Italy to Ireland.

[106] There were obviously also deep changes in laymen's perception of the knowledge of faith, despite whether it was canonic or not. But this, as well as the changes within the whole popular conception of religion, will be treated extensively in the following main chapter.

[107] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars.Traditional religion in England c. 1400 - 1580* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992), p. 53.

[108] See Francis Bond, *Fonts and Font Covers* (London, 1908), p. 113.

Another example of this is that educated lay people were envisaged to act as disseminators of written doctrinal material. As we will see in the course of this chapter, a wide range of doctrinal literature which was especially adapted to the religious needs of lay folk circulated across Europe, including Scotland. There is a relatively large number of versions of the Pater Noster, the Ave Maria, and the Creed, for example, which were translated into the vernacular, which were set in rhymes, or which were richly illustrated with pictures.
The clergy also tried to motivate literate lay folk to read or to teach those who were not literate from pieces of doctrinal literature - for example through indulgences, in the form of fewer days to be spent in purgatory, as a reward.[109]

This fact enables us also to prove that every piece of literature was not automatically part of a culture of an élite (the literate) which was somehow separate from popular culture. On the contrary it appears from our example of religious education that even the non-literate participated to some extent in religious literature, as long as it was written in the vernacular, because huge portions of this literature were read aloud and in front of audiences during the Sunday mass, for example.[110]
The fact that élite culture in early modern times does not appear to be separate from popular culture is also stressed by Peter Burke. He establishes that all over Europe a culture of the educated influenced the culture of the "Common Man". Vice versa it seems that popular customs also strongly influenced the habits of the educated. One example he introduces is the tradition of feasts.[111] Although not explicitly mentioned it seems to be plausible that even in the field of religious education there were some people who acted within the communities as mediators, communicating popular elements to the educated's perception of religion and communicating in the same way educated means of religious socialization to the "Common Man". So the distinction between élite and popular culture in the sphere of religious socialization on the eve of the Reformation was somewhat blurred.

One other key means of religious instruction within the parish was the confession. The layman's knowledge of the guidelines of Christian faith, consisting of the Lord's

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[109] Duffy gives as one of the many examples for this kind of literature the *Lay Folk's Catechism*, which had attached to it an indulgence of forty days for everyone who learned it or taught it to others, Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 54.

[110] It is not clear how many people actually attended the Sunday mass. Sometimes the provincial councils of the church complained that very few people actually were going to Sunday mass, but we do not have precise numbers.

[111] The German translation of Burke's most influential book, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*. Peter Burke, *Helden, Schurken und Narren. Europäische Volkskultur in der frühen Neuzeit* (Klett - Cotta, Stuttgart, 1981).

Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Seven Sacraments, the Seven Virtues, and the Seven Works of Mercy, frequently including also the Seven Deadly Sins and the Hail Mary, could regularly be examined by local clergymen. This was officially the case since 1215, when the Fourth Lateran Council urged laymen to an annual confession to their parish priests.[112] Because of the fact that a good moral condition of a parishioner meant also to have a basic knowledge in essential parts of catholic faith, the parish priests had with the confession a immensely valuable pastoral and educational tool in their hands.

From manuals for confessors which were frequently guidelines for them how to act as a confessor and how to conduct confession we can reconstruct how confession took place and to what extent it also served instructional purposes:[113]

It started normally with some preliminary questions, possibly about the profession and social and marital status of the penitent which would enable the confessor to hear the confession more intelligently. Frequently he also asked when the penitent had made his last confession and whether the penance imposed then was finished.[114] The confession could touch quite delicate questions about moral and sexual behaviour, for example. All this, of course, must be seen in the context of the rigour of late medieval morality. [115]

On the eve of the Reformation when more pious lay people seemed to have confessed more regularly,[116] confession served also as a general form of spiritual direction.

However, the main guidelines for the average confessor were the main prayers the parishioners were supposed to know. This appears to be most plausible when we bear in mind the fact that the educational standards of the parish clergy could sometimes be quite poor. This was especially the case in predominantly rural areas like many regions of Scotland. There the parish clergy normally had no university education, or, to be precise, when a priest in a rural parish was well qualified he would not stay too long

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[112] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 54.

[113] Duffy gives a lot of references to this kind of manual, like William of Pagula's *Oculus Sacerdotis,* A most valuable and detailed examination on the whole issue of confession is provided by Thomas N. Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1977). On William of Pagula's *Oculus Sacerdotis* see also Leonard E. Boyle, *Pastoral Care, Clerical Education and Canon Law, 1200 - 1400* (Variorum Reprints, London, 1981).

[114] The confessor had also to find out to what parish or bishopric the penitent belonged to make sure that the confessor had jurisdiction. See Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation*, p. 84.

[115] Tentler cites from the manuals for confessors some most notable examples to illustrate this feature: Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation*, pp. 91 - 3; for the general moral background see ibid, pp. 162 - 232.

[116] This is at least the case within the urban communities, where the piety of the individual changed more than in rural areas where in most cases the conception of religion tended to remain more conservative. See Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 60.

within a rural community but tried as fast as possible to climb up within the ecclesiastical hierarchy and to get a benefice at one of the more important churches.
The examination of the penitent during confession along the guidelines of the main prayers and the articles of, for example, the Ten Commandments can be taken quite literally: in the course of regular confession the penitent had to show that he was able to recite the Lord's Prayer, that he knew the articles of the Creed and of the Paternoster and so on.[117] If the penitent failed in this, his moral condition was seen to be deficient, and normally a punishment followed which "helped" the penitent to recover his lack of knowledge. A common form of punishment was that the penitent had to pray a certain number of the basic prayers.[118] This shows, together with the obligation of regular confession to what extent it also served to make parishioners familiar with the basic elements of faith.

The seven sacraments[119] and the way they were administered were another way to instruct parish communities with some religious knowledge. One the one hand, the sacraments were deeply connected with the individual's life, because they structured it from birth to death. As we already established the sacraments were essential for communities and for the individual's welfare. This was connected with a better life in the individual's present, expressed for example in protection from godly punishment like the plague, but also in a better life in the individual's future, the life after death.[120]
On the other hand, the parish clergy, through the need for administration of sacraments, had a very powerful position which enabled them also to influence their flocks on the instructional level.
The administration of sacraments was most essential for the life of the individual in late medieval society from birth to death. So a child, who was not baptised, had no chance for a pleasant life after death in the common perception within pre-Reformation piety but had, together with all heathens, to endure hell.[121] And a dying person who did not

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117 Ibid, p. 54.

118 See Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation*, p. 86.

119 The sacraments were (and are in the Catholic Church today): baptism, penance, confirmation, marriage, ordination to the priesthood, eucharist and extreme unction. As a good introduction to the sacraments in general (although from a modern point of view) see John Macquarrie, *A Guide to the Sacraments* (SCM Press Ltd, London, 1997).

120 See for the impact of this my remarks in the previous chapter. The consequences and changes within the conception of religion of the individual will be treated in the third main chapter.

121 The mortality among children was, of course, in late medieval Europe much higher than it is in modern times. Therefore even layfolk, in the case of emergency, were permitted to baptise children "in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit". So, for instance, parents could baptise their children when they were dying and there was no priest around to do it. But normally a priest would baptise children in the first days after their birth.

receive the forgiving blessings of the last rites was in his understanding of piety sure to spend more days in purgatory.

The sacraments, together with regular confession,[122] guaranteed frequent contact between priests and parishioners and frequently these occasions were also utilised to strengthen the stage of religious knowledge within the parish community. So the sacrament of baptism, as we have already seen, was used to encourage the parents and godfathers of the child, to provide a Christian education by teaching it also the basic prayers.[123] In the same sense the sacrament of confirmation was used to provide a basic knowledge of the prayers for young people.[124] And with the same intention gatherings of the parish community for the eucharistic sacrament on Sundays were used to provide some religious instruction through a sermon the priest made, for example.[125] To sum up the sacraments and the way they were administered provided another key to religious education in late medieval society.

Another valuable and frequently underestimated[126] means of religious instruction was the wide range of visual aids. In many churches at least one of the different kinds of works of art was to be found: wall-paintings, stained glass, sculptures and carvings in stone and wood.[127] They helped parishioners to visualise the biblical stories and they replenished or substituted in an extremely precise and full form parts of the catechetical teaching.[128] This becomes most obvious when we consider the fact that large parts of

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[122] Even the eucharistic sacrament had to be received regularly by the parishioners. It is actually doubtful whether the parishioners actually confessed regularly and received the sacraments. We will deal with these realities of religious life below. But in this context we are aware that we only can draw an idealized picture of the religious education on the eve of the Reformation. Compare the following section "Claims and Realities".

[123] See footnote 107.

[124] Sometimes the young people of a parish who were to receive one of these sacraments came together to get some religious instruction from a member of the parish clergy.

[125] These semons were frequently explanations of the basic prayers. Altough it is not clear to what extent Sunday preaching was widespread it appears that it became increasingly important as a part of parochial life. See Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 57 - 8. However, it appears that in medieval times the parishioners did not receive the Eucharistic sacrament that frequently. Only with an increasing piety on the eve of the Reformation and later did pious people bacome eager to receive the communion frequently.

[126] It seems, that even art historians recognise the immense value of works of art as a source for social history in recent years. One example for this approach is Peter Humfrey and Martin Kemp (eds), *The Altarpiece in the Renaissance* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990), which includes most interesting articles like Craig Harbison's "The northern altarpiece as a cultural document".

[127] In this context we are only talking about a general context and more basic functions of art within the churches. In the second part of this chapter we will have to balance this analysis because in many churches the equipment in terms of art was relatively poor.

[128] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 63 - 6.

imagery in churches in the British Isles, but also on the continent, were depicting the framework of the catechetical teaching along basic guidelines of the faith. [129]

In this context it is interesting to look at wall-paintings which depict the Seven Works of Mercy and the Deadly Sins.[130] Another example is an illustration of the Apostles Creed which seems to have been extremely common in many churches in fifteenth-century England. Usually the twelve articles of the Creed were attributed to the twelve Apostles, so that on quite fashionable stained windows, altarpieces, or on fonts each Apostle is carrying a banner or a scroll on which the attributed article is inscribed. St Peter has the first article "Credo in Deum, Patrem Omnipotentem", St Andrew the second "et in Jesum Christum" and so on.[131]

We have examples of doors or pulpits which were painted or carved with the four Latin doctors and Church Fathers Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory, and Jerome which were general symbols of the church's teaching, following, of course, the scholastic tradition.[132] Other examples show the works of mercy and the vices carved on the ends of church benches, so that the people were confronted concretely with basic elements of catechetical teaching at close proximity.[133] And in other places in southern England we find the seven sacraments carved around the bowls of baptismal fonts.[134]

The increasing number of instructional works of art in fifteenth century manifests also an increasing lay interest in the catechetical teaching. This was valued especially by the wealthier parishioners who became increasingly educated, which is illustrated by the fact that many of the works of art within the churches were donations by these wealthier individuals. Duffy establishes the example of stained glass windows which depicted the seven works of mercy and which could, for instance, be paid for by prosperous merchants or lairds, who in these works also represented themselves as, for example, caring for the poor.[135] Furthermore, in his opinion the numerous examples of seven-sacrament fonts bear witness to an increasing lay interest in and enthusiasm for the catechetical teaching they enshrine, because the choice of the

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[129] Scottish evidence for this will be introduced below.

[130] For a good example of this in England see M. D. Anderson, *History and Imagery in British Churches* (John Murray, Edinburgh, 1971); plate 46, pp. 145 - 6.

[131] For a good illustration of this see Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, plates 29 - 30, p. 64.

[132] Ibid, plates 17 and 33.

[133] Ibid, plates 24 - 28. This is also a point against the thesis that the people in the late medieval church were quite far away from the actual celebration of the mass on the one hand and intellectually quite far from the ecclesiastical teaching on the other: In cases of smaller churches or in larger churches at the side altars the parishioners could have been very close to the action at the altar. And through visual aids the people could have well understood the essentials of catechetical teaching as well.

[134] Ibid, plates 34 - 36.

[135] Ibid, p. 64.

subject on the fonts must have met with the approval of the donors and the rest of the parish.[136]

It is difficult to distinguish the catechetical inclinations of an educated upper-class within parish communities from the religious knowledge of the "common man". And it is extremely delicate to take exceptional works of art as testimonies for general trends within the whole system of religious instruction throughout Europe. But nevertheless it appears that even the comparatively remote British Islands witnessed among the lay folk, whether literate or not, an increasing interest in, or a growing demand for, religious instruction.

This is well expressed also through the increasing popularity of religious plays. All over the towns and burghs of Europe including Scotland folk plays must have been quite popular. Many of the traditional plays were of pagan origin, like for example plays of the Robin Hood-type, but on the eve of the Reformation we have a good deal of evidence of plays which are connected with religious or instructional subjects. In some towns the initiative originated from lay folk and sometimes there were congregations founded, like the Corpus Christi gild or the Pater Noster gild, which were mainly committed to perform plays like the Corpus Christi play or the Pater Noster play. These plays were not just an attraction but also designed to teach the citizens the elements of faith.[137] More than merely illustrating for the people the biblical salvation story the plays were clearly linked to contemporary preaching, and they also involved a massive corporate effort by the laity to foster knowledge of the elements of faith. Not only the Pater Noster and Corpus Christi plays, but also miracle and saints plays were in the rural communities throughout Europe fundamental means of transmitting religious instruction and stirring devotion.[138]

The religious drama which, at least in Scotland, seems to have originated from within the churches seems to have become more and more secularised in the hands of gilds and crafts.[139] And the increasing dramatic activity on the eve of the Reformation shows an increasing demand for illustrations of the catechetical teaching.

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[136] Ibid, p. 65 - 6.

[137] The example of York which is in many ways exceptional, but nevertheless in its basic functions representative, is well analysed by Meg Twycross, "Books for the Unlearned", in: *Themes in Drama*, v, 1983, pp. 65 - 110.

[138] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 66 - 68. We will take up the whole subject of religious plays again in the next main chapter, when we are concerned with changes within the faith of the individual.

[139] For the evolution of the religious play in Scotland see Gordon Donaldson, *The Faith of the Scots*, pp. 42 - 45. However, the example of York shows that also a lay initiative could be a starting point for a play, as it was there the case with the Pater Noster play, see Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 67.

In this context we should also briefly stress the importance of music and religious songs in religious education. However, we have little evidence of to what extent music was heard during the mass and how often the parishioners sang songs together during a service. It was suggested by Gordon Donaldson that the introduction of congregational singing of metric psalms with the Reformation did not replace other forms of music, but replaced silence, because songs were almost never sung during a normal mass.[140] Nevertheless it appears that religious songs, like Robert Carver's compositions, became increasingly popular amongst the lay folk, although there is no evidence that they were officially promoted by the church. But collections of rhymed translations of the psalms and other devotional texts, which could have easily been sung, suggest their popularity.

The most famous example in Scotland from the eve of the Reformation are the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis*.[141] This collection, which was edited about 1542, comprises many songs which could also serve very well the purposes of religious instruction, because many of the songs were obviously following the melody of well known popular songs and also because of the rhymed character they were easy to memorise. The *Gude and Godlie Ballatis* follow the basic patterns of religious instruction as we already established for other means of catechetical teaching. The collection includes, for example, also a "catechisme put in meter", containing of course the ten commandments or the creed, and another cycle within the collection contains other "certaine ballatis of the scripture", which depict the biblical salvation story.

Generally we can establish that religious songs also manifest another key means of religious instruction. Although it is more difficult to prove the evidence of an increasing popularity than it is the case of wall paintings or windows in churches, for example, which have survived, it appears that the popularity of religious songs was increasing. But we will treat the wide range of balladry more carefully in the next chapter when we deal with the individual's piety.

The means of religious instruction were multifarious, and it appears that, connected with an increasing demand among the lay folk, they became more sophisticated. Catechetical material depicting or teaching biblical stories and the basic elements of the faith like the Lord's Prayer or the Creed were to be found in the form of catechetical literature, confessions, sacramental catechesis, all different kinds of works of art, religious drama, and songs.

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[140] This point, especially for the Scottish situation, is made by Gordon Donaldson, *The Faith of the Scots*, p. 46.

[141] *The Gude and Godlie Ballatis*, edited by A. F. Mitchel (Scottish Text Society, Edinburgh and London, 1897).

However, it is also obvious that, despite the wide variety of different means of religious instruction, the concrete knowledge of laymen in basic elements of the faith could be very poor. This was, firstly dependent on variations within the local situation of a parish community, and to get a full picture we should now qualify the ideals of religious instruction by confronting the established means of instruction with some local realities.

II. Claims and reality

The state of religious instruction could vary a lot at the level of parish communities. On the following pages we will try to analyse the factors which could cause the huge differences between the ideals of religious instruction, which were, for example, described in a confessor's manual or which we see in exceptional church windows, and the reality of a parish community.

The nature of these factors could, generally speaking, be connected with the different state of development of different parish communities. In this context we just have to think about the important differences between rural and urban communities. This general feature also becomes evident in the fact that historical movements, which shape a period, do not always occur simultaneously. This is the case for example with the culture of the Renaissance which shaped wide parts of urban Italy with its cultural and political manifestations in the fourteenth century, but which only seems to have influenced Scotland from the middle of the fifteenth century onwards; we can also observe that parallel historical phenomena do not necessarily occur simultaneously in the emergence of humanist thought.[142] In this sense religious education, in its different manifestations and in the different way in which it was seen, might also have performed on different levels.

Before we consider extensively the situation of religious education on the eve of the Reformation in Scotland with which we are, of course, most concerned, we have to describe some more general mechanisms which might have caused the enormous differences between the catechetical ideal and the local realities. This procedure is necessary to distinguish the special case of Scotland sufficiently from other deviations which occurred in a similar way throughout Europe.

The most obvious problem when trying to analyse the importance of catechetical literature in a more practical context is the problem of literacy. We have already

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[142] Although the culture of Renaissance or humanist thought can both be well understood as European phenomena with similar characteristics and with a similarity in the way in which society changed from Italy to Denmark it did not occur simultaneously throughout Europe.

established that on the eve of the Reformation an increasing number of lay folk were becoming literate. In addition there was also a difference between the ability to read and the ability to write in the sense that many people were able to read but not able to write. Writing was obviously the more difficult part for people. However, this dichotomy of literacy indicates that pieces of instructional literature were received by many more people than those who were able to write. The number of people who were instructed through catechetical literature might have also included individuals who were not even able to read because they received some popular texts when they were read aloud in front of bigger audiences. To put it in a nutshell we can not easily estimate how many people were reached by religious literature, but it can be suggested that it was more people than those who were fully literate, and on the eve of the Reformation this number was increasing anyway.[143]

However, on the eve of the Reformation it was still the parish clergy who had the main function in catechising the people. And in this context, when we are concerned whith the reception of catechetical literature, the key question is raised of whether the parish clergy was educated enough for this growing literature. Many of the manuals were obviously designed for the practical use of parish priests, and the numerous examples we have of this kind of literature suggest[144] that there was a certain demand on the side of the clergy in a sense that they obviously needed some kind of guidelines for their instructional work with their flocks. Despite this it is frequently questioned whether the educational standards of the average parish priests were sufficient to fulfil their catechetical duties effectively.

Although the bishops always attempted to improve educational standards of the parish clergy[145] the situation in many parishes was the object of severe criticism. It was common practice from the fifteenth century onwards that many rural parish churches especially never saw their parson but that this parson entrusted a vicar to fulfil the duty

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[143] See for the educational situation of layfolk in Scotland John Durkan, "Education in the century of the Reformation", in: *Innes Review*, 10 (1959), pp. 67 - 90. For a more general approach see John Durkan, "The cultural background in sixteenth-century Scotland", in: *Innes Review*, 10 (1959), pp. 382 - 439; compare also John Durkan and Anthony Ross, "Early Scottish Libraries", in: *Innes Review*, ix (1958), pp. 5 - 167.

[144] Many of the manuals for priests, for example the *Oculus Sacerdotum*, are mentioned in Tentler's *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* as well as in Duffy's *The Stripping of the Altars.*

[145] Leonard E. Boyle introduces, for example the system of licences for priest in fourteenth-century England. To acquire a licence, the candidate had also to prove his educational base, see: Leonard E. Boyle, "Aspects of Clerical Education in Fourteenth-Century England", in: Leonard E. Boyle, *Pastoral Care, Clerical Education and Canon Law*, pp. 19 - 32. To strenghthen this argumentation for the Scottish Situation we will introduce *Archbishop Hamilton's Catechism* which was also designed to improve educational standards among the clergy.

of the cure of the souls in his stead.[146] This vicar was paid a rent and it is obvious that absent parsons for the reasons of maximum profit were tempted to have the job of parish priest done for as little cost as possible. Therefore especially in the burghs and towns where the parish churches were also maintained by the local council the local authorities paid chaplains to fulfil the duty of the cure of souls. Frequently the stipend of these chaplains was augmented or paid in total by the burgh council.[147]

In consequence on the local level the parishioners were spiritually served by priests who were a long way from the educational ideal and who can well be described as clergy proletariat.[148] Especially on the rural level the parish priests were not often university graduates, and if they were for them the rural parish was no more than a short stop on the longer path of their career. Many of the rural clergy had just a few years of school education, and were sometimes not able to write and did not understand the Latin words of the mass.[149] This educational state of the main body of the rural clergy had, of course, an enormous impact on the religious education of the lay folk in these parishes. In summary then, the praxis on the local parish level could at times be widely divergent from the ideal of instruction as it was described in the manuals, especially in the distribution of instructional literature, in confessions and in the catechesis of the sacraments which were administered basically by the parish clergy.

In many towns the situation might have been much closer to the ideal because here the clergy appears to have been better educated and more qualified for their duties,[150] but on the eve of the Reformation wide parts of Europe and especially Scotland were still been predominantly rural. So it seems necessary to relativise the situation of religious education by showing it in a more correct light:

The poorly educated clergyman got his knowledge of how to administer his duties normally neither through the study of manuals nor through a centralised training in

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[146] Especially in Scotland but also through wide parts of Europe the majority of parsons were not individual clergy, but a religious house like a monastery, represented by, for example, the abbot. Monasteries like Eberbach at the Rhine, Fontenay in Burgundy or Subiaco south of Rome held through this system of appropriation enormous estates with many parish churches on them.

[147] For example, *Elgin Records*, i, p. 87.

[148] The mechanisms of recruitment of the local clergy are for the Scottish case well described in Denis McKay, "Parish Life in Scotland, 1500 - 1560", pp. 85 - 92.

[149] Of course even these people achieved a certain experience in celebrating the mass, and even if they had not studied Latin they had a certain knowledge of what they were talking about. The same was, by the way, the case for the parishioners who were often believed to have not understood anything of the mass. Through the experience and their religious socialisation they had for sure a certain knowledge of the meaning of basic elements of the Latin mass; see for this argumentation Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 109 - 116.

[150] McKay, "Parish Life in Scotland", p. 92.

form of seminaries, as is still the case up to now in the Catholic church.[151] As a kind of apprentice of a more experienced priest the candidate learned how to say the mass and how to administer the sacraments.[152] Even when these "priest-apprentices" got ordained, they had few possibilities for further training. On the one hand, self teaching through books meant a big effort for these men who could hardly read, and on the other hand, this clergy proletariat which had no university education had normally a very modest living, which meant that these priests were, of course, more preoccupied with organising the essential needs for the everyday life than with improving their skills concerning the care of souls. Most of the poorer chaplains for example had to count on the money they got for prayers or masses they said for members or families of the parish community, and therefore they had to try to get as much involvement as possible.[153] It was also common practice that after a confession the penitent asked the confessor to pray for him and offered their "alms".[154] We can well imagine that with priests depending on this alms, because they were paid poorly by the parson or had no fixed commitment in a parish, there was no real chance for any improvement in the sense of administering clerical duties. And even priests who tried hard to improve their skills, but were poorly educated, had few chances of succeeding in times of increasing piety among lay folk[155] and in times of increasing demands which were made on the clergy by the parishioners, at least in rural areas.

One example of this unlikelihood of improvement is the confession. In the manuals and further guidelines for the confessors it was well described how a confession by a confessor was to proceed. The confessor was told in what directions to examine and what questions to ask. But when the confessor because of his insufficient education himself was deficient in "learning, morals and discretion",[156] it must have been

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151 In pre-Reformation Scotland trainees would have to go abroad to a Scots College in France, Spain or Rome; this again only candidates with a wealthy background could afford.

152 Ibid, p. 91

153 In Germany this kind of priest who lived on the money obtained for saying masses or prayers were called "Heuerpfaffen", which could be translated with "hired clerics".

154 Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the eve of the Reformation*, p. 87.

155 In this context it is certainly open to question whether in rural areas the lay folk became actually more pious. But the fact that many laymen had contact with urban believers, because they had to go to the towns and market places, suggests that even rural lay folk knew about new movements of piety and new concepts of religion. However it is questionable if this knowledge led also to a demand for more educated clergymen in the rural parishes, because the situation in the rural parish communities was in so many ways different from the situation in the towns.

156 In 1549 the Provincial Council of Scotland complained tha many of the parish clergy were deficient in "learning, morals and discretion"; see McKay, "Parish Life in Scotland", p. 92; see also David Patrick, *Stautes of the Scottish Church*, p. 110.

difficult for him to distinguish what sins on the eve of the Reformation were regarded as serious and what sins as just trivial.[157]

We can even well imagine that a priest who hardly knew the basic prayers and the main articles of the faith himself and who had also made a enormous effort to memorise these elementary features by himself, was not the best person to teach his flock or take a confession. In these cases the confession could not have been a very important means of religious instruction, but it must have degenerated into a more mechanic act.

The same poor realities we can imagine for the administration of the sacraments. In many cases a poorly educated priest might have hardly memorised the words he had to say when administering for example the sacrament of baptism. But there was not a great deal of knowledge about the canonical or biblical framework the sacrament was set in, and so this priest might also have had difficulties in explaining the sacraments to the people. In this case the administration of a sacrament was surely not the catechetical and somehow enlightening event for all participants as it was meant to be in some manuals. In many rural parishes, where a predominantly poorly educated clergy administered the sacraments, it appears that the parishioners on the one hand were keen on receiving the sacraments but that on the other hand the administration of the sacraments was no more than an event which had to be done because it was somehow essential for the life of the people within the parish communities. But we can not imagine that a poorly educated priest could try to educate his flock in more things than he himself had learned, and he could be happy when his parishioners could memorise just a few of the essential prayers.

As far as the catechesis through the different kinds of works of art is concerned it is obvious that not every parish had a church which had at its deposal a sophisticated catechetical programme in form of stained glass windows, sculptures or paintings. This way of catechising the people was reserved for the richer churches like the cathedrals, abbeys, or collegiate churches. This kind of church had the means to celebrate masses which were more impressive for the laity already because they had more resident priests,[158] and these richer churches were also better equipped with works of art.

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[157] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, p. 54. In many cases the whole situation of the confession itself seems not to have been the right place for catechetical enlightenment, especially when queues of waiting parishioners were looming close behind the penitent and when the matter of confession or the chatter of the followers was plainly audible for everyone, see L. G. Duggan, "Fear and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation", in: *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, LXXV (1984), pp. 153 - 75.

[158] See Ian B. Cowan, *The Medieval Church*, p. 171.

Frequently, as we have established, the works of art were donations of wealthy parishioners or incorporations, like gilds, which thus had also the possibility of representing themselves in the most public forum of the community. Therefore the urban churches were normally better equipped with wall paintings or elaborately carved baptismal fonts, for example, because religious confraternities or gilds were urban phenomenona and the major part of wealthy individuals, like merchants or richer craftsmen, lived in the towns and burghs. The foundations of various side altars, for instance, with frequent services and the donations of all kinds of works of art which represented the donor but which also enriched the religious life of the parishioners and supported the catechetical efforts of the church were therefore predominantly urban phenomena.

In a rural parish church the situation could be very different. The normally very small church buildings were less elaborate in architecture and equipment, and so even the catechetical ideal could be quite far away. A rural parish community could be happy when the church had a baptismal font and the first interest of the parishioners was more to get the roof of the church watertight than to invest in elaborate wall paintings. Frequently there was only the patron, normally a major religious house or a wealthy individual landowner, who had the means to equip the church building with decorations. And because of the fact that rural society was a less important stage for the representation of the individual, which is again due to the fact that there was no real middle class,[159] there was not a great deal of representation of the patrons within their churches which went beyond the basic features.

In this sense we have to qualify the enriching contributions works of art made to the religious instruction of the laity on the eve of the Reformation, because in rural areas the situation was frequently very different from the ideal we established earlier.

This analysis is to a similar extent valid for religious drama and songs as means of religious instruction. We can well imagine that rural parish communities, which were normally much smaller than their urban counterparts and which lived not as close together, as in a burgh with buildings gathered around the local church, had disadvantages which prevented the performance of religious plays on feast days. But the main reason is undoubtedly the lack of supporters to promote and sponsor the performance of a play for a rural community. In the towns and burghs there gilds and other incorporations, like the fraternities, acted as the main supporters, as we have

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[159] In many rural areas the differences between rich and poor members of the communities were more obvious, also because there was practically no middle class. In the towns and burghs, where wealthier merchants and craftsmen became increasingly educated and politcally responsible, there was more need for representation, because urban society on the eve of the Reformation was more competitive and in many ways more subject to social changes, than rural society was.

established. And in fact Anna Jean Mill's book on medieval plays in Scotland shows no single example of a religious play which was not performed for the population of a burgh.[160]

There is also a good deal of evidence that songs in the Sunday mass were not very common in the rural parish. It has been suggested that in the rural parish on the eve of the Reformation the service was generally more down on earth and that already a languid priest who was stumbling in the mid-course of the reading was not supporting a festive atmosphere which encouraged the parish community to sing religious songs.[161] It appears to be more plausible that the singing during the mass took place more in the major churches which had a choir or a college of priests which led the singing and sang the liturgy in Latin. In this sense it appears for the major part of the parish churches that, when the congregational singing of metrical psalms came in with the Reformation, it did not replace plainsong of a choir or even the mass congregation, it replaced silence.[162]

In many ways it was necessary to show the realities with which the efforts to instruct the lay folk in the basic elements of faith were confronted. As we have seen the key means of instruction which the clergy had ideally at its disposal, like religious literature, confession works of art, religious plays and songs, were in many rural areas either not practised, or far from the ideal which was described in the manuals of the time. For the urban communities we can generally establish that on the eve of the Reformation the means of religious instruction became more elaborate and appeared (obviously because of the increasing demand for religious instruction among the lay folk) to have been exploited in a more public way[163], but in many rural areas the situation must have remained basically as before.

After this more general context it seems now necessary to analyse the situation in Scotland more in detail.

III. The Situation in Scotland. An Elusive Quarry

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[160] See Anna Jean Mill, *Medieval Plays in Scotland* (Edinburgh and London, 1927). One could argue that the lack of evidence of religious plays in rural areas is caused by the fact that we have no written records for rural communities. But it appears to be more plausible that for example peasants, who wanted to see a religious play, went on feast days to the next burgh where a performance took place. The performance must not necessarily have taken place within the burgh but could also have been on a kind of festival site outside.

[161] Ian B. Cowan, *The Medival Church*, p.171.

[162] Gordon Donaldson, *The Faith of the Scots*, p. 46.

[163] In the last main chapter, when we are concerned with the individual's piety this point will be treated more extensively.

The title of this chapter is borrowed from Peter Burke's book *Popular Culture in Early modern Europe*, and when Burke compares the approaches towards popular culture as an elusive quarry, so is the same concept valid for our aim to reconstruct the situation of religious education on the eve of the Reformation in Scotland. Of the potential sources very little has survived, because for example many works of art which could have helped to strengthen our case have been destroyed in the course of the events of the Reformation. In addition to this, there is not many studies on the Scottish situation by scholars who are concerned with the means of religious education in our sense. In consequence it remains for us to apply the statements we made for the wider context of the old church to the Scottish case on the one hand, and to explore the few examples we have as effectively as possible on the other.

In Scotland on the eve of the Reformation the ecclesiastical and other authorities were generally preoccupied with the religious state of most of the lay folk. Both, the poor church attendance of the parishioners and their behaviour in church limited the catechetical influence which even the most ambitious priest could exert. Attendance in many parts of pre-Reformation Scotland was hindered by the distance of many homes from the place of worship, especially as churches were not always centrally placed and some rural parishes, even in the Lowlands, were very large.[164] But even beyond these more general conditions it appears that many people stayed away from the mass in many rural areas of Scotland anyway so that they did not have to go to church to bring their offerings. And when people went to church, frequently their attention was apt to be distracted by the many secular activities which were also carried out in the building.[165]

The church which was richly equipped with lots of works of art, which could so support the clergy's catechetical efforts, and which provided a flourishing parish life, expressed, for example, by pious parishioners who confessed regularly or manifested in religious song and drama, appears to have been the exceptional case in most parts of Scotland. This again is especially the case for the rural church, as Gordon Donaldson points out:

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[164] Gordon Donaldson, *The Faith of the Scots*, p. 45; for an overview of the size of the parishes see McNeill, Peter G. B. and MacQueen, Hector L. (eds.), *Altlas of Scottish History to 1707*, p. 383. For an overview on the parishes in the whole of Scotland in detail see Ian B. Cowan, *The Parishes of medieval Scotland* (Scottish Record Society, Edinburgh, 1967).

[165] We have allready written about the secular purposes the church building served also in the first main chapter; see again for example Gordon Donaldson, *The Faith of the Scots*, p. 45.

> Most rural churches were modest in size and equipment and there is ample evidence that the condition of many ecclesiastical buildings was often such as hardly to encourage reverence, let alone devotion.[166]

The documentary evidence shows that the authorities were quite aware of the very modest state most of the rural churches in Scotland were in,[167] and this situation could not have been the best climate for a profound religious education. In cases where a patron was concerned with the state of a church building he frequently first of all had to provide the most essential elements for priest and parishioners, like a watertight roof or walls which would not collapse, before thinking about elaborate furnishing.

Nevertheless, a few of the important churches in Scotland, which were mostly situated in the Lowlands,[168] appear to have been fairly richly equipped with works of art or with other kinds of foundations which permitted a more sophisticated religious life and a higher level of religious instruction. In most of the cases the foundations were gifts to the church of the patrons, of rich parishioners, or congregations which in this way also satisfied their needs for representation within the communities. Gilds founded altars in the parish churches of their burghs, for example in St Giles', Edinburgh. And other major churches, like Glasgow cathedral or Roslin Chapel, accommodated splendid works of art which were to a great extent sponsored by rich parishioners or the patrons. This is most obvious for the collegiate churches which, as we have established in the first chapter, were mostly founded by private men. Roslin Chapel, near Edinburgh, which was founded in the midde of the fifteenth Century by William Sinclair, Earl of Caithness and Orkney, is a splendid example, and the equipment of this foundation was undoubtedly well suitable to inspire the religious perceptions of the pre-Reformation visitor.[169]
However many most ambitious projects remained unfinished because, as Ian B. Cowan writes:

> The zeal of the founders which was strengthened by this outward demonstration of their worldly success was, however, often greater than the resources at their disposal.[170]

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166 Ibid, p. 46.

167 For the general situation of parish churches on the eve of the Reformation in Scotland see Ian B. Cowan, *The Parishes of medieval Scotland* (Scottish Record Society, Edinburgh, 1967).

168 This can be well illustrated on the centres of pilgrimages or on churches which had shrines which were object of devotion; see McNeill and Mac Queen, *Atlas of Scottish History to 1707*, p. 377.

169 For an overview on pre-Reformation churches in Scotland with special emphasis on Roslin Chapel see Steward Cruden, *Scottish Medieval Churches* (John Donald Publishers, Edinburgh, 1986); especially pp. 183 - 196.

170 Cowan, *The Medieval Church in Scotland*, p. 174.

Roslin Chapel is in this sense also an example of an unfinished project as is the collegiate church in Crichton.
But the ambitions of the lay folk to represent themselves within the church as the most public forum was undiminished even after the Reformation. This is well expressed in the practice of burial within the churches which continued also after 1582 when the General Assembly had found it necessary to condemn it.[171]
We can transfer this general need for representation also to donations of all kinds of works of art, and so we find in the major churches in Lowland Scotland the same features which improved the situation of religious education in the whole realm of the old church, like wall paintings, stained glass windows, or carved baptismal fonts.[172]
But generally the richly equipped church was more the exceptional case in Lowland Scotland.

Also the state of the education of the parish clergy seems to have been relatively poor in many areas of Scotland. Especially in connection with the rising Protestant thought the local clergy were the object of severe criticism, and even the sub-prior of St Andrews, when preaching against a man accused of heresy, had to admit that:

> the cause of heresy is the ignorance of them which have the cure of men's souls.[173]

Preaching in Scottish churches on the eve of the Reformation seems to have been quite rare and the most popular preachers must have been not the parish priests but the friars. Their popularity was so high that they were regarded with serious suspicion by the ecclesiastical authorities, so that every time that a friar deputised for the parish priest in the pulpit, report was to made to the bishop.[174]
However, the parish clergy in Scotland, as well as in the whole sphere of influence of the old church, was requested to make their flocks familiar with the basic elements of faith, at least with the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and the Commandments and, if possible, also with the deadly sins, the sacraments, the works of mercy and the Hail

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171 *Edinburgh Burgh Records*, iii, p. 106; also McKay, "Parish Life in Scotland", p. 112. One reason for the condemnation was also the limited space within the churches which made regulations necessary. But the tombs within the churches, close to the holy sacrament (in the times of the old church) or in general in the most public room, where the parishioners frequently gathered together, remained a key feature of representation of wealthy parishioners.

172 There is unfortunately only a small literature which deals with the equipment of pre-Reformation churches. See for an example of church paintings M. R. Apted and W. N. Robertson, "Late fifteenth-century church paintings from Guthrie and Foulis Easter", in: *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, xcv (1961 - 2), pp. 262 - 79. In Guthrie wallpaintings of the Day of Judgement and of the Crucifixion have survived.

173 *John Knox' History of the Reformation in Scotland*, edited by W. Croft Dickinson, ii, p. 233.

174 Patrick, *Statutes of the Scottish Church*, p. 125.

Mary.[175] And as guidelines for the catechetical work we find among the books Scottish priests possessed the same kind of manuals as Duffy or Tentler have analysed for the English case. It appears indeed that the same books which were popular in England also circulated in Scotland.[176] One example is the *Manuale parochialium sacerdotum*, a practical guide to ministry of which there were many editions after the invention of printing, and among the books which Bishop Elphinstone presented to King's College in 1505, there was next to this also a *Modus confitendi* or Guide to Confession.[177] There is a good deal of evidence of the books people and also clergymen on the eve of the Reformation owned,[178] but we have to doubt whether we can transfer this information about libraries of more prominent public figures, like bishops, entirely to the books the ordinary parish priest possessed.
However, especially on the eve of the Reformation, attempts were made to improve the educational standards of the parish clergy also in order to ameliorate the religious state of the flocks. One example of this emphasis on catechetical work in Scotland will be introduced now in more detail.

In 1552 a catechism in the vernacular was issued which was highly influenced by Archbishop Hamilton himself. It was meant to be

> The Catechisme, that is to say, ane comone and catholik instructioun of the christin people in materis of our catholik faith and religioun, quhilk na gud christin man or woman suld misknaw.[179]

This book, printed in the name of Hamilton, at the time primate of the whole realm of Scotland and the Provincial Council, was to be placed in the hands of the parsons, vicars and curates, as well for their own instruction as for that of the Christian people of whom they had the care.[180] As Mitchell writes:

> Finally, the rectors by themselves or the vicars and others serving the cure are directed on all Domenical and festival days when the people are wont and bound to attend devine service, to read and recite from the book itself, in the pulpit and vested in surplice and stole, each of the chapters and parts of this Catechism, beginning at the Preface and continuing even on the conclusion without adding, altering, suppressing or omitting anything, and this for the space of half-an-hour before the celebration of high mass.[181]

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175 See David Patrick, *Statutes of the Scottish Church*, p. 108.

176 Donaldson, *The Faith of the Scots*, p. 39.

177 Patrick, *Statutes of the Scottish Church*, p. 266, n. 2.

178 A most usefull article is John Durkan and Anthony Ross, "Early Scottish Libraries", in: *Innes Review*, ix (1958), pp. 5 - 167.

179 *The Catechism set forth by* Archbishop Hamilton, printed at St Andrews, 1551, together with the *Two-Penny Faith*, 1559 (William Paterson, Edinburgh, 1882), p. xxxiii.

180 See ibid, the introduction by Alex F. Mitchell, pp. i - ii.

181 Ibid, p. 2 - 3.

The reading of the catechism was also strongly recommended in the *Statutes of the Scottish Church*,[182] but special emphasis is laid on the education of the clergy, because:

> Ignorance the mother of al errours suld maist of al be eschewit in preistis, quhilk hes ressauit the office of teaching amang the christin pepil.[183]

Hamilton's catechism follows the classical pattern of the teaching of the old church: An introductory chapter explains the necessity of knowledge in the basic elements of faith along with quotes from the holy scripture and the teaching of the church fathers. In the following chapters the book compiles *Ane introductioun to the commandis*, *Ane introduction to the crede* along the twelf artikles, *Ane prologe to the sevin Sacramentis*, with chapters about the *Baptyme*, the *Confirmatioun*, the *sacrament of the Altar* (Eucharist), the *Pennance*, *extreme Unctioun*, *the sacrament of Ordour* and the *sacrament of Matrimonie*. Then, after extended introductions into the basic elements of faith, the Catechism compiles guidelines for the prayer and devotion of the individual. One introductory chapter to this second part deals with *the maner how christin men and wemen suld mak their prayer to God.* Then follows the Lord's Prayer, both in Latin and in English and again with an extended comment on the seven *petitiouns* of the prayer. In similar manner the Hail Mary is treated. The last two chapters are dedicated to the *praying to sanctis* and to the *praying for the saulis departit.*
It is remarkable that *Hamilton's Catechism* leaves out main religious issues which were discussed most controversially on the eve of the Reformation: There is nothing written about the pope or the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and indulgences are not mentioned either.[184] But the catechism is not intended to pave the way for reformation thought. The great bulk of the *Catechism* is what the old church had taught for generations before and in this sense the book embodies a return to traditional virtues of faith as they were idealised in the centuries before the Reformation. In Scotland on the eve of the Reformation, however, there was in some communities obviously a enormous need for religious instruction.

In the course of the second chapter we have analysed the means of religious instruction and we have tried to confront them with the realities on the level of the local parish on the eve of the Reformation. Before dealing with the Scottish situation in more detail, it was necessary to bring out firstly general features of religious education within the realm of the old church and to confront the difficulties at local level. As we have seen,

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182 Patrick, *Statutes of the Scottish Church*, p. 143 - 148.
183 *Hamilton's Catechism* p. xxxviii.
184 Donaldson, *The Faith of the Scots*, p. 52.

especially in rural Scotland the reality of poorly educated priests, humble church buildings and parishioners who were quite conservative in their conception of religion seems to overwhelm the ideals of catechetical works described in the manuals of the time.

However especially in the towns and burghs we have examples of a change within the conception of religion, expressed in richly equipped churches, in parishioners who became increasingly pious, and in new ways of religious education. One reason for this growing demand for religious instruction was connected with the ecclesiastical authorities, who tried, in times of political and social change, to increase their influence on the parishioners at a local level. But another explanation lies within the changes in individual piety, which appear to have demanded more sophisticated manifestations of religious conceptions. These changes in the individual's piety will be the main topic of the next chapter.

Chapter III

Individuality and Devotion. Patterns of Changes in the People's Beliefs.

The aim of the last main chapter of this dissertation is to trace social change in pre-Reformation society in Lowland Scotland within the context of the individual.[185] We have set the scene in the first chapter by establishing the position of the pre-Reformation church within the rural and urban communities of Lowland Scotland. In the second chapter, we investigated how the layman got his religious education. In this chapter, finally, we will deal with the relation of the local church and the layman from the layman's point of view. The key unit of this analysis will be the people's beliefs, as it is assumed that the events of the Reformation cannot only be explained within political or ideological explanation patterns. Major changes also took place within the popular conception of religion which is reflected in the individual's beliefs.
Therefore the first part of this chapter deals briefly with the methodological problems which occur when we try to specify a vague issue like that of popular beliefs. In the second part, we will establish manifestations of popular beliefs on the eve of the Reformation in Lowland Scotland. The main source material we will refer to will be the popular literature which deals with religious topics: plays, religious balladry and songs, pamphlet literature and devotional literature. In the last part of this chapter, we will investigate the changes in popular beliefs. The way in which the popularity or the frequency of performances of plays or balladry, for example, changed will be used as an indication of these changes within the people's beliefs.

I. Approaches to Popular Beliefs

Popular beliefs are part of the wider system of popular culture which was defined by Peter Burke as:

> a system of shared meanings, attitudes and values, and the symbolic forms (performances, artefacts) in which they are expressed or embodied.[186]

In this way of understanding, the common meanings, attitudes, and values concerning the matter of beliefs within a community are expressed not only in many ways of

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[185] It is understood that we only can describe a society and social changes within a system of major contexts (modern philosophy points out that there is no such thing as individuality). But the main focus of this investigation will not be political or ideological but the relation of members of the society with the church as an institution, on the basis of local communities.
[186] Peter Burke, *Europäische Volkskultur in der frühen Neuzeit*, p. 11.

everyday religiousness, and the relationship between the church and the people, but also in parts of popular festival culture and in customs which later, in the times of religious struggles, will be described as "pagan". The term "popular piety" (Volksfrömmigkeit), a relatively well-established concept in describing popular perceptions of religion within German historiography, is avoided in this chapter,[187] mainly because "piety" (a well-fitting term to describe parish life later within the reformed church) implies that the religious life of laymen in late medieval times was expressed in more or less the same customs as early modern piety. Indeed it appears that on the eve of the Reformation the border between practices which were considered to be pagan and non-pagan ones was somewhat fluid.[188]
Using the same concept for describing the religious customs of a time in which these customs and the popular perceptions of religion as a whole were subject to serious changes would be counterproductive, especially when these changes are the subject of the investigation itself. The changes within religious customs and beliefs are most obvious in the period of the eve of the Reformation moulded by social discipline,[189] changes within the conception of power and by the reform of the church.[190]

A general problem when trying to approach and to evaluate the popular beliefs for pre-Reformation Scotland is the source material. It is problematic to use written material as evidence because most of the people whose culture we are concerned with were not literate. In the same sense, to investigate a popular concept of religion we have to treat sources, like works of art or architecture, with care, because an elaborate church building or impressive wall paintings could testify to the vanity of an individual patron more than the religious needs of his parishioners. However, as we have already established, works of art within churches, if there were any, were appropriate means to educate the common man in the basic elements of faith. And due to the fact that a sponsor of a work of art had always somehow to satisfy also the taste of the people should his need for representation succeed, these works of art can also be well used to get an insight into the common perception of the biblical salvation story.

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187 See for the concept of popular piety for example Peter Blickle, *Die Reformation in Reich*, (Stuttgart, 1992), pp. 19 - 37.

188 However, we have to be well aware that the term "pagan" as well as the term "superstitious" were frequently used for purposes of propaganda by early protestants to distinguish themselves from the old church.

189 See for the concept of social discipline footnotes 58 and 59.

190 It should be mentioned that in the whole of Europe a so called Catholic Reform took place, which became manifest in the arrangements of the sessions of the Council of Trent in the middle of the sixteenth century.

In this chapter, however, we may use popular literature as a way to approach popular beliefs,[191] although the major part of the people were not literate. One reason is the fact that we have to deal with the concept of literacy carefully: popular literature, like ballads and songs, pamphlets, and the wide range of devotional literature was received not only by the people who could actually read and write. Literacy is divided up to our day into the ability to read and the ability to write. And the writing appears to be the more difficult part of literacy, as on the eve of the Reformation there were more people who could read but not write than people with both abilities. However, popular literature was not only understood by the educated, and it was literally "popular" because parts of this kind of literature were read aloud and in front of large audiences, so that the "common man" could receive it. (Certainly a literature existed in parallel which was not part of the public discussions and was reserved for the "literati", like philosophical treatises, for example. But even this literature was not only born of a certain sophisticated aura, but also reflected, like popular literature, a social reality which was both, reality of the literate and reality of the non-literate.)

A general problem of this kind of literature is that major parts of it have not survived. This is obvious in the case of large parts of the balladry which predominantly existed over generations in the oral tradition. Most of the ballads only became literate in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, when collectors like Sir Walter Scott or, in the German case, Clemens von Brentano, tried to prevent ballads from being forgotten.[192] In our case, and to avoid methodological problems, we may use the few examples of popular literature from the eve of the Reformation which have survived as written texts. In the Scottish case, we have examples of balladry, of devotional literature and of pamphlets which will be introduced in detail on the following pages.

There is another element of popular literature that can hardly be described as literature: plays, especially religious plays, were frequently not written down but were handed down by burgesses on the basis of traditional customs from performance to performance. But from burgh records and other sources we have quite a good deal of evidence about the popularity these plays, and sometimes we even know many people were acting, how much money was spent and whether the performance was successful or not. There were other non-religious plays which were performed by professional

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191 Brother Kenneth points out that most of the popular literature on the eve of the Reformation in Scotland, whether religious or not, was referring to the Bible. In this sense, it might be used as an indicator of the perceptions of religion: Brother Kenneth, "The Popular Literature of the Scottish Reformation", p.171.

192 The way in which followers of the movement of Romanticism tried to conserve the ballad tradition and features of the past in general is well described in Peter Burke, *Volkskultur der frühen Neuzeit*, pp. 17 - 35.

groups and a few of them have survived as written texts.[193] But nevertheless the culture of religious plays seems to be a good indication of the religious perceptions of the people.

On the following pages we may trace along the lines of balladry, songs, devotional literature, pamphlets and plays basic elements of the popular beliefs on the eve of the Reformaton in Scotland. We will also investigate to what extent these elements of literature changed in their popularity or in their manifestations in order to examine possible changes within the people's beliefs.

II. Manifestations of Popular Beliefs on the Eve of the Reformation in Scotland

Late medieval Scotland, like the whole of Europe, was a place where a widespread media-revolution took place. The invention of the printing press made books available for more people.[194] And in parallel to this also the education system in Lowland Scotland changed fundamentally so that a rapidly increasing number of people became literate. Schools were founded in towns and burghs, and the foundation of three Scottish Universities in the fifteenth century[195] gave the opportunity to more people to be educated at home. In former times there prevailed a kind of "education tourism" to the European university centres on the continent like, for example, Paris. In these times obviously only a few people had the means to enjoy an academic education.
On the eve of the Reformation a wide range of literature circulated predominantly in towns and burghs. This literature can be regarded as popular because it seems to have reached the major part of the people in this milieu. In Scotland there were books which appeared in the Scottish vernacular, but many books also came from England or from the continent to Scotland. Tyndale's translation of the New Testament in English, for example, was published in print in 1526,[196] and it came to Scotland only a few months later, although it was prohibited by the authorities: In 1527 the English ambassador at Antwerp informed Cardinal Wolsey that:

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193 In Scotland we have as an example from pre-Reformation times Sir David Lindsay's *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estatis*, in: *The Works of Sir David Lindsay of the Mount, 1490 - 1555*, edited by Douglas Hamer (Scottish Text Society, London, 1931), vol. ii.

194 Books widely distributed, now in printed form, were also closely connected with the matter of religious education of the people, like *Hamilton's Catechism* or the *Manuale parochialium sacerdotum.*

195 St Andrews, 1411; Glasgow, 1451; Aberdeen, 1494.

196 Donaldson, *The Faith of the Scots*, p. 62.

> ... there were divers merchants of Scotland that brought many of such like books [Tyndale's *New Testament*] and took them to Scotland, a part to Edinburgh, and most of them to the town of St Andrews.[197]

But not only did the circulation of the translation of the Bible worry the "custodians of the faith": On the one hand there were several editions of the Bible - the translations of which were from the authorities' point of view tendentious by all means - which also carried glosses and prefaces of unothodox character. But on the other hand a huge variety of different kinds of texts which were dealing with religious matters was available in print which might well be suitable as sources to investigate popular beliefs of the time. We will analyse some notable examples of ballads and songs and of devotional and catechetical literature which have survived. And we will also deal with plays although, as we have already established, they only partly became literature.

On the eve of the Reformation the authorities were constantly preoccupied with literature which was considered to be "heretical" and with unlicensed publications. Already in 1525, the Scottish Parliament passed an act which took legal proceedings especially against the importations of Luther's works, and ten years later, it was found necessary to renew the act.[198] In 1541 the Parliament issued nine acts against "heretical" movements including their expression in literature,[199] and in 1552, the Parliament acted especially against:

> ... bukis concerning the faith, ballatis, sangis, blasphemationis [and] rymes als weill of kirkmen as temporal and others.[200]

This obviously experienced necessity to take legal action against popular literature about religious matters suggests, that this kind of literature was becoming popular on the eve of the Reformation and that for the authorities the new ways of religious perceptions bacame somewhat menacing. On the following pages we will investigate more in detail the character of this literature.

The ballad and song culture was flourishing already in fifteenth-century Scotland, long before the Reformation. There were song schools throughout the country and until the reign of James VI, whose court was a place of greatest cultural patronage, musicians,

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197 Christopher Anderson, *The Annals of the English Bible*, 2 vols. (William Pickering, London 1845), ii, p. 409.

198 *APS*, ii, pp. 295, c.4. For the general influence of Luther and his works on the Scottish Reformation see J. H. Baxter, "Luthers Einfluß in Schottland im 16. Jahrhundert", in: *Luther Jahrbuch* 1958, pp. 99 - 109; W. S. Reid, "Lutheranism in the Scottish Reformation", in: *Westminster Theological Journal*, vii (1944 - 45), pp. 91 - 111.

199 Donaldson, *The Faith of the Scots*, p. 62.

200 *APS*, iii, p. 488 - 9.

singers and pipers were to be found throughout the centres of cultural life in Scotland, predominantly in the Lowlands. Some of the musicians were, of course, professionals who played in front of exclusive audiences, for example at the court of a noble family. But there were others who could be well described as folk musicians,[201] because they sang their songs in public places and they sang ballads which well reflected the people's opinions and beliefs. It was a well-established practice in Lowland Scotland of the sixteenth century to produce ballads both to reflect and mould public opinion.[202] In this sense, especially historical ballads, which were about well-known historical characters, seem to have evoked a wide interest, because these figures were deeply interconnected with the people's everyday life, or, as Ian B. Cowan writes:

> ... the strength of the kin-ties, the appeal to the blood and the name, the bonds of vassalage and tenancy, all combined in Highlands and Lowlands alike to ensure that the interests of a Gordon or Morray or a Campbell were identified with the interests of those who depended upon them.[203]

At this stage, the ballad tradition must be seen as predominantly orally transmitted, but shortly after the Reformation, in 1583, the Privy Council proclaimed against the unlicensed printing of books, ballads, songs, rhymes or tragedies.[204]
The first example of collected and printed balladry we have are the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis* by John Wedderburn.. For his compilation, as Calderwood writes:

> He translated manie of Luther's dytements into Scottish meeter, and the Psalmes of David. He turned manie bawdie songs and rymes in godlie rymes.[205]

In the second half of the sixteenth century the book passed through several editions and apparently it was extremely popular until the seventeenth century.[206]
The *Gude and Godlie Ballatis* are in many way exceptional, also because of their explicitly religious connotations. Wedderburn obviously changed very popular secular songs into pious ballads. The melody was normally maintained, as the following example shows:

> Johne, cum kis me now,
> Johne, cum kis me now,
> Johne, cum kis me by and by,
> And mak no moir adow.

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201 This point has been made by Edward J. Cowan, *The People's Past*, (Polygon, Edinburgh, 1980), p. 32.
202 Ibid, p. 42.
203 Ibid, p. 47.
204 *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, 14 vols. (Edinburgh, 1877 - 98), iii, p. 587.
205 David Calderwood, *The History of the Kirk of Scotland*, edited by Thomas Thomson, 8 vols. (Wodrow Society, Edinburgh, 1842 - 49), i, p. 143.
206 *The Gude and Godlie Ballatis*,p. xxxix.

The secular dance character of this explicit love-song is almost audible. And in Wedderburn's version, which keeps the first stanza, it continues quite piously and John, the lover, changes into John, the Baptist:

> The Lord, thy God, I am,
> That Johne (sic!) dois thé call,
> Johne representit man
> Be grace celestial.[207]

On the one hand, this collection of pious ballads underlines our remarks about religious education in the previous chapters. The pious songs which kept the melody were for the people easy to remember and so could become very popular. It is also not only by accident that these songs were edited together with a *Catechisme put in meter* with *Spiritual Sangis* amongst them *Ane Confession of sin, with ane praye* and with *Certaine Ballatis of the Scripture*, which could help to illustrate the biblical salvation story. In this sense the collection would fit well into the catechetical programme which we established on the previous pages. Only those songs which explicitly represent sentiments against the established church cast a cloud over this picture of educational enthusiasm, like the following anti-papal song:

> The Paip, that Pagane full of pryde,
> He hes vs blindit lang,
> For quhair the blind the blind dois gyde,
> Na wounder baith ga wrang;
> Lyke Prince and King, he led the Regne,
> Of all Iniquitie:
> Hay trix, tyme go trix, vnder the grene [wod tré].[208]

On the other hand the example of the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis* shows how lively the ballad tradition must have been in Scotland and that the ballads and songs also expressed contemporary religious perceptions. But the fact that the ballads became available in print also marks a turning point within the ballad tradition. Although we can assume that the oral tradition of the Scottish balladry carried on at the same time, the advent of the ballad as a literary form became also an even more suitable means for propaganda purposes and for the moulding of popular opinions and beliefs.

Another type of popular literature which is also frequently seen as deeply connected with the propaganda of the times of religious struggles is the wide range of pamphlet literature. For the Scottish case some notable examples have survived in the

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207 Ibid, p. 158.
208 Ibid, p. 204.

compilation *Satirical Poems of the Time of the Reformation.*[209] The manner in which pamphlets were distributed, is described by Cranstoun:

> printed in Black Letter on the one side of single leaves of paper and hawked out about the country by chapmen and pedlars.[210]

This illustrates how much the media revolution, resulting from the invention of the printing press, influenced and changed the modes of communication and the ways in which public opinion was formed within society. The most famous example of pre-Reformation pamphlets, *The Beggars' Summons* from 1559, was posted up on the doors of the friaries and churches.[211] And because of the fact that the friars were most integrated into society, in the sense that the doors of the friaries were like a kind of public place within a community, the spread of this document in print manifests a new kind of public in which there was more possibility for common perceptions encouraged by the print as a new mass media.

Most of the pamphlet literature which has survived from the eve of the Reformation was born of the fact that:

> ... the fierce struggle between Catholicism and Protestantism, the avarice and tyranny of the nobles, the unsettled and lawless condition of the Commons, the corruption and immorality that everywhere prevailed, furnished endless themes for the balladist and satirist.[212]

In this sense even pamphlets which were written explicitly as propaganda pieces or as weapons to mould public opinion in the struggle between two religious or political parties, reflect to some extent the religious perceptions of the common man on the eve of the Reformation. It is an intrinsic feature of all propaganda[213] that, to be effective, it must have certain resonances with the common perceptions which are the object of the propaganda. Every kind of propaganda needs to be based to some extent on public opinion.[214]

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209 *Satirical Poems of the Time of the Reformation*, edited by James Cranstoun, 2 vols. (The Scottish Text Society, London and Edinburgh, 1891).

210 Ibid, p. x.

211 The great bulk of the *Satirical Poems* circulated after 1560 and the example from pre-Reformation times are few. As the *Beggars' Summons* shows even before Reformation pamphlets circulated. The text is in *John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland*, ii, pp. 256 - 7.

212 *Satirical Poems of the Time of the Reformation*, p. ix.

213 Propaganda can most elementary be defined as the use of symbols with the goal to support or to disapprove a project in public, see Wilhelm Bernsdorf (ed.), *Wörterbuch der Soziologie* (Stuttgart, 1969), p. 851.

214 The propaganda of the twentieth century is, of course, also shaped by technical perfection in the way of using the modern means of mass communication.

In the pamphlet literature of the time of the Reformation we find a wide range of criticism of the church and concepts of religion which must have occupied the common man, the uneducated parishioner of the time.
Many of the pamphlets in the *Satirical Poems* show unconcealed anticlericalism which must have been regarded with much suspicion by the authorities, as the following verses from a poem entitled *The Bischoppis lyfe and testament* demonstrate:

> Without respect to God or feir of faith,
> Plumand but pietie I did oppress the pure;
> Be fenzeit causis I confiscat graith;
> Men criminal to accuse I tuke na cure;
> Quhen it was gottin I gaif it to my hure.[215]

These pamphlets, full of anticlerical polemic, were without a doubt a suitable weapon to incite the people against the clergy. On the other hand, they brought into sharper focus the whole dissatisfaction of the people not only concerning actual politics or individual clergymen but also with the church as an institution in general and with the whole system of a clergy which was supposed to care for the people and their religious needs.
To approach these religious needs of the individual we will deal with their manifestations in examples of devotional literature on the following pages.

Devotional literature became extremely popular on the eve of the Reformation not only in Lowland Scotland but also in the whole of Europe. As we have already mentioned, even the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis* contained in the first section of the book some pieces which can be classified as devotional. The catechism in the Scottish vernacular on the first pages mainly had the purpose of teaching the people the basic prayers. But the following *spirituall sangis* are pieces which could have well guided and inspired the prayer of the individual in devotion.[216] Some *sangis*, like "*of our coruiptit nature, and the onlie remeid thairof*"[217], or "*ane sang of the Croce and the frute thairof*"[218] can be understood as a kind of guideline to individual devotion, as a reminder of the biblical salvation story to inspire the prayers of the faithful.
The devotional pieces in the *Ballatis* are not exceptional. The book *Devotional Pieces in Verse and Prose* compiles a wide selection of different examples of this kind of

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215 *Satirical Poems of the Time of the Reformation*, p. 196.
216 The aim to inspire the prayer of the individual is, in my opinion, the main difference between catechetical and devotional literature. Catechetical literature wanted to teach in basic and standardised elements of the faith. The guidance to individual prayers was also to some extent standardised but its aim was to lead to an approach of the individual to the God of salvation.
217 *The Gude and Godlie Ballatis*, pp. 24 - 5.
218 Ibid, pp. 28 - 32.

literature.[219] Not all of the pieces were original Scottish contributions[220], but they all circulated in Scotland. However, there are some pieces of devotional literature written by illustrious Scottish figures, like Dunbar who wrote a *tabill of confessioun*, obviously composed to stimulate and guide self-examination.[221]

On the one hand, the devotional literature appears to be inspired by the basic elements of faith and by the prayers, the Lord's Prayer, or the Creed for example, altogether features which must have been taught for generations. But on the other hand, there is a new element in this literature which strongly emphasises the passion of Christ and the consequences which grow out of it for mankind. Some pieces display an almost cult-like adoration of the instruments of the passion,[222] as in the *Book of Hours of Mary of Guise*, for example, a *Devotion to the Passion* and an illustration of the Five Wounds.[223] But this general devotion to the passion is not only manifest in literature: many church altars dedicated to the Holy Blood were founded and in Aberdeen and Edinburgh there were confraternities of the Holy Blood.[224]

Many of the pieces of devotional literature written in the vernacular aimed to be close to the mind and beliefs of the "common man". There was plenty of material which was well suitable to concentrate men's and women's thoughts on the passion and surrounding features of the biblical story, and in this sense, as Macfarlane writes:

> ... the increasing emphasis on Christ's suffering humanity in many ways reflected [...] an awareness of, if not a genuine sorrow for, sin.[225]

The pieces of devotional literature seem to follow the catechetical ambitions of the time. The biblical salvation story was depicted not only in different literary genres (like, for example, in verse and prose). The editions of the time also were illustrated with woodcuts which supported the catechetical aims.[226] This underlines the function of these devotional pieces for the non-literate who not only heard them when they were read aloud but who could also picture the salvation story through the illustrations. We

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219 *Devotional Pieces in Verse and Prose*, from MS. Arundel 285 and MS. Harleian 6919, edited by J. A. W. Bennet (The Scottish Text Society, Edinburgh and London, 1955).

220 Also Wedderburn translated some of Luther's songs into the Scottish vernacular.

221 Donaldson, *The Faith of the Scots*, p. 54; the *tabill of confessioun* is in *Devotional Pieces in Verse and Prose*, pp. 1 - 6.

222 See for example *Ane dewoit exercicioun in the honour of the croun of thorne*, in: *Devotional Pieces in Verse and Prose*, pp. 182 - 193.

223 Mark Dilworth, "The Book of Hours of Mary of Guise", in: *The Innes Review*, 19 (1968), pp. 77 - 80.

224 Donaldson, *The Faith of the Scots*, p. 55.

225 Quoted in Donaldson, *The Faith of the Scots*, p. 55.

226 A list of the illustrations in the original editions of the *Devotional Pieces in Verse and Prose* is in *Devotional Pieces in Verse and Prose*, pp. xxxiii - xxxv.

do not know to what extent the devotional literature led to a more individualised relation of the common man to a God of salvation. But we can assume that this new manifestation of religiousness also was caused by increased religious needs of the people.

Another manifestation of popular beliefs are the plays. On the eve of the Reformation in Scotland, as in the whole of Europe, folk plays were extremely popular. In the towns and burghs, especially in Lowland Scotland, performances of plays of the Robin Hood type or plays of pagan origin were an important event for the communities on feast days. The old church from time to time tried to prohibit these secular plays, for example through ecclesiastical enactments which forbade priests to follow the performance of minstrels ("histories") or through the ban of monks to frequent "spectacula".[227]

But already in medieval times there was growing a wide range of religious plays. In the beginning predominantly miracle plays in which biblical stories or stories of saints were performed.[228] Later, until the eve of the Reformation, plays evolved which depicted the contemporaneous perception of the biblical salvation story with the aim to perform the biblical stories most realistically. Examples for this kind of plays are the extremely popular *Corpus Christi Play* or the *Good Friday Play.*

The performances of these plays, which were highlights in the lives of the communities, were deeply influenced by the everyday life of the people. The characters of the plays were usually shown in contemporary dress and many biblical scenes were set not in an artificial surrounding with a stage set but in surroundings familiar to the people, for example in front of a public building.[229]

Despite the fact that all forms of dramatic activity was held by the Church to be suspicious, tainted with the smell of heresy, and that the authorities in all times attempted to suppress all kinds of plays, it appears that the religious drama in Scotland started within the churches and with clerical actors.[230] This indicates the attempts made by the clergy to make biblical stories more accessible to a largely illiterate community. Activity in the church in this sense was also always activity for the people who went to church, and in this sense the parish clergy could not ignore the needs of their parishioners and the demand for illustration of the biblical stories.

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[227] Anna Jean Mill, *Medieval Plays in Scotland*, p. 86.

[228] Especially in the early times of the religious play in the form of miracle plays it is not easy to distinguish with modern categories secular from religious theatre. The term pagan is best avoided.

[229] Donaldson, *The Faith of the Scots*, p. 42.

[230] Ibid, pp. 42 - 45. Donaldson describes very plausible the evolution of the religious play in Scotland.

Until the eve of the Reformation the religious drama which, as we have said, started within the churches and became more and more secularised in the hands of gilds or confraternities. This again is of course connected with the increasing influence of these laymen on the local church, through donations or benefices, for example.[231] In consequence the religious play on local feast days became even more connected with the social life of the community because many members of the community themselves played an active rôle in the performance. As Donaldson writes:

> Shipwrights constructed the ark, goldsmiths undertook the adoration of the Magi, vitners the marriage of Cana, and bakers the Last Supper.[232]

And the rest of the community, the common people of a town or a burgh, were not only spectators but played the people and witnesses of the biblical story which was played.[233] In this sense the religious drama was not just a social event or a diversion from everyday life but rather a corporate re-play and individual experience of the biblical salvation story. In consequence the performances both reflected and represented also the contemporaneous perceptions of the Bible and the experiences of the salvation story which the common man had.

Unfortunately no "script" of these plays, religious or not, has survived.[234] But the means which were provided by the local government, the gilds, or the confraternities give us some idea about the elaborate performance of the plays.[235] Some reports from pre-Reformation times also indicate how impressive the performances must have been.[236] Also the fanaticism of the reformers when trying to suppress dramatic activity after the reform of the Church indicates how vibrant this tradition must have been.[237]

The development of the ballad tradition, the pamphlets as a means of propaganda, of the devotional literature and the development of the play-tradition indicate severe

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231 We analysed this increased influence on previous pages, compare p. 30 - 1.

232 Donaldson, *The Faith of the Scots*, p. 44.

233 Some of these folk plays have survived until our day, which help to create the atmosphere of the performance of the pre-Reformation religious drama. One example are the passion plays (Passionsspiele) of Oberammergau in Bavaria. Once a year the whole community of the village is involved in the performance of the story of the passion of Christ.

234 The only exception is David Lindsay's *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estatis*, in: *The Works of Sir David Lindsay of the Mount, 1490 - 1555*, edited by Douglas Hamer (Scottish Text Society, London, 1931), vol. ii. This play is for many reasons exceptional and marks, like the printing of the ballads, a turning point in the Scottish tradition of drama. We will refer to it on the following pages.

235 The best compilation of source material on dramatic activity in Scotland on the eve of the Reformation is still Anna Jean Mill, *Medieval Plays in Scotland.*

236 John Knox himself described his experiences when visiting a performance in Stirling.

237 For the topic of suppression of dramatic activity see Mill, *Medieval Plays*, pp. 87 - 95.

changes within the popular beliefs. These changes baseed on popular literature are the topic on the following pages.

III. Changes in Popular Beliefs in Lowland Scotland

In some aspects there was a huge continuity in the art forms which reflected the people's beliefs.[238] The pamphlet literature, of course, was a new literary genre which evolved with the invention of the print as a mass media. But the plays, the balladry, and the devotional literature reflected a tradition which continued from the medieval times. However, it is necessary to analyse the changes in this art form in more detail, because these changes in the technical performance, in the subjects of a performance, and in the popularity of an art form, will lead to a better understanding of the changes within the people's beliefs which these art forms reflect.

As we have already established on previous pages, already before the Reformation there was a long tradition of balladry in Scotland. Although the secular ballad, which was predominant transmitted orally, continued after the Reformation, the compilation of the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis* marked a turning point which also indicates changes within popular beliefs. The *Gude and Godlie Ballatis* represent the attempts to change ballads and folksongs into pieces of literature. Well-known secular folksongs were adapted for religious purposes and changed into pious songs.[239]

On the one hand this marks a change within the audience of the ballads which became increasingly literate. But on the other hand the whole function of a ballad is changed when it becomes a literary genre. A ballad which was transmitted within the oral tradition was a non-static and changeable song. Its character and contents could change slightly, depending on the situation and circumstances in which it is sung and on the individual singer.[240] Another singer who heard the song and sang it in front of a new audience could add new lines or change names of the characters to make a song popular also for a different audience. A ballad which became a piece of literature, like in the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis*, got a fixed version, which was open only to reproduction.

Although, as we have mentioned, the oral tradition of Scottish balladry continued after the Reformation and the fact that explicitly religious songs became literate on the eve of

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238 It is understood that also the art forms within the churches, like wall paintings, stained glass windows, sculptures, etc., also reflected the people's beliefs and their changes. But to avoid methodological problems, we refer only to the art forms which can be traced as written sources.

239 One example, *Johne cum kis me now*, is quoted on page 60.

240 This is also the reason why all collectors of ballads, from romantic times until our day either compromise by creating a standardised written version out of the different oral ones or explicitly mention that there are different versions of a song. A high number of different versions of a song which are handed down is normally seen as an indicator for a high popularity.

the Reformation marked a turning point within the popular conception of religion. The new religious songs were very popular[241] to sing for everybody because their tunes were mostly well-known old folk songs. They were created to be sung by the parish community at Sunday mass.[242] And the fact that songs were composed to be sung by the parish community indicates a change in the people's beliefs. As we have seen in a previous chapter there was not a great deal of congregational singing before the Reformation.[243] Now pious songs were thought to be sung by a congregation and this is an expression of the changes of the people's beliefs in two senses.

Firstly the songs manifest a new concept of corporate religious life. The parish community could have a corporate experience of religion and would consider the parishioners not just as spectators but as active participants of religious life. The singing of religious songs also created a new corporate feeling of the congregation as a salvation community. For this experience a more standardised expression of piety was necessary which was accessible to everyone.[244]

Secondly the fact that pious ballads could be sung together by the parish congregation also marks a change within the conception of religion of the individual. Obviously, as the popularity of the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis* indicates, the individual believer also wanted to participate actively in the religious action. Although the new piety was somehow standardised, the individual obviously started to believe in an individual access to salvation which also became possible through pious acting.

This becomes even clearer when we analyse the religious change which becomes obvious through the analysis of devotional literature. The *Devotional Pieces in Verse and Prose* and the pieces which can be classified as devotional in the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis* represent a new kind of literature for the common man. The medieval manuals, for example the *Manuale Sacerdotium* already had some passages about prayers for the layfolk. But these passages were addressed to the parsons who should teach their flocks the basic prayers. And even in *Hamilton's Catechism* of 1552, which obviously was addressed to a wider audience and was to be read aloud from time to time to the Sunday mass congregation, most of the time deals with the basic prayers. Only at the very end of the book do we find some passages about the praying to the saints. But

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241 As we have mentioned, the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis* went through several editions and were widely distributed, see footnote 206.

242 Of course we do not know to what degree these songs were sung by a parish congregation, for example. But the high popularity of the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis* indicates that the songs actually were sung.

243 See footnote 162.

244 Not only religious songs represent this standardised expression of faith but also the devotional literature which will be treated on the following pages.

these bits follow more the scholastic tradition of teaching and try to substantiate the necessity of prayers to the saints:

> Now sen God almychty had Abimalech require Abraham to praye for him, quhy suld nocht we likwais desire gud men and wemen to pray to God for us?[245]

There is no such thing as a guidance to or an inspiration to the individual prayer in this catechetical literature, only the justification as to why it is necessary to say the basic prayers which have been taught for generations.

Devotional literature and its purposes are new in two ways: *Firstly* this kind of literature was conceptialised explicitly for the layfolk. For people who could read and for people who could hear the pieces in large audiences, the access to the pieces was a direct one. The pieces of devotional literature made it possible that the common man could concern himself with the salvation story not as a disciple who learnt from his priest the basic elements of the faith but more individually.

Secondly the pieces of catechetical literature were written down. Although the pieces, as a literary genre, were somehow standardised, the individual could refer the salvation story directly to himself, as the following example, a stanza of the *Passioun of Christ*, shows:

> Compatience persis, reuth & marcy stoundis
> In myddis my hert, and thirlis throw ye vanis.
> Thy deid, Iesu, ye petuous cruell woundis,
> Thy grym passion, gret tormentis, grevous panis,
> Ingrauit sadlie in my spreit remanis.
> Se[n] me of noucht you hes boucht with yi blude,
> My ene for doloure wofull teris ranis
> Quhen that I se the nalit on ye rude.[246]

These new manifestations of piety which are totallly different from medieval piety cannot be thought only as having evolved fom the authors of this new literary genre. There must have been also a new concept of religion among the people who actually heard or read this literature. The new piety which becomes manifest in the pieces of devotional literature is ambiguous in two senses: on the one hand the new piety on the eve of the Reformation was somehow standardised because it was mediated through literature.[247] The approach to salvation in this sense worked in a corporate way because the religious life was somehow standardised and in a new way institutionalised through corporate songs, like in the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis*, or

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[245] *Archbishop Hamilton's Catechism*, fol. clxxxxvi.

[246] *Devotional Pieces in Verse and Prose*, p. 255.

[247] Literature is always a means to standardise opinions and positions. This function in our day is also exercised by the newspapers, for example.

through pieces of devotional literature which also partly were experienced corporately in the mass congregation.
On the other hand the direct approach to salvation became in this conception of religion also possible for the common man through individual prayer. In theory no further mediation through priests was necessary, the relation of the individual to the God of salvation was a direct one. In this sense the individual could experience salvation individually, as the example of the *Passioun of Christ* shows.

The appearance of pamphlets as a literary genre was, of course, deeply connected with the invention of printing. In this sense we cannot analyse the changes of the pamphlets as a genre to investigate the changes of popular beliefs, because the pamphlets since the times of their appearance and from the beginning were a mass media which carried popular conceptions either explicitly religious or not. But we have to analyse in this context the structure of society which made the pamphlets as a mass media possible and we have to analyse the concepts of religion which made it possible that pamphlets could carry religious contents.[248]
The major part of the pamphlets of the eve of the Reformation with explicitly religious connotations reflected an unconcealed anticlericalism, as the example we introduced on previous pages shows.[249] This anticlericalism could only be transported by the pamphlet literature and could so become increasingly popular. It was an anticlericalism which evolved on the basis of the experiences of the common man.[250] It was a criticism of a predominantly uneducated clergy which caused a lack of spiritual support of the people. The situation could only have been experienced in this way because the people had different religious needs than in former times. And the representatives of the old church obviously had difficulties to satisfy the people's religious needs.
A new piety established itself which was totally different from the system of medieval beliefs.[251] This new piety on the eve of the Reformation became manifest not only in the pamphlets which criticised the unsufficient spiritual support, but also in the devotional literature which indicates an individual approach to salvation. Many

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[248] Every invention which makes its way is only possible because of the environment in which it is invented. Also the contents of pamphlets which were produced with the invented printing press fit logically into the society in which the material was distributed. See for this discussion Thomas S. Kuhn, *Die Struktur wissenschaftlicher Revolutionen* (Suhrkamp, Frankfurt/Main, 1993), especially the introduction.
[249] See p. 62.
[250] This anticlericalism in Scotland becomes manifest mainly in the towns and burghs, because there the ordinary people lived together in a way that they could act more politically than was the case in most parts of Scottish rural society. This happend despite the fact that the educational standards of the clergy in urban areas was better than in the rural ones, compare pp. 42 - 5.
[251] This process, of course, took place subsequently and at first within the rural communities of Lowland-Scotland.

parishioners obviously experienced individual salvation not more as predominantly defined by the mediation of a priest, but as a salvation which was individually and accessible without any mediation. Therefore the manifestations of religious life also changed fundamentally, as the example of devotional literature shows. These changes also become manifest when analysing the situation of the religious drama in the time of the Reformation.

Not long after the Reformation in Scotland the drama in the old form as a miracle or folk play became less popular, or, as Mill puts it:

> the drama as a popular institution and a force in the national life was dead.[252]

The activities of the reformers in suppressing the drama especially as a means to illustrate the biblical stories for the common man were until the beginning of the seventeenth century quite successful. Even the literary evidence for the plays (apart from the notes in local records which are compiled in Mill's book) was extinguished in the times of religious struggles. In consequence, Sir David Lindsay's play *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estatis* has survived as the only complete text of a medieval play in Scotland.[253] For the surviving of the *Satyre*, according to Mill there are several plausible reasons. *Firstly* this play, full of unrestrained attacks on the corruption of the clergy, was in pre-Reformation times obviously extremely useful for the cause of the reformers. In this sense Lindsay's works were subsequently canonised in the eyes of the protestant leaders. A second reason for the preservation of the *Satyre* while other texts perished is also Lindsay's outstanding position as a court poet at the court of James V in Edinburgh which guaranteed the high standing of his works.
But religious drama in Scotland was on its decline, and if the drama continued in Scotland after the Reformation, so it did only in the form of secular drama and mainly performed by English acting groups which were travelling through the country. Plays as a means to illustrate the Bible and to make biblical stories accessible to the people were seen as unsuitable in Reformation doctrine, and it appears that this doctrine became social practice[254] in total soon after 1600.

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252 Mill, *Medieval Plays*, p. 112.

253 Ibid, p. 101. It is worth discussion whether the term "medieval play" is fitting for Lindsay's *Satyre*. The time of origin (1540) and the closeness to the events of the Reformation and its topics remove it from the medieval tradition of drama.

254 I. e. performances of religious drama are not documented after 1600; see Mill, *Medieval Plays*. The process of ideas and doctrines becoming *social practice* is, in a more complex way referring to the phenomenon of protestant ethics, also discussed by Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handels*, 2 vols (Frankfurt am Main, 1981), vol. 1, pp. 299 - 321, especially p. 321: "Solange wir Ideen für sich betrachten, bilden sie *kulturelle Wertsphären*; sobald sie sich mit Interessen verbinden, bilden sie *Lebensordnungen*, die den Besitz von Gütern legitim regeln."

But the reason for this was not only the eagerness of the reformers. The decline of the religious drama on the eve of the Reformation in Scotland must be thought as also caused by the "social reality"[255] of pre-Reformation society in Lowland Scotland. Obviously also the understanding of the Bible changed fundamentally, so that a corporate replay of the biblical salvation story was no longer needed by the people. The common man no longer performed the examination of the biblical stories as the spectator of a *Corpus Christi Play*, for example, or as a mere audience in the Sunday mass. The religiousness of the common man became more individualized, through the inspiration of devotional literature, for example. And the corporate religious life was increasingly based on the participation of the individual, by singing religious songs in the mass, for example.

This changed popular conception of religion did not take place from one day to the next. As the source material suggests, it started in Scotland before the Reformation. This becomes evident not only in the popular literature which explicitly deals with religious topics, but also in the wide range of catechetical material which is in Scotland increasingly found already before the Reformation.[256] Obviously the changes within the people's belief cannot be explained only with the Reformation, but the Reformation appears to be a movement which changed the institutions of Scottish society on the one hand but which reflected a society which had already changed before. The old church was not able to satisfy a changed conception of religion by the people, but the decline of the old beliefs was not caused by the reformers. As Keith Thomas writes:

> The decline of old Catholic beliefs was not the result of persecution; it reflected a change in the popular conception of religion.[257]

The changes of this popular conception of religion can be explained by most complex changes in the social structure of Scottish society which caused a different social reality. Explanations for these changing patterns in society have been explored in the previous chapters.

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255 See footnote 7.

256 See the second chapter about religious instruction.

257 Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Hamondsworth, London, 1971), p. 87.

Conclusion

The Reformation in Scotland cannot be understood just by analysing political or cultural factors alone. When analysing the causes of a major event in history we have also to draw attention to the society which stipulates the political realities. Events, like political changes, inventions, amongst others, have to be analysed in the context of patterns of social changes. There is no change without a society stipulating it, and, to put it in a nutshell, a political change of a social reality can be interpreted as a reflection of changes which take place within the society. From this point of view we also tried to understand the events of the Reformation in Scotland, and our task was to analyse the changes which shaped the society in pre-Reformation Scotland.

In this dissertation we have attempted to describe patterns of social and religious changes within pre-Reformation society in Scotland which have been very influential for the events of the Reformation. Being aware that we could not claim to analyse and explain the phenomenon of the Reformation sufficiently we chose one focus to demonstrate the changes within pre-Reformation society. The emphasis on the changes within the religiousness of the people was plausible for two reasons.

Firstly, the question of religion was too obvious deeply connected with the events of the Reformation. The Reformation all over Europe was shaped by the development from a religion to a confessional church, that means a stronger involvement of the individual in religious matters, manifested also in a changed piety. The question of religion was also a key feature within the process of social disciplining which shaped the time of the Reformation in many ways.[258]

Secondly, the focus on the religious changes was a suitable way to analyse the changes within pre-Reformation society so to speak "from below". The matter of religion was deeply connected with the everyday life of the "common man".[259] In this sense by analysing the popular conceptions of religion and their expressions in everyday life we were able to investigate social changes "from the roots".

Before focusing on changing patterns within the religiousness of the people we had to set the scene by describing the standing of the church within pre-Reformation society. We had to describe the importance of the church for the everyday life of the people.

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[258] For the concept of the confessional church linked together with the process of social disciplining see Wolfgang Reinhard, "Konfession und Konfessionalisierung in Europa", in: same (ed.), *Bekenntnis und Geschichte. Die Confessio Augustana im Historischen Zusammenhang* (München, 1981), pp. 165 - 187; for the German context compare also Heinrich Richard Schmidt, *Konfessionalisierung im Sechzehnten Jahrhundert* (Oldenbourg, München, 1992).

[259] For the concept of the "common man" which has, like other conceptions, a strong constructional character, see our methodological comments in the introduction, p. 6.

As we have seen there was not a clear distinction within the communities between a secular and a religious part of life. This was also expressed by the functions the church building served on the local level: In most cases, when there was no castle nor tollbooth the church as a building dominated the scene. And in most cases it was also the only building open to the public. Following the logic that there was no distinction between the religious and the secular sector, the church building also served several secular purposes. This became most evident from the example of the bells which, on the one hand, called for the prayers of the canonical hours but, on the other hand, structured in this way the day of the people and served as a time keeper in their everyday lives. And, in the case of a poorly equipped rural parish church which had no bells, the church building could also be used for the holding of courts of both secular and canon law and also for other legal transactions. The Sunday mass in the church was also a place for public announcements addressed to the parish community.
On the local level the church played a very influential rôle in terms of cohesion for the communities in both rural and urban areas. This was expressed in the several purposes the building served and in the fact that the parish was a key unit of administration. There was not a single spot in Scotland on the eve of the Reformation which did not form part of a parish and there was not a single Christian person who had not his parish priest. The parish priest provided sacraments from birth to death for the people and the sacraments again were an essential good for the achievement of the salvation of the individual.[260]
The unity of religious and secular life was also well expressed in the burgh in the example of the gilds, which also had both secular and religious functions in the community. On the one hand the gilds organised a craft by setting regulations and standards, and on the other, the gilds were also a corporation of Christian laymen which organised religious life. Altars in parish churches of burghs or other donations made by the gilds became increasingly popular on the eve of the Reformation. This also expressed the need for representation of these groups and indicated that representation always had to work in a surrounding which was inseparably connected with religious matters.
In this sense and following a German conception of the analysis of pre-Reformation society, we could assume that the communities of pre-Reformation Scotland tended to see themselves as a small *Corpus Christianum*, that is a salvation community whose

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260 Of course, there were remote areas in Scotland where the basic supply with sacraments, from the ecclesiastical point of view, was not sufficient. There were regions, on the Islands for example where the children were sometimes not baptised simply because the next priest lived too far away. But in the Lowlands, which are the object to our investigation, is was normally the case that the sacraments actually structured the individual's life from birth to death.

welfare on earth in the self-perception was deeply connected with a corporately lived religious involvement.[261] Works of piety, like worship, prayers to the saints, and regular receiving of the sacraments could in this perception have a positive influence on the welfare of the individual and on his life after the death. But also a corporately lived piety was meant to influence positively the destiny of a community which experienced basic factors of everyday life together.
The degree of cohesion which was also provided by the functions the Church fulfilled for the communities appears to be more intensive on the urban level. This was because there the communities were generally closer together than in remote rural areas of Lowland Scotland. But nevertheless even on the rural level the Church fulfilled the same basic functions for the community and even there the Church was a key element in the community's life in which religious and secular aspects were inseparably linked together.

The deep connections between secular and religious life became manifest also in the degree to which ecclesiastical and secular structures were interwoven. The most obvious examples of this connection were the different functions the parish clergy served. In many communities of Lowland Scotland the clergymen were the people with the highest degree of education. The educational standards of the parish priests were relatively high, especially in the burghs; that means the priest normally could read and write in Latin. And in addition to that, priests had a certain experience in administration and legal transactions in connection with the canon law. The clergymen were also fully integrated into pre-Reformation society because they were bound into the same economic system. Chaplains and parsons had close contact with the people because they provided the sacraments for the people and they read masses at the altars of the gilds and fraternities or for wealthy individuals.
In consequence of the position of the clergymen within pre-Reformation society the priests could also serve many secular functions. Frequently the clerks who kept the burgh records in Latin were priests and in many communities the priests served as notaries public also for contracts, for example, which were solely based on secular law.[262]

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261 We avoid the concept of *religious discipline* in this context in order to distinguish the pre-Reformation religious life from the post-Reformation one. While the latter was shaped by a new Church which tried to establish new standards of religious life "from above", the former stemmed from an intrinsic consciousness of the communities as a small *Corpus Christianum.*

262 As we have established in the first chapter there were enormous differences within the educational standards of the clergymen in burghs and rural areas. This was, of course, connected with the better career opportunities in the urban parishes. But also in rural areas the clergymen normally fulfilled many secular functions.

But the reason for the close connection between secular and religious life was, apart from individual qualifications and personal relations of priests to members of the communities, also a structural one. This was most obvious when regarding the influential position which the canon law also had in civil affairs. The ecclesiastical jurisdiction often interfered with matters we would today assign to the secular sector. Marriages which also had a strong influence on possessional rights were in the range of competence of the canon law because they were sacraments. And even civil contracts which were fortified by oath became a matter of the canon law. In consequence the ecclesiastical institutions were deeply interwoven with the judicial constitution of the local communities.
But also in terms of administration the parish as the ecclesiastical unit was the key unit for civil affairs, for example when the payment of teinds was enforced by the threat of excommunication also in the case of a secular patron.[263] This was the case primarily because the church had at its disposal better administrational structures than the crown.[264]

But the general tendency on the eve of the Reformation in Scotland was that the Church was the subject to increasing influence of laymen. This again was connected with the severe changes within the feudal system on the eve of the Reformation.
Originally each parish had some land which was the benefice of the parson but subsequently these lands became appropriated to higher ecclesiastical institutions, like monasteries which could in some cases be quite far away from the lands. On the eve of the Reformation it had become practice that these church lands were leased by the patrons to local landowners who acquired the right to collect the teinds in return for an annual payment. These people, who were called tacksmen, became increasingly influential on the affairs of the parish whose lands they had leased. This was frequently expressed in the fact that these tacksmen often also paid the rent for the parson.
Another office which demonstrates the growing influence of laymen on the local church was the parish clerk, who was an official assistant minister to support the parson in his duties. The parish clerks on the eve of the Reformation were frequently the choice of the patron and in the case of a lay patron it was quite often his son or a relative. This office, which was normally filled with appointees who were absolutely

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263 This is proved with most plausible examples on pp. 25 - 7.

264 These better resources in terms of administration diverted from a more centralised organisation of the Church and a better system of recruitment of qualified individuals.

loyal to the patron, was an adequate means of increasing influence of the lay patron on the ecclesiastical affairs in his community.
Foundations or donations made to a local parish were a further way in which laymen increased their influence on the local Church, like the refurnishing of the church or the repairing of the building's roof. Only enormously wealthy laymen could afford to found a whole church,[265] but in the burghs, where the burgesses became increasingly emancipated groups, like congregations or gilds, could also found an altar in a local church and had so also influenced actions within the church.
While in the rural areas it was normally wealthy individuals who played influential rôles in the ecclesiastical affairs, in the burgh the influence of the burgesses or groups of them became more obvious. In the towns and burghs this was most plausibly expressed in the fact that laymen subsequently took over functions which were formerly fulfilled by the Church. One example for this is the care of the poor which was increasingly organised by the town council. The secular government also tried in many cases to set regulations for the local church, which again was a manifestation of the increasing influence of laymen on ecclesiastical affairs.[266]

A possible explanation for this change within the rôle of the laymen in the Church may be the change within the educational standards of the layfolk. In a time in which an increasing number of people became literate, a high education was no longer only limited to clerics. Therefore laymen also became more self-conscious in religious matters and the relation between the people and the Church slowly changed.
The aim of this dissertation also was to analyse religious changes in Lowland Scotland on the eve of the Reformation. But in order to draw a sufficient picture we firstly had to analyse mechanisms of religious education to find out how the common man got his religious knowledge.

As a first step we analysed general means of religious instruction, because we assumed that changes within these means of education would also reflect a changed religiousness of the people. The portrayal of this general means was not limited to Scotland but was enlarged on the wider context of the pre-Reformation Church in Europe, merely because the means and the contents of religious life were basically the same all over Europe.

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265 Roundabout forty collegiate churches were founded by laymen, wealthy clerics and the crown in the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth century.

266 These laymen who became influential in ecclesiastical affairs also in the towns and burghs belonged to an "upper class" within the communities. But this change, of course also influenced the general behaviour of laymen towards the Church.

The basic elements of religious knowledge were expressed in the canon of the Pater Noster, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, in the seven works of mercy, the seven virtues, the seven vices, and the seven sacraments. The goal of religious education was to make the people familiar with these general features, which was expressed in the fact that the ecclesiastical authorities frequently complained that the ordinary people often hardly knew how to say the Pater Noster.

But the matter of religious instruction had, as we have seen two faces: On the one hand, there were the ecclesiastical authorities which tried to increase the religious knowlegde of their flocks for example through the catechesis by well qualified priests. On the other hand there were the religious needs of the people who wanted to increase their knowledge of a religion which played, as we have seen, an important rôle in their everyday life. The means of religious education which we have analysed expressed the two faces of the phenomenon.

There were different ways of religious instruction which all fulfilled the same functions of religious instruction.

Written texts, like doctrinal or devotional literature or translations of the basic prayers into the vernacular were frequently read aloud in front of a larger audience.[267]

The *confession* was a means of religious instruction, because the people were examined along the guidelines of the basic elements of faith. A good moral state of a person was thought to be expressed also in a good knowledge of the basic prayers. The fact that people had to confess at least annually guaranteed a regular control.

The *administration of the sacraments* also implied a frequent contact between the priests and the parishioners. On the one hand the sacraments were essential for the individual's life from birth to death,[268] on the other hand the administration of a sacrament was an event which could also be functionalised for religious instruction, for example when the priest delivered a sermon at Sunday's mass when the people received the eucharistic sacrament, or when parents at the baptism of a child were encouraged to provide a proper religious education.

Visual aids, like wall paintings, stained glass windows, sculptures and carvings visualised biblical stories and the catechetical programme. On the eve of the Reformation we have an increased number of these works of art which were frequently donations made by wealthy laymen. This expresses an increased need for visualisation.

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267 We discussed the function of written texts which were not just understandable for literate people, but also for non literate; compare pp. 42.

268 This was also because the regular receiving of the sacraments was thought to be essential for the individual's access to salvation.

Religious drama can also be interpreted in its functions for the religious instruction of the people. With an increasing number of laymen who participated in the performances of religious plays, like the Corpus Christi play or the Pater Noster play, they became a corporate replay of the biblical salvation story.
Finally *music* and *religious songs* were a means of religious education which became increasingly popular. Favourite songs were provided with religious texts which made the contents easily memorable.

But when analysing the general means of religious education on the eve of the Reformation we also had to put them in contrast to the social realities of religious life in Lowland Scotland.
To analyse the situation of religious education on the eve of the Reformation sufficiently, we had to consider the enormous differences between urban and rural communities. For written texts, for example, we had to establish that many people in rural areas of Scotland do not seem to have come in contact with religious literature and written texts in general because nobody in the community could read properly. While in an urban parish also the parish clergy distributed doctrinal material by reading text in Sunday's mass, for example, standards of education among the clergy in rural areas were usually fairly modest. Most priests in rural parishes were poorly paid by the absent rector or by the patron, so that a well qualified cleric would rather go to a major church in order to achieve a proper benefice. Many rural priests, like some chaplains in the towns and burghs, had to say as many masses and prayers for private persons as possible because only through the payment for these duties they could keep their modest standards of living. In consequence the duties they served for the parish communities, which like the confession, the saying of the mass and the administration of the sacraments could also have instructional implications, were more a mechanic act than an inspriring feature of religious education. Rural parish communities frequently were not open to new ways of religious instruction.
Ecclesiastical authorities tried to improve the poor educational standards of the parish clergy, which were the object of severe criticism on the eve of the Reformation. *Hamilton's Catechism* is a most illustrative example for this movement.
The same differences between rural and urban parish communities were valid for works of art and their functions for religious instruction. We had to establish that many parish churches in rural areas were of a quite modest state in terms of equipment and architecture. Frequently there where not many works of art inside the churches which could promulgate the catechetical programme of the basic elements of faith. The

parish community could be happy if there was a patron or a donor who sponsored the repairing of the roof of the humble building.
Also for plays and music as means of religious instruction the situation was not different in rural areas. We found no evidence for a religious play which was performed outside a burgh or a town, and as far as songs are concerned, normally there was no priest in a rural parish who could lead the congregational singing.

Despite the huge differences we established between rural and urban areas in Scotland, however, there were a few richly equipped churches and some movements in the towns and burghs which did express a new quality of religiousness on the eve of the Reformation. This new quality was investigated in the third chapter of this dissertation: to avoid methodological problems in this context we analysed primarily written source material, like pamphlet literature, devotional literature, plays and ballads.[269]
On the eve of the Reformation texts which dealt explicitly with religious matters became increasingly popular. On the one hand this happened because the distribution of written texts in a wider sense became generally a new feature in times in which printed material evolved as a mass media. In this sense texts with religious contents were used for purposes of religious education and propaganda. On the other hand the contents of the religious literature expressed a new quality of people's religiousness.
This was shown with the example of *pamphlet literature* which expressed an unconcealed anticlericalism which on the one hand was pure propaganda but which on the other hand revealed the dissatisfaction of the people with the system of the old church.
Devotional literature was merely inspired by the basic elements of the faith, the basic prayers for example. The new approach to religious subjects was on the one hand more individualized but was on the other hand to some extent also a standardised piety, because the pieces of devotional literature frequently followed a similar scheme.
Through *religious plays* the common man was able to correlate the thus illustrated biblical salvation story to his everday reality. The people of a community in which a play was performed were not only spectators but played an active rôle as the testimonies of the biblical or miraculous story. The increasing needs of the people for this illustration was expressed by the growing popularity of religious plays until the eve of the Reformation.
The devolopment of a *ballad tradition* and of *religious songs* was also seen as an indicator for the severe changes within the religiousness of the people. Secular folk

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269 For the methodological discussion compare pp. 55 - 57.

songs were adapted for religious purposes and became popular as a literary genre.[270] In this sense the ballads were now open only to reproduction, but with the introduction of congregational singing a new concept of corporate religious life within the parish community was introduced. The congregational singing can be interpreted as caused by a growing demand of the layfolk to take part actively in the religious action.

The key feature to demonstrate the changes within the people's religiousness seemed to be the growing literacy of the layfolk which allowed a wider distribution of religious texts. The individual preoccupation with a written text and the untransmitted access to religious material manifested a more individual and intimate religiousness which could also be lived in privacy.[271] This new way in which the people started to live their religiousness also explained the decline of the religious drama and the corporate replay of the biblical salvation story. This expression of religiousness did not correspond any more to a new individualized piety which to a great extent started to be lived in privacy.

However for the case of Lowland Scotland we still are confronted with enormous differences in the stage of the development within religious life between rural and urban areas. Literacy as an indicator for religious perceptions was increasing in rural areas of Scotland in the seventeenth century, later than in the towns and burghs.[272] In this sense, for the rural communites we can assume a similar but decelerated development of the religiousness of the common man as the one we could analyse for the urban communities of Lowland Scotland on the eve of the Reformation.
Thus we have to interpret the Scottish Reformation in its events and the way in which religiousness changed also in an institutional sense, primarily as it originated within urban communities.[273]

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270 We analysed the example of the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis.*

271 For the connection between the ability to read and to write and privacy see Roger Chartier, "Die Praktiken des Schreibens", in: Philippe Ariès and Roger Chartier (eds), *Geschichte des privaten Lebens, vol. iii: Von der Renaissance zur Aufklärung* (Fischer, Frankfurt/M., 1991), pp. 115 - 165, especially p. 115 - 6.

272 Chartier, "Die Praktiken des Schreibens", pp.116 - 119, see also: R. Houston, "The literacy myth? Illiteracy in Scotland 1630 - 1670", in: *Past and Present* 96 (1982), pp. 81 - 102.

273 A similar analysis was made for the German case by Athur G. Dickens who interpreted the German Reformation as an "urban event": Athur G. Dickens, *The German Reformation and Luther* (London, 1976), p. 182.

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