THOMAS GILLESPIE AND THE ORIGINS OF THE RELIEF CHURCH IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY SCOTLAND

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DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis and the research contained within it are my own original work, and that I have acknowledged all debts to others.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the life and work of Thomas Gillespie and the origins of the Relief Church in eighteenth century Scotland, within the wider context of the evangelical movement both within and without the Church of Scotland. We begin in the first chapter by investigating the early influences on Gillespie's life, and seek to analyse Gillespie's intellectual and spiritual development within the wider context of Scottish religion. We also look at the profound impact of his brief, but significant, period of study at Philip Doddridge's theological Academy in Northampton. Finally, we consider the beginning of his pastoral ministry in Carnock. In the second chapter we focus on the Cambuslang Revival in 1742, including the significant factors which contributed to the event, the impact it made upon Evangelicals within the Church of Scotland, and the divisions it created between Evangelicals in the Church of Scotland and the Secession Church. The third chapter examines the events surrounding Gillespie's deposition from the ministry of the Church of Scotland in 1752. This includes a discussion of the different approaches which members of the Moderate and Popular parties took towards the issue of patronage, especially as illustrated by the controversy surrounding the Inverkeithing settlement. Chapter four looks at the two further disputed pastoral settlements, in Jedburgh and Colinsburgh, which led directly to the formation of the Presbytery of Relief. In chapter five we examine Gillespie's preaching and pastoral ministry, and consider the major emphases of his ministry and the themes which were vitally important to him. Chapter six develops an interpretation of Gillespie's theology in its relationship to the Reformed Theology of the Westminster Confession of Faith and the ethos of the Enlightenment. Finally, chapter seven examines the consolidation of the Relief Church. In examining the state of the Relief Church at the time of Gillespie's death, we will also consider the reasons why he had become disillusioned with the movement which had grown to the point
when it was outwith his control and influence, and also why many members of the Relief Church may have become disillusioned with him.
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Introduction

Thomas Gillespie entered the ministry of the Church of Scotland in September 1741. From almost the very beginning, he expressed a concern 'to look to the Lord for having his Spirit poured on us.' ¹ His hopes for a spiritual awakening within the Church of Scotland seemed to come to fulfilment the following year, in 1742, with a 'revival of religion' centred in Cambuslang and Kilsyth. As a 'popular' preacher, Gillespie's influence in Kilsyth was warmly welcomed by James Robe, the parish minister there. Gillespie's reputation as a soundly orthodox theologian led William McCulloch, the parish minister of Cambuslang, to invite him to examine the written testimonies of converts and edit them for publication. For the next decade, Gillespie worked to revitalise the Church of Scotland. As a correspondent of Jonathan Edwards, Gillespie sought the advice of the great New England philosopher and theologian, as he attempted to understand and encourage the work of the Holy Spirit among the new converts at Cambuslang and Carnock. As a parish minister he expressed his opposition to the policy of the Moderates within the Church of Scotland regarding patronage, adopting a resolute attitude at the General Assembly in May 1752 which led to his deposition from the ministry of the Established Church. He was driven from the Church he loved. Even after his deposition, however, his influence continued to be felt within the national Church. Between 1752 and 1770, the 'case' of Thomas Gillespie appeared in the minutes of the General Assembly on five separate occasions. ²

Thomas Gillespie was known and respected by many leaders of the eighteenth

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¹ From a sermon preached on the Fast Day in the Tollbooth church in Edinburgh on 1 November 1741. This is the first recorded sermon of Gillespie in New College Mss. Sermons, in two small volumes, p 1.

² 1752, 1753, 1766, 1769 and 1770.
century evangelical movement, not only in Scotland but also in England and America. When he was deposed from the ministry of the Church of Scotland, he received messages of encouragement from such luminaries as George Whitefield and Jonathan Edwards. John Erskine, who would later become leader of the Popular party in the Church of Scotland, had during his youth admired Gillespie's ministry in Carnock and later oversaw the publication of many of Gillespie's writings between 1771 and 1774. Gillespie was well known, not only because of the controversy surrounding his deposition, but also because of his warm personality, his steadfast loyalty to his principles, and his heart-felt pastoral concerns. On two occasions, Gillespie refused to receive his half-yearly stipend - first after the General Assembly had deposed him from the ministry in May 1752, when he refused the offer of the stipend for the first half of the year because he had not worked the full half-year, and second, during his Relief ministry in Dunfermline, during a time of acute economic distress within the town, he suggested that his stipend be distributed among the poor. It is hardly surprising that his devotion to Christ and the Church elicited a warm affection from his parishioners.

In 1761, Gillespie founded the Presbytery of Relief, noted for its commitment to religious liberty, open communion and tolerant attitudes towards other Churches. The Relief Church was strongest in the central and southern lowlands of Scotland. In January 1774 it had grown to nineteen congregations and by 1847, the year in which it joined with the United Secession Church to form the United Presbyterian Church in Scotland, it had 136 congregations.

And yet by 1774, at the time of his death, Gillespie had grown disillusioned with the Relief Church. Doctrinal controversy, ecclesiastical disputes, as well as personal dissension with other Relief ministers, had convinced Gillespie to beg his
congregation to return to the Church of Scotland and apply to the General Assembly to become a Chapel of Ease. He thus evidently abandoned the denomination he had helped to create and lead. None the less, despite his personal disillusionment, the large majority of the new Relief Church declined to follow his advice and return to the Established Church. In the event, the movement which Gillespie had initiated proved greater than its leader. The movement had attracted disillusioned members of the Church of Scotland for a variety of different reasons and had become a new Church, not simply a personal cult. The Relief Church continued to express their admiration for Gillespie’s Christian character, as well as his commitment to pastoral care and preaching, but they did not consider the Relief Church to be a Gillespean Church. In Dunfermline, this meant that a majority within his own congregation defied their pastor’s wishes and remained within the Relief Church, building a new church for themselves. Only a minority, associated with the original donors, rejoined the Established Church as a Chapel of Ease in 1779.

The life and ministry of Thomas Gillespie has never received the attention it deserves. Nor has the contribution of the Relief Church to the religious life of Scotland been adequately appreciated. In 1843, Gavin Struthers, minister of Anderson Relief Church in Glasgow, published The History of the Rise and Progress of the Relief Church. The book is a superb source of detailed information about Relief Church History, although its overall interpretation is tainted by the controversy between the Relief Church and Evangelicals within the Church of Scotland, and it is far from an objective account of the Relief Church. William Lindsay, one of the professors of the United Presbyterian Church, published a short Life of the Rev. Thomas Gillespie in 1847. Although it succeeded in reminding the Church in Scotland of the enormous contribution which Gillespie had made to the founding of the Relief Church and to religious liberty, it suffered from being hagiographic in tone,
and it failed to place Gillespie's life within the social and religious context of eighteenth century Scotland.

Recently, there has been a large amount of scholarly research into the political, social, and intellectual context of eighteenth century Scottish religious history. In 1987, Callum G. Brown, of the University of Strathclyde, published a pathbreaking book, *The Social History of Religion in Scotland since 1730*, which examined patterns of religious adherence and the place of religion in rural and urban society, and placed the Relief Church in the wider context of the rise and fall of Presbyterian dissent in Scotland. Brown, however, gives Gillespie only a passing reference and is more interested in broader social movements than in exploring Gillespie's distinctive contribution to the religious life of the Church in Scotland. The work of Professor Richard B. Sher of New Jersey Institute of Technology, on the Moderate literati of Edinburgh in his book *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment*, published in 1985, emphasised the influence of the Moderate Party in the Church of Scotland and the Scottish universities from the mid-1760s to the early 1780s. The focus of Sher's book is on a group of leading Moderate clergymen in the Established Church. Sher discussed Gillespie in the context of the dispute surrounding the Inverkeithing settlement which led to his deposition from the ministry of the Church of Scotland, but Sher understandably did not see a need to trace the history of the Relief Church.  

John McIntosh's doctoral thesis on *The Popular Party in the Church of Scotland, 1740-1800*, presented to the University of Glasgow in 1989, demonstrated that the Popular party in the Church of Scotland was not a homogeneous group of evangelicals, and that the Popular clergy as a whole had much in common with the

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3 In private correspondence with myself, Sher speaks of the need for a fresh study of the history of the Relief Church, especially in its relationship to the Popular party and the Moderates within the Church of Scotland.
Moderates in doctrine and pastoral concern. He also attempted to show that, although the Moderates were critical of 'man made creeds and confessions' they did not relax the doctrinal standards of the Church of Scotland. The main issue which separated the Popular party and the Moderate party, McIntosh argued, was not a doctrinal one, but rather related to their different approach to the law of patronage. David Bebbington of Stirling University has endeavoured to place the development of Evangelicalism within the context of the Enlightenment. In his Evangelicalism in Modern Britain, published in 1989, Bebbington demonstrated that Evangelicalism shared many of the characteristic assumptions of the Enlightenment. In a study which examines Evangelicalism in Britain, from the 1730s to the present day, it is understandable that Bebbington focused his attention more on England than Scotland. However, this has also meant that he makes only a passing reference to the origins of the Relief Church in Scotland and makes no mention, whatsoever, of Thomas Gillespie. Bebbington concluded that Evangelicalism was 'an expression of the age of reason' and that it was 'permeated by Enlightenment influences.' In a recent article, Bebbington indicated that John Erskine, leader of the Popular party and a close friend and champion of Gillespie, was a pivotal figure in adopting the ethos of the Enlightenment and co-operated closely with William Robertson, the leader of the Moderate party, as a ministerial colleague in Edinburgh. There is a need to set the Relief Church within this wider picture of Evangelicalism and the Enlightenment, and to investigate the relationship of Gillespie to such movements and examine Bebbington's thesis within the context of an Evangelicalism influenced by the Calvinist Westminster Confession of Faith.

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4 See David Bebbington's article on 'The Enlightenment' in Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology. Edited by Nigel M. de S. Cameron, (Edinburgh, 1993), p 294.
Further, the role which Gillespie played within the evangelical awakening in Scotland has never been fully appreciated. In 1971, Arthur Fawcett published a pioneering work on *The Cambuslang Revival*, in which he gave a detailed description of the Evangelical revival in Scotland. The work is now somewhat dated and lacks the benefit of current scholarly research. Recent work by Leigh Schmidt, Marilyn Westerkamp, Ned Landsman and Michael Crawford has shown the influence and points of connection between America and Scotland. Furthermore, Schmidt and Crawford have also examined the McCulloch manuscripts, and pointed out the significance of popular piety in eighteenth century Scotland, especially that associated with the Scottish 'communion seasons.' Yet Gillespie’s role as a editor of these manuscripts has been largely ignored.

Along with the context of Evangelicalism within the Church of Scotland, this thesis also considers Gillespie’s relations with the Secession Church which had its origins in 1733. In that year, Ebenezer Erskine and three other ministers of the Church of Scotland, formed themselves into a Presbytery to protest against the imposition of the laws of patronage within the Established Church. By 1761, when Gillespie formed the Relief Church, two separate Synods within the Secession movement already existed in Scotland. Along with the Relief Church, they opposed the laws of patronage. One of the questions this thesis will explore is that of why Gillespie believed it was necessary to form another Presbyterian Church in Scotland when the Secession Church already existed. The thesis will thus attempt to re-examine the role of Thomas Gillespie within the wider context of the evangelical movement both within and without the Church of Scotland. It will seek to understand the various influences which moulded, not only his Christian character and commitment, but also the Relief Church which he helped to found.
Unfortunately, although a large number of Gillespie's sermon manuscripts survive, only a handful of letters to Jonathan Edwards, William McCulloch and Henry Davidson remain extant. The paucity of personal letters makes it difficult to understand the inner psychology of Gillespie's intellectual and spiritual development. However, Gillespie, as we have already noted, was one of four editors commissioned to examine the written testimonies of many of the converts of the Cambuslang Revival, and the McCulloch Mss help us to understand Gillespie's attitude towards the Revival and its strange manifestations. They also help us to place his pastoral theology within the context of a vibrant popular piety which ministers like Gillespie could not control. As W. R. Ward has suggested, the evangelical revival flourished when the laity were given their head, but stagnated when the ordained ministry took control. The fifteen volumes of Gillespie's manuscript sermons provide a crucial body of material through which to explore his theological and pastoral concerns. Two other valuable sources for an understanding of his theological development are An Essay on the Continuance of Immediate Revelations of Fact and Future Events in the Christian Church, published in 1771, and a Treatise on Temptation, published in 1774. An examination of both published and unpublished material will help us to relate Gillespie's thought to eighteenth century Reformed theology in Scotland and to discover other significant influences in his thinking.

There are numerous contemporary records which provide a rich resource for scholarly research into eighteenth century religious life in Scotland. The Scots Magazine published reports of the meetings of the General Assembly, as well as reviewing significant theological works which were published during Gillespie's life. The Scottish Records Office, with its deposits of Church records, is a rich resource for investigating significant events in the religious life of eighteenth century Scotland.
An examination of the records of the Church of Scotland and the Relief Church have helped to examine the issues surrounding the formation and consolidation of the Relief Church.

The thesis will principally examine the life and work of Thomas Gillespie and the origins of the Relief Church in eighteenth century Scotland. We begin in the first chapter by investigating the early influences on Gillespie's life, including the ministry of Thomas Boston of Ettrick, the theology of the Marrow, the origins the Secession Church and the reasons why Gillespie attended their Divinity Hall for a short period of time. In this way we can analyse Gillespie's intellectual and spiritual development within the wider context of Scottish religion. We also look at the profound impact of his brief, but significant, period of study at Philip Doddridge's theological Academy in Northampton. Finally, we consider the beginning of his pastoral ministry in Carnock. In the second chapter we focus on the Cambuslang Revival in 1742, including the significant factors which contributed to the event, the impact it made upon Evangelicals within the Church of Scotland, and the divisions it created between Evangelicals in the Church of Scotland and the Secession Church. The chapter focuses on the attitude of Gillespie towards the Revival, and especially his editing of the Cambuslang Manuscripts, the series of narratives of individual conversions which came out of the Revival. We consider what editorial alterations he suggested, and what theological and pastoral concerns this expressed. Finally, we draw some conclusion about the impact of the revival on Gillespie's life and ministry.

The third chapter examines the events surrounding Gillespie's deposition from the ministry of the Church of Scotland in 1752. This includes a discussion of the
different approaches which members of the Moderate and Popular parties took towards the issue of patronage, especially as illustrated by the controversy surrounding the Inverkeithing settlement. We explore the reasons why, in 1752, Gillespie was deposed from the ministry when his three ministerial colleagues on the Presbytery of Dunfermline, who shared his resistance to patronage and the Inverkeithing settlement, were only denied the right to sit in the courts of the Church. We consider the reasons why, in 1753, the General Assembly, which had a strong representation of the Popular party, did not repone Gillespie to the ministry of the Church of Scotland.

Chapter four looks at the two further disputed pastoral settlements, in Jedburgh and Colinsburgh, which led directly to the formation of the Presbytery of Relief. We seek to understand the principles which motivated Gillespie and his colleagues to form another Presbyterian Church in Scotland when most Evangelicals seemed content to remain within the Church of Scotland, and when the Secession Church offered a refuge for discontented members of the Established Church.

In chapter five we examine the preaching and pastoral ministry which Gillespie exercised, not only in Dunfermline, but also in various congregations within the expanding Relief Church. We consider the major emphases of his ministry and the themes which were vitally important to him. Chapter six develops an interpretation of Gillespie's theology in its relationship to the Reformed Theology of the Westminster Confession of Faith and the ethos of the Enlightenment. We are particularly interested in the extent to which Gillespie was influenced by the moderate Calvinism of Philip Doddridge, as well as by Enlightenment thought.
Finally, chapter seven provides a capstone for the overall argument of the thesis. The consolidation of the Relief Church indicates that while Gillespie was a key figure in its consolidation from 1761 to the time of his death in 1774, the Relief Church was bigger than simply a personal following. The local contexts in which many Relief congregations developed suggests that there was no single, overriding cause which brought these congregations into the Relief Church. To look only at the issue of patronage is to over-simplify a complex movement. In short, the Relief Church had developed into a Church of Christ and not simply a personality cult or a popular anti-patronage protest movement. Its members were ultimately united by a shared belief in a free, Reformed, Presbyterian and tolerant form of Christianity, and not simply by loyalty to Gillespie or common opposition to patronage. In examining the state of the Relief Church at the time of Gillespie's death, we will also consider the reasons why he had become disillusioned with the movement which had grown to the point when it was outwith his control and influence, and also why many members of the Relief Church may have become disillusioned with him.
CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Scotland in the early 18th Century

The 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, which brought the flight of James VII and the accession of William and Mary to the throne, was an event of religious as well as political significance. It was perceived by probably the majority of the Scottish population, at least in the Lowlands, as a rejection of James VII's attempts to reintroduce the practice of Roman Catholicism. The reinstatement of 'the antediluvians', sixty Presbyterian ministers who had been deposed since 1661, and their restoration to their parishes, whether held by someone else or not, led to the beginnings of an expulsion of Episcopal ministers and the abolition of Episcopacy. This was followed in 1690 by the re-establishment of full Presbyterian government in the Church of Scotland. The whole sequence of events was celebrated by the General Assembly as an act of God's Providence. 1

On the political field, the Union of the Parliaments of 1707 was not proving to be a popular decision within Scotland. 2 In an unusual and yet powerful alliance between the Jacobites and radical Presbyterians, there were many dissenting voices to the proposed treaty. Although many Scots believed that the Union of Parliaments would bring economic prosperity, others maintained that they were mortgaging their future to England. Within the Church of Scotland, there was apprehension that the hierarchy of the Church of England would exert undue influence on spiritual matters. In his final sermon to the people of Simprin on 15 June 1707, Thomas Boston urged his parishioners to continue in their opposition,

against popery, prelacy, superstition and ceremonies.
And mourn for this, that by the union, a nail is sent
from Scotland, to fix the Dagon of the English
hierarchy in its place in our country. 3

Thomas Boston may be seen to be a representative of many people within the
Church of Scotland at this time who were opposed to the Union. He later recalled
how the failure of the clergy of the Church of Scotland to oppose the Union had
alienated the people of his parish of Ettrick,

the spirits of the people of that place being embittered
on that event against the ministers of the Church; which
was an occasion of much heaviness to me, tho' I never
was for the Union, but always against it from the
beginning unto this day. 4

Although there were anti-Union riots at Dumfries, Glasgow and up and down
the royal mile in Edinburgh, it was evident to many people that the Union was the
only practical solution to a deepening political and economic crisis which Scotland
had been facing in the years following the Revolution of 1688.

Several years of famine, from 1695, with only a relative respite in 1697-8,
along with prolonged warfare with France which interrupted trade with the Continent
and increased all forms of taxation, had brought about the worst economic crisis that

3 Thomas Boston, Complete Works, (London, 1853), Vol. 4.465. Opposition to the Union did not
only come from Scotland. There were those, like William Beveridge (1637 - 1708), bishop of St
Asaph, who spoke vehemently against the Act of Union on the ground that the Presbyterianism of
Scotland would endanger the national Church of England. See article on 'W Beveridge' in the

4 Thomas Boston, A General Account of my Life, ed. by G Low, (London, 1908) p 169. In a similar
vein, John Willison, of Dundee speaks of the Church of Scotland's, 'degeneracy and defection' which
he believes 'have of late years become too visible; and our union with England, in 1707, may be
looked upon as the chief source thereof, next to the corruption of our hearts.' John Willison,
Practical Works, (Glasgow, 1844) p 899.
Scotland had ever known.  

In the short term, the opponents of the Union were proved to be correct in their apprehensions that the Union would not bring a dramatic improvement in the economy. In the years immediately following the Union, trade in Scotland was adversely affected as a result of the open competition which was the inevitable consequence of free trade with England. Although there was a surplus of grain for export, the Scottish Lairds were frustrated that the prices were so low, while merchants engaged in the linen trade discovered that it was very difficult to expand their sales to England where a vigorous linen industry was already in the process of expansion.

On the long term, however, the Union would bring new economic opportunities, providing Scottish merchants and manufacturers with greater access to foreign markets and, perhaps more important, by creating the largest free trade area in the world. The Union of Parliaments, although not intended by the English Parliament for the benefit of Scotland, provided it with a means of economic growth and prosperity. This improvement, however, would not become obvious in Scotland until after 1750. On the ecclesiastical scene, Presbyterianism had become the dominant force throughout the land by the mid 1690s. Although it was impossible to

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6 William Ferguson, Scotland, pp 180ff. Nicholas Phillipson speaks of how 'the first twenty years of the union was a period of economic depression' and that the economy 'remained as depressed immediately after the union as it had been before' in N. T. Phillipson, 'Culture and Society in the 18th Century Province: The Case of Edinburgh and the Scottish Enlightenment' In The University in Society Volume 2: Europe, Scotland and the United States from the 16th to the 20th Century, Edited by Lawrence Stone. (Princeton University Press, 1975), p 420.

7 Bruce Lenman, Economic History, p 62.

bring about an immediate expulsion of all ministers of the pre-Revolutionary settlement who had acquiesced in Episcopacy because of the protection provided by powerful patrons,\(^9\) the vast majority of clergy were now committed to a Presbyterian Church government along with a subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith for retaining soundness and unity of doctrine.\(^{10}\) It was evident from the 1694 Assembly that it was the intention of the Church to exercise a 'godly discipline' over all areas of Scottish society, including the suppression of

the impiety and profaneness that aboundeth in this nation, in profane and idle swearing, cursing, Sabbath-breaking, neglect and contempt of Gospel ordinances, mocking of piety and religious exercises, fornication, adultery, drunkenness, blasphemy, and other gross and abominable sins and vices.\(^{11}\)

As well as calling upon Kirk Sessions and Presbyteries to 'faithfully exercise Church discipline against all such scandalous offenders,'\(^{12}\) the Commission of the General Assembly which met on January 4th 1696 also called for the suppression of 'Scepticism and Atheism' along with 'any doctrine...contrary unto, or inconsistent with, the Confession of Faith of this Church.'\(^{13}\) In 1696, the full force of this policy was manifested in the trial and execution for blasphemy of an Edinburgh student,

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\(^9\) Tristam Clarke estimates that it was not until 1720 that the established Church gained possession of all the parishes in 'The Williamite Episcopalians and the Glorious Revolution in Scotland' Records of the Scottish Church History Society, XXIV (1990), Part 1, p 36.

\(^{10}\) Acts of the General Assembly, p 225. T. C. Smout estimates that it was nearly fifty years before the last of the Episcopal ministers were excluded from Church of Scotland livings in the former diocese of Aberdeen. T. C. Smout, History, p 213. See also James K. Cameron, 'Theological Controversy: A Factor in the Origins of the Scottish Enlightenment' In Origins of the Enlightenment in Scotland, Edited by R. G. Cant (Edinburgh, 1982), pp 116 - 130.


\(^{12}\) Ibid., p 241.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., p 253.
Thomas Aikenhead, for allegedly denying the divinity of Christ, despite the evidence of only a single witness and a complete recantation by the youth. 14

The Aikenhead incident revealed the oppressive lengths some were prepared to go in imposing the authority of the Church. The fact that this was the last execution for blasphemy in Scotland also suggests that the policy of imposing a uniformity of doctrinal belief was already proving to be unrealistic. Soon other types of heterodoxy were appearing in Scotland. In 1710, Thomas Halyburton devoted his inaugural lecture as Professor of Divinity at St Andrews, to an attack on Deism indicating that 'the infection spreads and many are carried off by it both in England and Scotland. Though it must be owned that Scotland, as yet, is less tainted with that poison.' 15

A few years later, in 1715, the Professor of Divinity at Glasgow University, John Simson was charged with teaching Arminianism and the General Assembly appointed a Committee on purity of doctrine to investigate the charge. Its report was not given in until the Assembly of 1717. Simson denied that he had deviated from the Confession of Faith and he was acquitted, though with a warning 'not to attribute too much to natural reason and the power of corrupt nature to the disparagement of revelation and efficacious free grace.' 16 Twelve years later Simson was back before the General Assembly, charged on this occasion with the more serious heresy of Arianism. The Assembly of 1729, although finally suspending him from teaching, did not depose him from the ministry or deprive him of his chair. For many, like Thomas

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Boston, this was judged 'to be no just testimony of this church's indignation against the dishonour by the said Mr Simson to our glorious Redeemer, the great God and our Saviour.' 17 It was becoming clear that those who were beginning to control the courts of the Church of Scotland were inclined to tolerate a more liberal approach to theological thinking.

Despite these tensions, the early eighteenth century Church of Scotland was enjoying a period of relative unity. Apart from the challenge of the Cameronians, 18 the Church of Scotland's claim to be the national Church of the Scottish people was largely unthreatened. However, this would change. The middle decades of the eighteenth century would witness the disruption of that unity as the result of the Secession of 1733 and the formation of the Relief Church in 1761. By the end of the century, there would be seven different Presbyterian Churches within Scotland. 19

One factor which allowed this religious diversity to develop was the passing of the Act of Toleration in 1712, extending free worship to Episcopalian ministers, and also making it possible for other churches to be constituted outside the pale of the established Kirk.

Thomas Gillespie: Early Life and Influences

When Thomas Gillespie was born in Clearburn, in the Parish of Duddingston,


18 The Cameronians, sometimes called the Society or Mountain men had originated from the time of the Revolutionary Settlement in 1690, which they refused to accept. They were reorganised to form the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the eighteenth century. See W. J. Couper, The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland, (Edinburgh, 1925). C. G. McCrie, The Church of Scotland: Her Divisions and Her Re-unions, (Edinburgh, 1901) pp 25-49.

19 The Secession Church divided into the Burghers and Antiburghers and then further subdivided into the New-light Burghers, New-light Antiburghers, Old-light Burghers and Old-light Antiburghers. The Reformed Presbyterian Church was re-organised in 1761. The position of the Church of Scotland during this period will be examined in greater detail during the course of the thesis.
near Edinburgh in the year 1708. Scotland was still passing through a period of change which would affect many areas of its life. Gillespie was the only son of a second marriage, his father having at least two previous children, a son Robert, who was later to become the factor to John Erskine in Carnock, and a daughter. The family owned a farming and brewing business which his mother kept on after Gillespie's father had died, an event which occurred while Thomas was still young.

Nothing much is known about Gillespie's early life. He continued to live at home with his mother, probably involving himself with the family business. It may have been this commitment to help his mother which hindered him from entering University at the usual age. It would appear that Gillespie's mother, as well as being a woman of some business acumen was also a lady of deep piety with an interest in hearing preachers associated with the Marrow doctrine. It was her practice during the summer months to go as often as she could to the great communion seasons in the Borders to hear men like Gabriel Wilson, Henry Davidson and Thomas Boston preach. Thomas Boston, along with two of his closest friends, Gabriel Wilson and Henry Davidson, was a Marrowman and all three had a deep and lasting influence upon Gillespie's life.

The Marrow of Modern Divinity controversy had troubled the Church of Scotland from 1718 to 1722, and highlighted the diversity of theological opinion over

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21 Thomas Boston had to wait for two years before he was able to attend Edinburgh University because of a lack of family finance. See *Memoirs,* Edited by G. H. Morrison, pp xiii, 13-16.

22 See Henry Davidson, *Letters to Christian Friends,* (Edinburgh, 1811) which contains several letters to members of the Gillespie family, as well as references to Gillespie's deposition; cf. also a letter to Jonathan Edwards in which Gillespie asks the New England pastor if he was familiar with the works of the 'great Mr Boston.' J. Edwards, *Works,* (Edinburgh, 1974) Vol. 1, p lxxxvi.
a legal and evangelical understanding of Federal Calvinism. There were two theological controversies current at the time of the republication of the Marrow of Modern Divinity. One surrounded antinomianism, a conception of Christianity which so stressed the freedom of the Christian from the condemnation of the law that it maintained that the believer need no longer consider the keeping of the ten commandments as an essential part of discipleship. The second concerned neonomianism, which originated in the teaching of Richard Baxter, who held that the Gospel was a new law demanding faith and obedience with which the Christian won the right to eternal life.

The Marrow of Modern Divinity had been originally published in 1645, under the imprimatur of Joseph Caryl, who had been appointed by the Westminster Assembly to revise and approve theological works for the press. Its purpose was to describe the way of salvation, and to show the difference between the law and the gospel, and thus steer a mid-way path between legalism and antinomianism. The work is largely made up of selections of Reformed Divines, from John Calvin through William Perkins and John Preston to Thomas Goodwin and Thomas Hooker. The first part of the work is an exposition of Federal Theology in which the difference is seen between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace.

It had been reprinted in 1718 by James Hog, at the recommendation of Thomas Boston, who felt the book had helped him in understanding the proper relationship between the law and the gospel. As a result of a complaint by Principal James Hadow of St Andrews, the General Assembly in 1719 appointed a committee

to inquire into the orthodoxy of the book. On the committee's recommendation, the General Assembly of 1720 approved an Act which condemned the Marrow. 24 The Act sets forth five heads under which various passages are classified: Concerning the Nature of Faith; Of Universal Atonement and Pardon; Holiness not Necessary unto Salvation; Fear of Punishment and Hope of Reward not allowed to be motives of a Believer's Obedience; That a Believer is not under the Law as a Rule of Life. Although a whole host of books and pamphlets were written for and against the decision of the Assembly, with the Marrowmen denying all the charges which were brought against them and the book itself, the Act of 1720 was confirmed in 1722, and the Marrowmen were rebuked at the Bar of the Assembly.

To men like Thomas Boston, who took a leading role in the controversy, the issues which the Marrow raised were central to their whole understanding of the gospel and its application to the lives of men and women in their communities. The Marrowmen believed that those who condemned the Marrow were guilty of a legalistic understanding of the covenant of grace, making repentance a condition of salvation and restricting the free offer of the gospel, through a mistaken belief that a universal offer of the grace of God required as its basis a universal atonement.

While Gillespie showed no real interest in spiritual matters, he was willing to accompany his mother down to a communion season in the Borders where she managed to arrange for Boston to speak to him privately. Boston preached at the Sacrament at Maxton in 1727 and 1728 and at Galashiels in August of 1727, 25 and there are indications which suggest that Gillespie, who was around 19 or 20 years of age at the time, passed through a conversion experience which radically altered his

whole outlook on life.

With his life now apparently changed by a personal commitment to Christ, Gillespie decided to prepare for the Christian ministry, and entered the University at Edinburgh about 1732, later in life than most, indeed at a time when many people of his age had already graduated and were being licensed to preach. 26

Gillespie entered Edinburgh University to begin his studies at a time when the University was undergoing a radical change, both in its teaching methods and curriculum. The initial move away from the regency system towards professorial specialisation, which had first been made at Edinburgh in 1708, had brought about a 'quickening of the spirit of intellectual enquiry.' 27 This was followed up by the introduction of a new generation of professors who had been influenced by belonging to the Rankenian. The Rankenian was one of the early Scottish clubs, through which the influence of the Enlightenment, with its object of 'mutual improvement by liberal conversation and rational enquiry' influenced many graduates. 28 These professors laid the 'philosophical, social, academic, and ecclesiastical groundwork for Moderatism and the mature Scottish Enlightenment.' 29 The club's historian, George Wallace, speaks of how 'the Rankenians were highly instrumental in the disseminating

26 Henry Davidson graduated from Edinburgh in 1705 when he was only eighteen, and Thomas Boston Jnr was licensed by the Presbytery of Selkirk on 1st August 1732 when he was nineteen.


28 P. Jones, 'The Scottish Professoriate and the Polite Academy' In Wealth and Virtue : The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment, Edited by Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff. (Cambridge, 1985) p 99. The Rankenian Club, named after the tavern at which it met, had a membership of nineteen by the mid 1720's, six of whom were University Professors, five advocates, two doctors and four from other professions.

throughout Scotland, freedom of thought, boldness of disquisition, liberality of sentiment, accuracy of reasoning, correctness of taste, and attention to composition.'

By about 1730 the University had developed a wide range of subjects in which the teaching was undertaken by specialist teachers who were aware of the latest developments in their fields of study. In the twenty or so years since the Union of 1707, 'the college, which had been little more than a Presbyterian seminary, was transformed into a self-consciously modern academy with faculties of law and medicine as well as philosophy and theology.'

Gillespie appears to have completed his three year course in Philosophy, and to be nearing the end of his further three years study in Divinity, when he left the University in 1738. Probably at the urging of his mother, who had joined the recently formed Secession congregation in Edinburgh, Gillespie left Edinburgh to attend the newly formed Secession divinity hall in Perth where William Wilson had been appointed the Theological tutor.

In order to understand the Secession Church we must consider the controversy of patronage. It was one of the issues which caused great debate and division within the Church of Scotland during the 18th Century. In 1712, despite the guarantee made at the Act of Union of 1707, the British parliament passed the Act concerning Patronage, which restored the rights of lay patrons to appoint ministers to

30 G. Wallace, 'Memoirs of Dr Wallace of Edinburgh,' Scots Magazine 33 (1771), pp 340 - 341
31 Phillipson, 'Culture and Society', p 429.
charges within their gift. Although the act was unpopular with many people within the Church of Scotland, patronage was tolerable if exercised with respect for popular opinion. There is no doubt however, that this act was viewed by many with great alarm, and problems arose when patrons not only insisted on their rights of presentation, but also presented unwanted men. Many pamphlets were written and several disputed settlements took place. There was usually an annual protest given at the General Assembly and in 1729 the Assembly provided for special committees to induct unpopular presentees who were being opposed. These became known as 'Riding Committees' partly because they were seen as trampling over the decisions of Presbyteries and also because they moved about the country conducting inductions, riding in and riding out of parishes, often in a hurry. In the following year the Assembly removed the right of minorities formally to dissent from the imposition of a minister upon them.

In the Assembly of 1731 an overture was presented which would have restricted the call of a minister to the heritors and elders of a congregation. This overture became an act of Church law in 1732, despite being opposed by the majority of Presbyteries who responded to the overture. It was also fiercely resisted by a number of ministers headed up by Ebenezer Erskine, Minister of Stirling. Erskine had spoken against the Act in the Assembly and had called for his dissent to be marked in the Minutes, a request which was denied. Erskine was at this time the Moderator

33 Preaching at the communion season at Orwell in July 1730, Ebenezer Erskine attacked those who were usurping 'the rights of the Lord's people, in choosing their own pastors.' E. Erskine, The Whole Works of Ebenezer Erskine, (Edinburgh, 1871), Vol. 2, p 102.

34 Donald Fraser, The Life and Diary of the Rev Ebenezer Erskine, (Edinburgh, 1831), pp 358-360. Thomas Boston was too ill to attend the Presbytery of Selkirk when it debated the overture, but he expressed his opinion in a letter written on 22 February 1732 in which he speaks of his personal conviction that 'Christian people have, of divine right, the power of choosing their own pastors' and that 'by the transmitted act, the body of the Christian people is robbed of that their sacred right; inasmuch, as thereby the power of electing and calling of ministers is appropriated to heritors...and to elders; and in royal burghs, to the magistrates, town-council, and kirk-session, and is cut off from the rest of the Christian people, who are not so dignified.' T. Boston, Works, Vol. 12, p 500.
of the Synod of Perth and Stirling and on 10 October 1732 he preached a blistering sermon attacking the new measure. In his sermon he asserted that 'the Call of the church lies in the free choice and election of the Christian people. The promise of conduct and counsel in the choice of men that are to build the church, is not made to patrons, heritors, or any other particular set of men; but to the church, the body of Christ.' Referring to the new act, he declared that 'whatever church-authority may be in that act, yet it wants the authority of the Son of God.' By this act,' he continued, 'Christ is rejected in his authority, because I can find no warrant from the word of God, to confer the spiritual privileges of his house upon the rich beyond the poor...this act will place the power of electing ministers ...in the hands of a set of men who are generally disaffected to the power of godliness.'

Erskine was rebuked for this intemperate sermon by the Synod in 1732. When he appealed to the Assembly of 1733, the rebuke was upheld. Erskine, along with William Wilson of Perth, Alexander Moncrieff of Abernethy and James Fisher of Kinclaven submitted a formal protest, however, the Assembly refused to receive it. Instead, the Assembly suspended them from the ministry. They held to their charges and churches nevertheless, and continued to preach. In December 1733, they constituted themselves as the Associate Presbytery, thereby beginning the first Secession from the Church of Scotland. It was not until 1740 that the General Assembly finally deposed the ministers of the Associate Presbytery. Despite further sub-divisions within the Secession, it continued to grow and became a formidable body of dissent in Scotland, rigidly adhering to the seventeenth century covenanting tradition and the standards of the Westminster Confession of Faith. By 1742 it had 20 ministers and 36 congregations and by 1745 it had a synod of three presbyteries.

35 E. Erskine, Works. Vol. 1 p 544

36 Ibid., p 558
William Wilson, one of the original Seceders, was involved on 22 March 1738 in a service at the Braid Hills, in Edinburgh when he baptised 10 children, some of them having travelled 20 or 30 miles for the baptisms. According to the Caledonian Mercury there were about 5,000 hearers at each service (there being three in all) besides an ungodly audience consisting of many thousands, some of whom set fire to the furze.  

When the Associate Presbytery had been formed, there had been no intention of breaking off all expressions of communion with those who remained within the establishment. When Ralph Erskine gave in a signed Adherence to the Associate Presbytery he specifically stated his understanding that the Associate Presbytery was not a, 

Judicatory separate from the Church of Scotland, but...a Part of the same Church...distinct from the present Judicatories of this Church, and witnessing against their Corruptions and defections (although)...by withdrawing from these Judicatories at present, and joining with the said Brethren, I intend and understand no Withdrawing from Ministerial Communion with any of the godly Ministers of this National Church...nor do I hereby intend to preclude myself from the Liberty of returning and joining with the Judicatories of this Church, upon their returning to their Duty. 

However, one of the Religious Societies in Edinburgh which 'met at Mrs 

37 Wilson, although not one of the 12 Marrowmen, had attended an initial meeting to discuss the condemnation of the Marrow doctrine in February 1721, after which he took no further part in the controversy. See D. C. Lachman, The Marrow Controversy, pp 281, 287-8. 

38 Robert Small, History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church from 1733 to 1900, (Edinburgh, 1904), Vol. 1, p 426. The meeting at Edinburgh had been authorised by the Associate Presbytery as a 'day of Solemn Fasting and Prayer' as the result of a petition from the 'General Quarterly Correspondent Meeting' in Edinburgh. Minutes of the Associate Presbytery, CH3/27.1, pp. 306, 308. 

Homer's, began to question the lawfulness of continuing to hold communion with any ministers connected with the Established Church 'however pious and eminent they might be.' They asked the Associate Presbytery to look at the question of 'Whether one can make secession from the Established Church, and yet hold communion with those who are her members, whether they be ministers or private Christians?'

Gillespie, as we have seen, became a member of the Associate Presbytery and began to prepare for the ministry in 1738, largely through the influence of his mother. Despite this commitment, he was troubled by two aspects of the new Church. First, he was concerned over the 'plan of their principles' which would eventually lead them to a much more restricted understanding of communion with other Christians. Secondly, he was disturbed by the stress which the Seceders gave to the question of Covenants. One of the questions which prospective candidates for their Ministry were being asked was

Do you own the binding obligation of the national covenant of Scotland, particularly as explained in 1638, to abjure prelacy, and the five articles of Perth; and of the solemn league of the three kingdoms, particularly as renewed in Scotland in 1648, with an acknowledgement of sins; and will you study to prosecute the ends thereof?

Gillespie did not find the theological atmosphere at Perth one in which he could live; indeed, he left after only ten days. The issues of the covenants and

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40 Minutes of Associate Presbytery. 12th July 1737, CH3/27.1, p 290. A division had arisen between the society which met at Mrs Horners and the General Correspondent Meeting at Edinburgh, which led to the Presbytery delaying the authorisation of a Day of Fasting until March, 1738.

41 John McKerrow, Secession Church. Vol. 1, p 113

42 Struthers, History of the Relief Church, p 5

43 McKerrow, Secession Church, p 123
separation from other Christians was apparently too much for Gillespie to stomach. In this, he may have been influenced by Thomas Boston, who claimed to be ready to hold communion with all who loved the Lord Jesus Christ though they differed from him in smaller matters. 44

**Philip Doddridge and Northampton**

We know nothing of the next two years of Gillespie's life, until 1740. In that year, 45 on the recommendation of twelve ministers of the Church of Scotland, 46 five of whom had been among the Marrowmen, 47 he was admitted to Philip Doddridge's Academy at Northampton for the completion of his theological education.

To understand the background of Doddridge's celebrated Academy, we must consider the nature and growth of English Dissent. The early part of the eighteenth century had been marked by the rapid expansion of Dissenting Churches in England. Between William's accession in 1689 and 1720, some 4,358 meeting-houses were licensed for public worship, 48 an indication of the flourishing state of Dissenting

44 Thomas Boston, *Sermons on Communion*, (Edinburgh, 1752) p 157

45 Gavin Struthers is wrong to suggest that Gillespie went to study with Doddridge immediately he left Perth. See Struthers, *History of the Relief Church*, pp 4-6. Gillespie was one of 19 students who began their studies under Doddridge in 1740. See *List of Doddridge's Students* in Dr Williams Library, 93.A.2.


47 The five ministers who had been associated with the Marrow Controversy were Henry Davidson, Gabriel Wilson, James Wardlaw, James Kid, and John Bonar. By the time Gillespie went to Northampton five of the other Marrowmen, James Hog, James Bathgate, Thomas Boston, John Williamson and William Hunter, had all died and Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine had formed the Associate Presbytery.

devotion. Dissent was strongest in urban areas, and of the 1,238 Presbyterian, Independent, and Baptist congregations which existed between 1715 and 1718, more than half of them met in cities, boroughs, or market towns, their social composition being matched by that of the surrounding community.

In Church organisation it was often difficult in England to distinguish between a Congregational and a Presbyterian Church because years of persecution had made it difficult for any network of Presbyteries, Synods and Assemblies to act effectively. However, although Presbyterian churches had often been forced by circumstances to be independent of one another, they were not congregational. The chief difference between the two groupings was that Presbyterians 'admitted to communion all who lived respectably and had some knowledge of the Christian religion,' while the Congregationalists 'restricted communion and church membership to those who were able to give an account of the work of grace in their souls.'

Although there were numerous books and pamphlets which appeared in the 1730's bemoaning the spiritual decline of dissent, Philip Doddridge believed that

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dissenters in early-eighteenth-century England as follows</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>179,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>59,940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particular Baptists</td>
<td>40,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Baptists</td>
<td>18,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quakers</td>
<td>39,510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All dissenters</td>
<td>338,120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


49 M. Watts, *The Dissenters.* Ibid., p 285. The actual figures which Watts for England are '63.2% of Presbyterians' and '69.5% of Independents...worshipped in cities, boroughs, or market towns.' Ibid.

50 Ibid., p 353.

51 Ibid., p 291.

decline occurred only 'in those places into which the Arian and Pelagian doctrines have been introduced which is chiefly tho' not only in the Western and Southern Counties.'

Philip Doddridge lived from 1702 to 1751, becoming the minister of the Castle Hill Congregational Church at Northampton on 19 March 1730. Gillespie arrived at Northampton at a time when the church had experienced a period of 'sensible revival,' the church consisting of '230 members of which about 130 have been admitted since I became their Pastor.'

As well as exercising a 'careful and conscientious ministry,' his most lasting influence on the history of evangelicalism was his Theological Academy. The Academy began in his own house in 1730 with forty carefully selected students. It would appear that students were accepted by Doddridge as a result of being recommended by friends and fellow ministers. The work grew and in 1740 he had to acquire larger premises. By 1743 he had sixty three students living in Northampton. In total over two hundred students passed through the Academy in its twenty-two years of existence at Northampton, of whom one hundred and twenty

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53 Letter from Doddridge to Daniel Wadsworth at Hartford in Connecticut Colony, 6 March 1741, in G. F. Nuttall, Calendar of the Correspondence of Philip Doddridge, (London, 1979), p 130.


56 Doddridge received the degree of DD from Marischal College, Aberdeen on 27 May 1736 and from King's College, Aberdeen on 5 July 1737. See Nuttall, Correspondence, p 86.

57 See letters written in August 1733 from Rev John Barker in Hackney and Doddridge's reply regarding a 'clergyman's son in Norfolk, who desires to be brought up as a dissenting minister.' Philip Doddridge, Diary and Correspondence of Doddridge, ed. by John Doddridge Humphreys, (London, 1829), Vol. III, pp 203-208.

58 Doddridge charged fees of 'sixteen pounds a year board, and four pounds teaching' as well as a contribution towards the Library. Diary and Correspondence, Ibid., Vol. III, p 206.
became ministers of the Gospel. Doddridge was assisted in the Academy by a series of assistant tutors, \(59\) the best known of whom was Job Orton. Orton had entered the Academy in August 1734 and in 1739 he became Doddridge's first assistant tutor, being licensed as a minister in the same year, and acting as one of the elders at the Castle Hill Church. \(60\)

The Academy provided a comprehensive course, including mathematics, science, natural philosophy, and moral philosophy. Doddridge was concerned that 'polite literature' would 'not by any means be neglected,' \(61\) although 'it is not the one thing needful.' \(62\) Doddridge's personal concern was to make his students into 'citizens of the intellectual world.' \(63\)

As the great majority of his students were destined for the ministry 'the chief object of their attention and study...was his system of divinity,' \(64\) and a series of two hundred and thirty divinity lectures formed the backbone of his entire academic course. Doddridge was concerned to preserve a proper balance between a general knowledge of polite literature and philosophy and the 'great doctrines of the

\[59\] Doddridge's assistants in order were Job Orton, Thomas Brabant, James Robertson and Samuel Clark (son of Dr. Samuel Clark). Malcolm Deacon, Philip Doddridge of Northampton 1702-51, (Northampton Libraries, 1980), p 163.

\[60\] Doddridge described Orton as 'one of the best of preachers & of men.' G. F. Nuttall, Correspondence, p 131. Orton left Northampton in 1741 to become minister of a combined Independent and Presbyterian congregation in Shrewsbury, moving to Kidderminster in 1765, where he died in 1783. Orton was to become Doddridge's first biographer in 1765. See M. Deacon, Philip Doddridge, pp 93, 163.


\[62\] Ibid.


everlasting gospel.'

He feared that many ministers in his day were being tempted to 'wave the Gospel, that we may accommodate ourselves to their taste; which if we do, we may indeed preserve the name of virtue, but I fear we shall destroy the thing itself; lose it in our congregations, and probably in our hearts too.'

He was concerned, not only to provide a well educated succession of ministers, but above all, men who had a burning passion to win souls for Christ. It was evangelism which was 'the thread on which his multicoloured life was strung. It was for this above all that he wrote, preached, corresponded and educated his students in the Academy.'

The education which was provided at Northampton was not only broad in terms of its curricula, but also liberal with regard to the tolerance which Doddridge displayed towards divergence of opinion. In this, Doddridge was following the example of his own tutor at Kibworth, of whom he wrote, 'Mr Jennings does not follow the doctrines or phrases of any particular party; but is sometimes a Calvinist, sometimes an Arminian, and sometimes a Baxterian, as truth and evidence determine him....he always inculcates it upon our attention, that the scriptures are the only standard of orthodoxy, and encourages the utmost freedom of enquiry. He furnishes us with all kinds of authors upon every subject, without advising us to skip over the heretical passages for fear of infection.'

Doddridge continued the same liberal tradition in his own academy at Northampton. This intellectual openness must have had a liberating effect on Gillespie as he came from Scotland, where the orthodoxy of the Westminster Confession of Faith was virtually unquestioned and unquestionable.

65 Ibid., p 225.
66 Ibid. In his letter to Daniel Wadsworth he explains that he takes time to 'frequently converse with each of them alone, and conclude the conversation with prayer.' G. F. Nuttall, Correspondence, p 131.
67 Ibid., p xxxv.
68 Doddridge, Diary and Correspondence, Vol. 1, pp 155-6, 198
It would be wrong, however, to draw the conclusion that Doddridge was indifferent toward theological truth, or that he was opposed to holding any doctrinal convictions. He believed that,

truth is indeed too sacred a thing ever to be denied on any consideration and...neither honour or charity will allow us to give it up, as a point of mere indifferent speculation....but let it be in a manner worthy of him, a manner which may not offend him as the God of love. And let us be greatly upon our guard that we do not condemn our brethren, as having forfeited all title to the name of Christians, because their creeds or confessions of faith do not come up to the standard of our own. 69

Doddridge's basic conviction was that the bible formed the foundation of all theological truth. It was this principle which led him away from bestowing an authority upon credal statements which tended to test and regulate theological formulas, as well as being cautious about going further than the bible allowed in making dogmatic statements about matters relating to the Christian faith.

Central to his understanding of the Christian faith was the gospel of grace which centred on the cross of Christ, 'not a subject which grows out of date in a few months' rather 'the joy of the church in all ages.' 70 Although he accepted a Calvinistic understanding of the doctrine of Election, 71 he did not draw the conclusion that Christ died only for the elect. 'It is plain...,' he maintained 'that there is a sense, in which Christ may be said to have died for all, i.e., as he has procured an offer of pardon to all, provided they sincerely embrace the Gospel.' 72 To Doddridge, the

71 Ibid., Vol. 5, p 259-261.
72 Ibid., pp 214.
doctrine of limited atonement was an instance of human logic going beyond scripture.

Doddridge attracted several Scottish students such as Gillespie who had already attended the university stage of their education. 73 Among those who crossed over the Border to further their education were Gilbert Robertson, minister of Kincardine, 74 James Robertson, Professor of Hebrew in the University of Edinburgh, 75 and John Fergusson, son of Lord Kilkerran. 76 John Erskine, who later became the leader of the Popular party in Scotland, had wanted to go to Northampton, but Doddridge observed 'his parents forbade it, much to his mortification and mine.' 77

Although Gillespie's stay at Northampton was only to be of a few months duration (the normal period of study being five years for those studying theology) 78 the influence of Doddridge on his life and ministry proved to be significant in four areas.

First, Doddridge had a profound impact on Gillespie's preaching. One of Doddridge's personal influences on his ministerial students involved the careful

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73 S. G. Harries, 'The Status of Doddridge's Academy' In Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society, (17) 1952, pp 19 - 25. Humphreys comments that 'some young Divines from Scotland, who had studied and taken the usual degrees in the Universities there, and had begun to preach, came to attend his Divinity Lectures, and receive his Instructions, before they settled with parishes in their native countries. During their residence with him they preached occasionally in the dissenting congregations of that town and neighbourhood, and two of them were ordained there.' Diary and Correspondence, Vol. 5, p 546.

74 Robertson was one of the two students from Scotland, who along with Gillespie were licensed and ordained while at Northampton. Hew Scott, Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticannae, (Edinburgh, 1916), Vol. VII, p 61

75 G. F. Nuttall, Correspondence, p 317

76 G. F. Nuttall, Correspondence, p 187.

77 Philip Doddridge, Diary and Correspondence, Vol. IV, p 207

78 M. Deacon, Philip Doddridge, p 97.
attention which he gave to their sermon making. He encouraged them to preach in the surrounding villages, developing their skills in a practical manner under his direction. He was also a man of a great evangelistic zeal, undoubtedly influenced by his contact with the Evangelical Revival 79 and the Moravian missionary vision. 80 The Academy has been described as being 'distinguished by the enthusiasm of its men for ministry overseas.' 81

Secondly, Doddridge introduced Gillespie to the larger international community. Gillespie was later to become a correspondent with Jonathan Edwards and it may well have been during his stay at Northampton that he first became acquainted with Edwards' Faithful Narrative of the Surprising work of God...in Northampton in New England which was prepared for publication by Isaac Watts, and read avidly by Doddridge. 82

Thirdly, Gillespie imbibed from Doddridge's Academy a commitment to the ideal of Christian unity. Doddridge's attitude towards Christians within other Churches was one of warmth and welcome. Gillespie had left a situation of secession in Scotland where many were growing increasingly suspicious of ecumenical relationships. Doddridge, however had a passion for unity amongst Christians, feeling grieved that many people of his day failed to recognise that 'dissensions among

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79 George Whitefield visited Northampton in May 1739 and was, 'courteously received by Dr Doddridge' G. Whitefield, Journals, (London, 1965) p 273; John Wesley was corresponding with Doddridge as early as March 1739. see J. Wesley, Journals ed. by N. Curnock, Vol. 1, p 155.

80 Doddridge's connection with, and interest in Count Zinzendorf came about through a conversation with the young Benjamin Ingham, when he returned from Georgia. G. F. Nuttall, Philip Doddridge 1702-51 His Contribution to English Religion, (London, 1951) p 83.


82 G. F. Nuttall, Philip Doddridge 1702-51, p 83
Christians' were 'a means of bringing the truth and excellence of the Christian religion into question.' 83 He was impatient with denominationalism, which he called 'party spirit' and did all that he could to bring Christians together. It was this spirit that led Doddridge to have discussions with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Hering, as well as Baptist Pastors, showing friendship to both John Wesley and George Whitefield, as well as more traditional Dissenters. For Doddridge the Christian was,

bound in duty affectionately to esteem and embrace all who practically comply with the design of the revelation and love of our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, how much soever they may differ from myself in their language or their conceptions about any speculative points. 84

Fourthly, Doddridge instilled in Gillespie his liberal attitude with regard to subscribing to Confessions of Faith. Doddridge's position was summed up in his Divinity lectures, in which he displayed his dislike of 'requiring those who are to be publick teachers in the church to subscribe, or virtually to declare their assent to such formularies.' 85

Gillespie was to face such a dilemma when he returned to Scotland in 1741 and was required by the Church of Scotland to subscribe to the Westminster

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85 Philip Doddridge, *Works*, Vol. V, pp 230 - 231. Doddridge was not unconcerned with what a minister believed. He generally recommended that someone who was about to be ordained drew up, 'the confession of his faith...in which it is expected, that the great doctrines of Christianity should be touched upon in a proper order, and his persuasion of them plainly and seriously expressed, in such words as he judges most convenient. And we generally think this a proper and happy medium, between the indolence of acquiescing in a general declaration of believing the Christian religion, without declaring what it is apprehended to be, and the severity of demanding a subscription to any set of articles where if an honest man, who believes all the rest, scruples any one article, phrase, or word, he is as effectually excluded, as if he rejected the whole' Vol. IV, pp 271-272.
Confession of Faith. Gillespie was reluctant to endorse fully a signing of the Confession of Faith as it related to the Power of the Civil Magistrate in religious matters.  

86 His convictions were so strong that he did not require any elders whom he ordained during his ministry in Carnock to subscribe to the Confession of Faith.  

It would appear that the particular concern which Gillespie had related to Chapter XXIII of the Westminster Confession of Faith and the portion within section III which declared that

The Civil Magistrate...hath Authority, and it is his duty, to take Order, that Unity and Peace be preserved in the Church, that the Truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all Blasphemies and Heresies be suppressed, all Corruptions and Abuses in Worship and Discipline prevented or reformed, and all the Ordinances of God duly settled, administered and observed  

Gillespie was licensed at Northampton as a Preacher of the Gospel on 30th October 1740, and ordained on 22nd January 1741 by a class of dissenting ministers, of which Doddridge was the Moderator. It was at this point that he left

86 Minutes of the Dunfermline Presbytery 1729-1745, Scottish Records Office, CH2/105.6, June 3rd 1741.

87 Following Gillespie's deposition in May 1752, a committee of the Presbytery of Dunfermline reported that 'the Session of Carnock went off the rules of this Church in their way of choosing and admitting Elders and Deacons...requiring no more of them before the congregation but to declare their adherence to the Scripture and the Rules of the Church and without ever desiring them or any other of the Elders formerly ordained to subscribe the Confession of Faith and Formula appointed for all Elders to subscribe.' Minutes of the Dunfermline Presbytery 1751-1760. S.R.O. CH2/105.8, p 151c.

88 The Westminster Confession of Faith. Chapter XXIII.iii. Doddridge was convinced that there was no evidence in Scripture for the interference of the civil magistrate in religious matters. P Doddridge, Works. Vol. V, p 284. He was equally concerned that ministers of the gospel did not' arrogate any secular power, or pretend to any authority over the civil liberties of mankind,' and thus 'understand the doctrine of the two swords, with which many have been so fond of meddling...to the dishonouring of the Christian name, and the destruction of many of their fellow creatures.' Works. Vol. IV, pp 215 - 216.
Northampton, on Doddridge's proposal, to go to a Church at Hartbarrow for a month period 'on mutual trial.' 89 Hartbarrow, near to Cartmell Fell, just inside the Lancashire border, had been the home, for a short time, to Richard Franklin's Academy when he moved there in 1685 until he moved to Attercliffe, in Yorkshire, in the latter part of 1686. 90 The last recorded minister of the Church was John Jackson who appears to have left in 1737. 91 Gillespie, then, may have been one of the last ministers to have served in this Church which ceased to exist in 1746.

There may have been several reasons why Gillespie did not stay at Hartbarrow. Doddridge had been informed that 'the Presbyterian ministers of this North Class of Westmoreland and Cumberland are extremely prejudiced against Scotch Ministers in General.' 92 It is possible that the combination of a small congregation struggling to support him, and ministerial prejudice against him as a Scot, convinced him to return to Scotland after only a matter of weeks. Gillespie later explained to the Presbytery of Dunfermline that he had left Hartbarrow earlier than anticipated because 'his health did not agree with the dampness of the place.' 93 This appears to be a rather weak reason, especially in view of the fact that the Parish of Carnock was described as being 'rather damp in winter and spring.' 94 Although his stay at Hartbarrow had been short, it appears to have been warmly appreciated by the congregation, because he brought with him 'a testimonial subscribed by the principal members of the congregation, recommending him to any body of Christians with

89 G. F. Nuttall, Correspondence, p 128.
92 G. F. Nuttall, Correspondence, p 128.
93 Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunfermline 1729-1745, CH2/105.6, August 19th, 1741.
whom he might labour." Whatever his real reason for leaving Hartbarrow, Gillespie arrived in Scotland in March 1741 with a commendation from Doddridge, Job Orton, and thirteen other ministers 'as a deeply-experienced Christian, well qualified for the important work of the ministry, and one who bade fair to prove an ornament to his holy profession, and an instrument of considerable usefulness to the souls of men.'

The Parish of Carnock

It was to the Presbytery of Dunfermline, where Gillespie already had connections through James Wardlaw, minister of the second charge at Dunfermline and one of the twelve ministers who had recommended Gillespie to Philip Doddridge, that Gillespie returned. In this district he eventually received a call to the Parish of Carnock.

When Alexander Thomson drew up his report for the First Statistical Account in 1794, he estimated (no doubt using Alexander Webster's population figures) that in 1755 the population of the parish had been about 580. The parish was about three and a half miles in length from north to south, and varied in breadth from three miles to less than one mile from east to west. It was enclosed on the north by the Parish of Saline, on the east by Dunfermline, on the south by Torryburn and on the west by a part of Perthshire. The parish church, which measured only forty two feet by seventeen and a half feet, was located in the village of Carnock, while the villages of Gowkhill, New Luscar and Cairneyhill formed the other main settlements in the community.

95 Minutes of Presbytery of Dunfermline 1729-1745, CH2/105.6
96 Thomas Gillespie, Treatise on Temptation, in Preface by John Erskine, pp iii - iv.
The Church at Carnock was situated on the top of a small hill, overlooking the surrounding countryside, with its undulating landscape. Travel, especially in the winter, was difficult. Gillespie referred to the isolation of the parish when he wrote to Jonathan Edwards, explaining that he was unable to hear George Whitefield preach in Edinburgh, as Carnock was 'fifteen miles from that city, of which two miles are by sea.' Agriculture and handloom weaving were the staple industry of the parish. The years immediately prior to Gillespie's induction had witnessed serious famine and poverty. The scarcity became so acute that the heritors and session had to send agents through the country to purchase cereals which were ground at the local mill and distributed on Saturday mornings at reduced prices to all who were in need. The balance was paid for from the Poor fund.

The barony of Carnock, along with the rights of patronage, had been purchased in 1700 by Col. John Erskine, third son of Henry, second Lord Cardross. Col. Erskine had disapproved of the reintroduction of patronage by the Act of 1712 and had protested when the General Assembly had upheld patronage in a settlement in 1730. In 1734, in the aftermath of the Secession of 1733, the Parish of Carnock petitioned the presbytery of Dunfermline to,


100 J. M. Webster, History of Carnock, p 87.

101 Leighton, History, p 234.

102 C. L. Moffat, James Hog. (University of Edinburgh, Ph. D., 1961), p 118. This action led the Assembly to enact that, 'the reasons of dissent against the determination of Church judicatories, in causes brought before them, shall not be entered in the register, but kept in retentis, to be laid before the superior judicatories.' Acts of the General Assembly, p 612.
repeal the late Acts of Assembly viz. 1st, Act 1730 against recording dissents with the reasons thereof from the Decisions of General Assemblies. It being an Act that seems to deprive people of their just right and natural Liberty and very prejudicial to Truth. 2nd, the Act 1732 May 15th Anent Planting Vacant Churches which Act has raised a Great Flame already. 103

The kirk session may well have been concerned that a group in the neighbouring parish of Torryburn who supported the Secession, might draw away some members of the Carnock congregation. On 1 November 1737 this group presented a petition to the Associate Presbytery meeting at Abbotshall 'declaring their Secession from the Judicatures and Ministers in the Established Church' and also asked for a minister to be sent to preach and baptise their children. 104 The Associate Presbytery 'agreed to take the Society under their inspection.' 105 On 14 May there was a further petition and 'adherence' from a group in Culross and Torryburn which had arisen from a disputed settlement in the first charge at Culross, following the transportation of Alexander Webster to the Tolbooth Church in Edinburgh. 106 Both societies apparently came under the pastoral supervision of Ralph Erskine in Dunfermline, and members continued to travel into the town for public worship until the Burgher controversy in 1747, when those who took the side of the Antiburghers formed a separate congregation. Meeting at first in a barn at Drumfin farm, termed a 'Covenanter howf', they eventually built a church at Cairneyhill in 1752, with sittings for 400. 107 In 1781 there were 143 Antiburghers, 103 Burghers and 52 Relievers

103 Carnock Session Minutes, March 10th, 1734. Col. Erskine, along with Hog and the Elders of the Parish gave in a paper to the Presbytery. Ibid., March 20th, 1734.

104 Minutes of the Associate Presbytery, CH3/27.1, p 297.

105 Ibid.


within the Parish. 108

Col. Erskine, along with two other delegates, was appointed by the General Assembly of 1735 'to go to London, for the purpose of applying to Parliament, and to the Crown, for a repeal of the act of the 10th of Queen Anne, which restored patrons in Scotland the right of presenting to parish churches, of which the act 1690 had deprived them.' 109

His opposition to the law of patronage, as indicated above, can be seen in the way in which he delayed making any presentation to the parish living, which had become vacant on the death of Daniel Hunter on 20 May 1739. It was not until 15 April 1741 that Col. Erskine presented a candidate to the living. 110

Following the report of the committee which had met with the heritors, elders, and heads of families, Col. Erskine 'proposed that the Rev Thomas Gillespie, Minister of the Gospel, might be called to be Minister of this place.' 111 The only other name mentioned for consideration was that of Mr Rintouoll, preacher of the gospel, whose name was added to the leet at the suggestion of James Kirkland, one of the heritors.

During the period following Gillespie's return from England, he had preached


110 The Minutes of the Presbytery records that 'James Bruce, Elder of Carnock, gave in a petition signed by the Heritors and Elders of Carnock, along with a letter from Col. Erskine...craving a moderation.' CH2.105.6, p 348.

111 Ibid., pp 350-1 Webster speaks of one tradition that 'Gillespie's brother, Robert, was at one time factor to the Laird of Carnock' although by 1743 James Wingate was the factor throughout the rest of Gillespie's ministry in Carnock. Webster, History of Carnock, p 90.
within the Presbytery, at Dunfermline and Saline, where the majority of the people of Carnock had heard him. Although various Acts of the General Assembly had defined the proper licensing of preachers, there evidently was a certain latitude given to those ordained by other Christian denominations. In 1736, an act had been passed in the General Assembly stating that 'none coming licensed from abroad be allowed to preach in Scotland till they had been re-examined' by a presbytery. Gilbert Robertson had been licensed and ordained in the same circumstances as Gillespie, and his ordination was recognised by the Presbyteries of Dingwall and Tain in 1740 and 1742 respectively. Even stranger is the case of William Adam, who had been licensed by six dissenting ministers in London, and had been acting as the minister of a congregational church at Painswick in Gloucestershire. He applied successfully to the presbytery of Dunfermline in September 1738 'to be ordained a Minister of the Gospel by his mother Church,' before returning to Painswick, where he remained minister until 1750.

There was some opposition to Gillespie being called to the parish. Col. Halkett, one of the heritors, observed 'that Mr Gillespie is neither licensed nor

112 Minutes of Dunfermline Presbytery. CH2 105.6, June 3rd 1741. James Wardlaw, who was minister of the 2nd Charge at Dunfermline had been one of the twelve ministers who had recommended Gillespie to Doddridge. David Hunter, minister at Saline, had been one of the fifteen who dissented from the sentence of the General Assembly which deposed the eight seceding ministers on 15th May, 1740.


115 William Adam is described in the Presbytery minutes as 'son to the deceased Baily William Adam in Culross.' Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunfermline. CH2/105.6, p 292. He would later be the choice of the Parish of Inverkeithing over against Andrew Richardson in the disputed settlement over which Gillespie was deposed from the ministry of the Church of Scotland.

ordained by the Church of Scotland, and that he is not of fixed principles, nor of the 
communion of this church and that he has actually refused to sign the Confession of 
Faith.' 117 However, when the roll of heritors, elders, and heads of families was called 
and the votes marked it was discovered that three heritors, four elders and thirty-two 
heads of families had voted for Gillespie while only one heritor and three heads of 
families had voted for Rintouoll. 118 At this point James Wardlaw from Dunfermline 
gave in Gillespie's license and act of ordination, along with the testimonials from 
Northampton and Hartbarrow. Following a discussion with Gillespie the Presbytery 
'unanimously declared their satisfaction with the licence, ordination and testimonials 
produced and read' and indicated that they were 'satisfied as to the objections made 
against Mr Gillespie.' 119 On 22 July, the Presbytery approved the call and appointed 
Gillespie to meet with them in August, when the call from Carnock was placed in his 
hand, which he 'judicially accepted.' 120 On the 4 September 1741, Thomas Charters, 
Minister of Inverkeithing and brother in law to James Wardlaw, preached in Carnock 
from Galatians 4 v 19 and following the sermon Gillespie 'was admitted as Minister of 
the Gospel at Carnock.' 121

Gillespie's thirty three years had seen several changes in direction, and been 
characterised by a great deal of uncertainty, as well as by some irregularity with 
respect to the Church of Scotland. Yet his spiritual life had undoubtedly been 
enriched through his contact with Christians holding a variety of different opinions. 
He was a man who would neither be restricted in his circle of Christian fellowship, nor

117 Minutes of Dunfermline Presbytery, CH2/105.6, June 3rd 1741.
118 Ibid.
119 Ibid.
120 Ibid. August 19th 1741.
121 Ibid.
allow his conscience to be at the beck and call of any human group. Like many other men, he must have entered the ministry with a certain degree of apprehension, as well as with an expectation of being used in the advancement of the Kingdom of God. He believed that the word of God gave 'strong encouragement to those who desire to put honour on the name of Christ...to help in this time of great need.' As yet unmarried, and living in a manse which he would later describe as being in a 'bad case,' Gillespie began a ministry that would be marked, not only by consistent zeal for pastoral work, powerful and influential preaching, but also by national controversy.

He entered the Ministry of the Church of Scotland at a time of acute social unrest and profound religious uncertainty. The Secession Church, to which he had very briefly belonged, was continuing to expand. The Parish of Carnock feeling the effects of the Secession, both through Ralph Erskine's ministry in Dunfermline and through the presence of the societies at nearby Torryburn and Culross. Within a few years of Gillespie's settlement, moreover, the Church of Scotland would be profoundly shaken by the revivals at Cambuslang, Kilsyth and elsewhere in Scotland.

122 From a Sermon preached on the Fast Day in the Tolbooth Kirk of Edinburgh on 1st November, 1741. M.S.S. Sermons, in two small volumes, f7v.

123 Minutes of Dunfermline Presbytery, CH2/105.6, 24 March 1742.
CHAPTER 2: REVIVAL

Any understanding of the life and thought of Thomas Gillespie must take into account the influence of the Revival in 1742. Gillespie visited the major centres of the revival in Cambuslang and Kilsyth, where he was an eye witness of the impact of the revival upon many people. 1 Writing to James Robe on 20 July 1742, he speaks of the great 'pleasure and thankfulness' which he felt in seeing 'a saving work of the Spirit of God, upon the souls of a great many persons of different ages, with whom I particularly conversed'. 2 It is for this reason that this chapter is given over to describing the events surrounding the revival, the way in which Gillespie was involved in the awakening, and the effect it had upon the relationship between the Seceders and Church Evangelicals.

The Secession

In 1741, George Whitefield made the first of twelve visits to Scotland, preaching in Dunfermline on 31 July in the 'seceding meeting-house' which had been built for Ralph Erskine. 3 His visit came at a time when the Presbytery of Dunfermline was trying to reach a decision on how to deal with the problem of Ralph Erskine, who was continuing to exercise his ministry within the Abbey church in Dunfermline, as well as to preach in his own meeting house. On 2 June 1742 the presbytery agreed to ask the magistrates and baillies of Dunfermline to bring Erskine's ministry in the Abbey church to an end. These two events - Whitefield's visit and Erskine's ejection - not only finalised the secession of the Associate Presbytery from the Church of Scot-

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1 In a letter to Thomas Davidson written on 23 August, 1742, Henry Davidson speaks of the communion 'at Kilsyth five weeks ago, where our Brother T. G. was made useful.' Letters to Christian Friends, p 62.

2 James Robe, A Short Narrative of the Extraordinary Work of the Spirit of God, (Glasgow, 1790), p 153.

land, but also divided them from their fellow evangelicals who remained within the establishment.4

In 1733, when the four 'brethren' had been suspended from the ministry, they had received widespread support from their fellow evangelicals within the Church. The representation of the Presbytery of Selkirk was typical of the feelings of many people within the Church, when they unanimously agreed to send a fourfold overture to the 1734 Assembly.5 First, they asked the Assembly to restore the four 'brethren' to their ministerial charges, after administering a 'solemn admonition' in order to maintain the authority of the Church. Secondly, they criticised the way in which the 1732 Act, relating to the settlement of vacant churches, had been passed, claiming that the Assembly had ignored the wishes of the majority of presbyteries.6 They asked the Assembly to rescind the Act, restoring the position of the Church to its state in 1731. Thirdly, the presbytery suggested that another attempt be made to petition King George to repeal the 1712 Patronage Act.7 Finally, they asked that the


5 The complete set of representations are in the Assembly Papers for 1732, S.R.O. CHI/2/65 f 293 r to f 366 r and CHI/2/66 pp 21 - 32.

6 An examination of the Assembly Papers for 1732 reveals that the majority of Presbyteries and Synods who responded to the Overture anent the planting of vacant churches, were opposed to it being turned into a standing act of the Church. Those who opposed the act included the Presbyteries of Aberdour, Elgin, Strathbogie, Biggar, Glasgow, Taine, Dingwall, Chanonry, Deer, Ellon, Alford, Kincardine, Aberdeen, Brechin, Cupar, Dunfermline, Stirling, Perth, Lanark, Ayr, Wigton, Kirkcudbright, Kirkwall, Penpoint, Lochmaben, Dornoch, Jedburgh, Selkirk, Forrest, Dunkeld, Shetland, St Andrews, Auchterarder, Paisley, Earlston and the Synod of Murray. Several Presbyteries, including Haddington, Dumfries, Irvine, Kelso and Dundee suggested amendments and only the Presbyteries of Turriff, Pitfour, Meigle, Dalkeith, Fordoun, Forfar, Chirnside, Aberbrothock (Arbroath), Edinburgh and a Presbytery whose minute is indecipherable (f 297 r) agreed to the overture becoming an act. Assembly Papers for 1732, S.R.O. CHI/2/65 f 293 r to f 366 r and CHI/2/66 pp 21-32. Records of the General Assembly 1730-1734, S.R.O. CHI/1/33, p 208. The vote carried 'by a very great plurality' Ibid., p 346. See A Letter to a Reverend Member of the General Assembly, (Edinburgh, 1733) who complains of how the Assembly paid 'little regard to Instructions of the greatest moment, from Synods and Presbyteries' p 4.

7 The 1734 Assembly sent John Willison of Dundee, Lauchlan McIntosh of Errol and James Gordon of Alford to petition the King and Parliament. In 1735 another delegation consisting of Alexander
authority of the Commission of the Assembly be limited, so that it would not be allowed to act in an arbitrary manner. 8

The 1734 Assembly took the unusual action, not only of repealing the 1732 Act regarding vacant churches, but also of taking steps to restore the four 'brethren' to the ministry. 9 In 1734, 1735 and 1736 several Acts were passed, which many evangelicals hoped would bring the Seceders back into the Church. 10 John Willison expressed to the Seceders his disappointment that they had not returned to carry on the work of 'reformation in the Church,' despite the fact that many ministers had 'used their most strenuous endeavours...to get the door opened to you...and got you publicly invited and pressed to return'. 11


10 In 1735 the Assembly passed an Act and Recommendation for Preserving Unity, and Preventing Error within this Church which specified the problems of 'deism, infidelity, Popery, and other gross errors,' in Acts of the General Assembly, p 632. In 1736 an Act concerning Preaching was carried which recalled the General Assembly of 1645 and emphasised the importance of an evangelical proclamation of the Christian faith. Ibid., pp 636-7. The Assembly also limited the powers which were given to the Assembly Commission to make sure that any decisions were made by the General Assembly itself. Ibid., p 640. Finally an act relating to Patronage was approved which indicated the concern of the Assembly to be faithful to the principles of the Reformation 'that no minister shall be intruded into any parish contrary to the will of the congregation.' Ibid., pp 641.

11 Willison believed that this contributed to many evangelicals giving up any further attempts to bring about a change in the General Assembly, A Letter from Mr John Willison to Mr James Fisher, (Edinburgh, 1743), p 32. The evangelical ministers within the Church of Scotland probably felt that the action of the Seceders in holding their first service of public worship at Edinburgh within the parish of the West Kirk where Thomas Pitcairn, a friend of George Whitefield was minister, was unwise. See Hew Scott, Fasti, Vol. 1, p 97 and Records of the General Assembly, S.R.O. CH 1/1/40, p 56. The feeling of division among the laity is seen in the Memoirs of the Life and Experiences of Marion Laird, (Glasgow, 1775) who was a women in Greenock who had joined the Secession Church and writes (1741/42) of how her 'spirit was overwhelmed...what a matter of grief is it to see so few owning a covenanted-work of reformation...I myself was witness to hear one of our ministers say, 'We of this generation have nothing to do with these old covenants'. p 25.
Yet, even in 1738, when it was becoming clear that the Seceders would not return to the Church, another year was allowed to lapse before steps were taken to depose their clergy. 12 In 1739, when a narrow majority of the Assembly thought the time had come to finally depose the Seceding ministers, John Willison entered his dissent. 13 Even after the Seceders appeared before the Assembly and refused to recant or apologise for their actions, there was still a small majority against proceeding to a final act of deposition until 1740. 14 Although the Assembly of 1740 deposed the Seceding ministers 'by a very great majority', 15 fifteen ministers and four elders continued to dissent against the deposition. 16

The reluctance of the Seceders to return to the Church, along with their actions in establishing an Associate Presbytery, baptising children, celebrating the Lord's Supper, licensing preachers and ordaining ministers, eventually brought a hostile reaction from many evangelicals who had supported their original stand against

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12 'although...this Church might proceed in the Exercise of Discipline...yet the Assembly Chusing rather still to treat them in the Spirit of Meekness, Brotherly Love and Forbearance, and by all proper means to Reclaim these poor Deluded people who have been carried away by this Division' Records of the General Assembly 1735-1738, S.R.O. CHI/1/35, pp 499-500.

13 Morren, Annals, p 7 who mentions Willison and four other ministers, along with two elders who entered their dissent.


15 Morren, Annals, p 17.

patronage. Despite the reluctance of many evangelicals to associate themselves with the deposition, the act of 1740 resulted in a wedge being driven between the Seceders and Church Evangelicals, creating a split that would widen during the Cambuslang revival.

On coming to Carnock, Thomas Gillespie was almost immediately involved in the dispute concerning Ralph Erskine. In April 1742, when the Presbytery of Dunfermline were still considering how to remove Ralph Erskine from the Abbey Church, he was preaching in Dunfermline and in one of the very few personal references to be found within his sermons, spoke of how 'frequently matters so fall out that they with whom they wish to walk in harmony stand at a distance from them.' Two months later, Gillespie entered his dissent against the proposal to involve the magistrates of Dunfermline in bringing Ralph Erskine's ministry in the Abbey Church to an end.

George Whitefield and the Great Awakening

George Whitefield had been in contact with the Erskine brothers for over two years prior to his arrival in Scotland. The correspondence had been instigated by

17 John Williamson, one of the Marrowmen, wrote two pamphlets against the Seceders. These were the Seasonable Testimony, (Edinburgh, 1738) and Plain Dealing for the Conviction of the Seceding Brethren, (Edinburgh, 1739). John Currie, a former close friend of Ebenezer Erskine when he was the minister of Portmoak, who had written against the act of 1732 in Queries anent the Assembly's Overture, (Edinburgh, 1732); A Full Vindication of the People's Rights to elect their own Pastors (Edinburgh, 1733); now took up his pen in attacking the action of Seceders in An Essay on Separation, (Edinburgh, 1738); A Vindication of the Real Reformation of the Church, (Edinburgh, 1740).

18 Gillespie Mss, (New College), p 40.


Whitefield who had heard of the success of the Secession in Scotland 21 and wrote to Ralph Erskine, detailing events surrounding his own ministry in England and Wales. By 4 August 1739, Ralph Erskine was satisfied with the enquiries he had made concerning Whitefield and wrote in his diary that he was praying for him and his colleagues, thanking God 'for what he has done to them and by them.' 22 Although Erskine attempted to influence Whitefield to leave the Church of England, he balked at their 'insisting only on Presbyterian government, exclusive of all other ways of worshipping God.' 23 Nevertheless, with hopes that Whitefield could be persuaded to join them as someone 'on the way of reformation,' 24 the Associate Presbytery issued an invitation to Whitefield to come to Scotland, 25 with the proviso that he would only preach within the confines of the Associate Presbytery. 26 Whitefield was unwilling to accede to their request, believing that his calling was 'simply to preach the gospel' to people 'of whatever denomination.' 27

Whitefield came to Scotland following a visit to New England, where he had

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21 Whitefield was particularly struck by the way in which the Seceders were preaching in the open air. He writes of receiving a letter from Ebenezer Erskine telling him of 'preaching to fourteen thousand people...there are other field-preachers in the world beside myself.' George Whitefield's Journals. (London, 1960), p 275.

22 Donald Fraser, The Life and Diary of the Rev Ralph Erskine. (Edinburgh, 1834), p 287. In a letter dated 23 July 1739, Erskine sent the greetings of all of the seceding brethren to Whitefield as those who 'love and respect you in the Lord.' Ibid., pp 210.

23 Fraser, Ralph Erskine. Ibid., p 311.


25 Letter written by Ralph Erskine on 10 April 1741. Ibid.

26 Erskine expressed his fears that if Whitefield preached for ministers within the Church of Scotland then their 'persecutors' would use his 'success' within the establishment against their secession. Ibid. Erskine also gives an interesting insight into the growth of the Secession when he tells Whitefield that their Theological Hall had 'more candidates for the ministry...than most of the public colleges, except Edinburgh.' Ibid., p 505.

27 Ibid., pp 505-6.
been involved with Jonathan Edwards in furthering the Great Awakening. The connection between Whitefield, Edwards and the leaders of the revival in Scotland would have long lasting repercussions. \(^{28}\) News of the spiritual awakening in New England was eagerly received on the Scottish side of the Atlantic, and by 1741 there were widespread expectations that Scotland would experience a similar outpouring of the Holy Spirit. \(^{29}\)

The revival tradition in Scotland was a vital part of the identity and aspirations of evangelicals in the Church of Scotland. Accounts of the revivals of Stewarton and Irvine in 1625 and Kirk of Shotts in 1630 \(^{30}\) were recalled in 1742 to give a legitimacy to the contemporary outbreak. \(^{31}\)


\(^{29}\) M. J. Crawford, 'New England and the Scottish Religious Revivals of 1742' in *American Presbyterians*, 69:1 (Spring, 1991) p 25. *The Weekly History* (London, 1741), 22:2f.; 26:2ff. Mark Noll suggests that although 'Scotland and America were quite different places...In theology, the two regions were strikingly similar. In both, a hereditary Calvinism provided the dominant theological perspective' Noll, *Revival*, pp 52-53.

\(^{30}\) Accounts of the earlier Scottish revivals can be found in R. Fleming, *The Fulfilling of Scripture* (Edinburgh, 1850), Vol. 2 pp 95-99. See also W. J. Cooper, *Scottish Revivals*, (Dundee, 1918), pp 26-39. The Seceders also appealed to Kirk of Shotts as a manifestation of revival, but argued that those ministers who were used in the revivals of the 1630s were those who were standing for 'reformation work' within the church. James Fisher, *A Review of the Preface to a Narrative of the Extraordinary Work at Kilsyth*, (Glasgow, 1742), pp 26f.

Whitefield arrived in Edinburgh on 30 July 1741. Although he was met by ministers of the Church of Scotland, he fulfilled his promise to the Erskine brothers by proceeding immediately to Dunfermline, being 'determined to give them the first offer of my poor ministrations.' 32 Ralph Erskine was evidently favourably impressed by Whitefield, and in letters to both his brother Ebenezer and Adam Gib, Seceding minister in Edinburgh, he noted that 'the Lord is evidently with him.' 33 Whitefield returned to Edinburgh on 31 July, where he preached 'to many thousands.' 34 On 5 August, as previously agreed, Whitefield returned to Dunfermline for a meeting with the Associate Presbytery, whom he described as a 'set of grave venerable men!' 35 According to the account which Whitefield later gave to Thomas Noble in New York, the discussion centred on the question of church government and the covenants, matters which Whitefield did not consider to be of primary importance to the faith. There appears to have been a difference of opinion between members of the Associate Presbytery, Ebenezer suggesting that they exercised patience, whereas a presbyter 'immediately replied that no indulgence was to be shown to me.' The end result was 'an open breach' of fellowship between Whitefield and the Seceders, 36 although in a letter to Whitefield, 37 Ralph Erskine indicated that he continued to have a high


33 Donald Fraser, Life and Diary of Ralph Erskine, pp 326- 7. 'Ralph Erskine to Ebenezer Erskine', July 31st, 1741, National Library of Scotland, Ms 10782, f.23.

34 Whitefield speaks in a letter to John Cennick of Ralph Erskine accompanying him to Edinburgh, although in his letter to Adam Gib, Erskine merely speaks of 'coming along with Mr. Whitefield to the Ferry.' It appears that Erskine travelled with Whitefield as far as North Queensferry and then came to Edinburgh on Tuesday 4 August to accompany Whitefield back to Dunfermline. It was on this occasion that Erskine came into the pulpit at Canongate. See Whitefield, Works, Vol. 1, pp 305, 309. cf. also Andrew Waddell, Satan's Ape Detected, (Glasgow, 1742), p 11, and John Lewis, London Weekly History, No. 20, p 4.


36 Ibid. James Fisher recounts his memories of the meeting in A Review of a Narrative, pp 65-6.

37 Donald Fraser notes that he could not find this letter, although it was mentioned in a letter to Adam Gib written on the same day. Ralph Erskine, p 335. 'Ralph Erskine to George Whitefield' 17
regard for Whitefield. While admitting that some 'harsh words' had been spoken to Whitefield, Erskine revealed his disappointment that Whitefield was now associating with ministers of the established Church 'wherein the affairs of our Associate Presbytery will be represented to the worst disadvantage.' This in turn led Erskine to inform Whitefield 'that you are quite lost to us.' Reflecting on these events, Whitefield expressed his hope that Scotland would soon experience a revival, believing 'nothing but that can break down the partition wall of bigotry.' He would soon discover that such a revival, far from breaking down sectarian animosities, would raise further barriers of bitterness.

The Cambuslang Revival

Whitefield remained in Scotland until 29 October, his ministry of three months taking him north to Aberdeen and south into the borders, where he visited Henry Davidson in Galashiels. He appears to have made Edinburgh the centre of his activities, and travelled to various parts of the country, usually returning to

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38 Erskine writes 'I am weary to be so long out of your company...you shall keep company with none that have a heart more inflamed with love to you than mine is and however you have disappointed me in some things, yet neither my love to you, nor hopes about you, are abated.' In a letter to David Erskine, son of Ebenezer written on 13 August 1741, Whitefield speaks of how 'I wish all were like-minded with your honoured father and uncle; matters then would not be carried on with so high an hand. I fear they are led too much.' Works, Vol. 1, p 314.

39 Ralph Erskine had told his brother Ebenezer that when Whitefield arrived in Edinburgh he only spent an hour in the city. What he did not tell him, and perhaps did not know, was that Whitefield had been 'met and entertained at Edinburgh by (Alexander) Webster, and some of his brethren. From them he learned the state of church prejudices and parties in Scotland' Scots Magazine, LXVI (1802) p 279. Whitefield obviously felt the pressure from both sides when he wrote to John Willison on 10 August 'I wish you would not trouble yourself or me in writing about the corruptions of the Church of England. I believe there is no church perfect under heaven...I think there is no need of casting myself out. The divisions in Scotland are affecting, and undoubtedly they will occasion great searchings of heart.' Works, Vol. 1, p 310.


41 He stayed in Edinburgh in the home of Thomas Davidson, an Edinburgh merchant, in James'
Edinburgh after about a week. 42 Thomas Davidson spoke of how 'many real Christians have been revived by his means....some of the most notorious and abandoned sinners...have a promising concern upon their minds about religion.' 43 The Seceders, on the other hand, tended to 'speak slightly of the work of God in his hands, and greedily embrace every thing, that may lessen him, and prove injurious to his good name.' 44

It was in Glasgow that William McCulloch, the parish minister in Cambuslang, first heard Whitefield preach. 45 Several of his congregation accompanied McCulloch to Glasgow, one of whom, Mary Scott, took the opportunity to hear 'nine sermons in Glasgow and four in Paisley.' 46 The visit was to have a marked influence on McCulloch, as he preached a series of sermons on the subject of regeneration, with a renewed enthusiasm and expectation of blessing. 47 He also made frequent references

Court. Davidson was a close friend of Thomas Boston, Henry Davidson, and the Gillespie family. Thomas Davidson had changed from Presbyterianism to Independency and it may have been Henry Davidson who had some influence over him. When Whitefield was invited to take up the pastorate of an Independent church in Braintree in Essex, he suggested Thomas Davidson who became the pastor in 1742. See Ms. 91 in the National Library of Scotland; Frederick West, History of Nonconformity in Braintree and Bocking. (London, 1891), p 12; H Davidson, Letters to Christian Friends, pp 61-64, 107-114, 168-174, 206-212, 247ff; Life of Ralph Erskine, p 301 who speaks of Davidson sending some books of Thomas Boston to Whitefield in 1739.


43 Letter to a friend in London, dated 24 October 1741 in Glasgow Weekly History, No. 9, p 7. In another letter dated 5 November 1741, a friend in Edinburgh told Whitefield that at the Tolbooth Church there were more than an extra hundred communicants 'eighteen of whom were found to be converted by your ministry.' John Lewis, London Weekly History, No. 34, p 3.

44 Glasgow Weekly History, No. 9, p 8.

45 Whitefield preached ten times in five days, chiefly in the High Church from Friday 11 to Tuesday 15 September where 'the congregations were very large...and many were brought under the deepest convictions.' G. Whitefield, Works, p 319. A letter from McCulloch concerning that visit is found in the Glasgow Weekly History, No 13 where he speaks of 'fifty persons...savingly converted by the blessing and power of God...besides several others under convictions.'

46 McCulloch Mss., II 243. At least fourteen of those who gave their testimonies to McCulloch had heard Whitefield preach in Glasgow.

47 McCulloch had begun this series in February 1741. See Robe, A Short Narrative, p 2. Mary Lap
to the Revival in New England, taking the opportunity to read to his hearers, missives, attestations and journals which he had received from his correspondents, giving an account of conversions which had taken place in different parts of the world, especially under Mr Whitefield's ministry.' In this way, the minds and hearts of his people were prepared to expect and pray for an outpouring of the Spirit on their own parish community.

By the end of January 1742, a concern for spiritual renewal began to affect several of the Cambuslang parishioners and led Ingram More, a shoemaker, along with Robert Bowman, a weaver to gather together a petition asking McCulloch to provide the parish with a weekly lecture. The first lecture was held on 4 February. On 14 February, when the church was full 'and many standing for want of seats,' McCulloch preached on the passage 'except a man be born again.' On this occasion, Catherine Jackson became so overcome with distress that she had to be taken to the manse for counselling. It was, however, the weekly lecture on the following Thursday, 18 February, which was commemorated for years afterwards as the day when the revival began.

48 Sir John Sinclair, Statistical Account, Vol. VII, pp 107ff. McCulloch began to publish his own account of the Revival in the Glasgow Weekly History, the first number being dated 'Nov. 18th. 1741.' It was a small 8vo of 8 pp, which ran for exactly one year and was made up of letters, partly reprinted from the London Weekly History, and some of which were printed for the first time in Glasgow.

49 More and Bowman had both been converted during Whitefield's ministry in Scotland. Ninety heads of families, which was more than fifty per cent of the congregation, signed the petition.

50 Robe, A Short Narrative, p 3.

51 McCulloch Mss., II.266.

52 Ibid., II.267. In a letter which McCulloch had written earlier in the day to George Whitefield he expressed his hope that 'God...is on the way to come and do mighty works of grace among us....There seems to be a more than ordinary Concern about Salvation among them.' London Weekly History, No. 51, p 2.
After the lecture ended, a number of people in great distress were brought to the manse for prayer and discussion with the minister. News of the dramatic evening spread throughout the parish and the surrounding countryside, and such crowds of people began to arrive in Cambuslang that McCulloch was persuaded to provide a daily service during the next several months. When the kirk session met on 6 June they concluded that the time had now arrived for the Lord's Supper to be celebrated once again in the parish, and proposed 11 July as an appropriate occasion.

Although the initial impetus for the Revival had occurred during the earlier visit which Whitefield had made to Glasgow in 1741, he did not actually preach in Cambuslang until 18 June 1742. By the time he preached at the first communion on Saturday 10 July, the crowds which heard him were estimated as more than 20,000 people. On the following day, when the communion was celebrated, some 1,700 communicants received the sacrament, although the actual number of those present was estimated as exceeding 30,000. By 15 July, Whitefield had preached seventeen sermons in the parish and McCulloch spoke of 'above 500 souls...savingly brought home to God' When the session met on 18 July, McCulloch reported the

53 By the middle of March, Whitefield had been informed that 'the work had begun in Scotland,' Glasgow Weekly History, No. 17 and by the middle of April the news of the revival had reached New England. Ibid., No. 31.

54 From 28 February, which was a Sabbath, until the end of June there were only 9 days in March, April and May and 12 in June when there was no service provided at Cambuslang. There was a significant rise in the offerings at the beginning of the Revivals. On 21 February the offering was £11.11.00 Scots., on 28 February it reached 25.04.06 and on 7 March it amounted to £37.07.06. Minutes of the Cambuslang Kirk Session. S.R.O. CH1/415.1, p 197.

55 The session was conscious that the parish had sustained a 'great loss...thro' want of the Sacrament...for a good while past.' The session was strengthened on 11 April when Mr Duncan, Ingram More and Matthew Strong were appointed as elders, and in June, Cland Summer, James Jackson and Archibald Fife were also appointed. Ibid., pp 94 - 95.


57 Glasgow Weekly History, No. 30 pp 1-2.
suggestion of Alexander Webster from Edinburgh, that a second communion should be observed as soon as possible. Although the suggestion was unprecedented, 58 the session considered that because 'a gracious God was pleased to remarkably countenance the late solemnity', the 15 August was settled on for the second communion. 59 Considering the fact that the total population of Glasgow in 1740 was only just over 17,000 60 the numbers attending the communion, estimated at being between thirty thousand and fifty thousand, 61 were astounding. It is hardly surprising, given the extraordinary circumstances, that the youthful John Erskine should draw the conclusion that Scotland was the verge of the 'latter day Millennial glory.' 62 However, although the second communion aroused expectations of greater blessing to come, the high water mark of the revival in Cambuslang had been reached.63

James Robe, the minister of Kilsyth, had frequently travelled the few miles to

58 James Robe wrote that 't'it hath not been known in Scotland that the Lord's Supper hath been given twice in a summer in any congregation before this revival.' Christian Monthly History, November 1743, p 28.
59 Minutes of Cambuslang Kirk Session, p 96.
61 A Short Narrative, p 36. A normal Sabbath day collection at Cambuslang ranged from between £3 and £12 Scots. The first communion Sabbath in July brought in £117 12s and the second £194. 2s. Over two hundred people came from Edinburgh and Kilmarnock, one hundred from Irvine and there were even some who had travelled from England and Ireland. Leigh Schmidt accepts these figures as being generally accurate, Holy Fairs, p 42.
62 J. Erskine, Signs of the Times Considered, or the high PROBABILITY that the present APPEARANCES in New England, and the West of Scotland, are a PRELUDE of the Glorious Things promised to the CHURCH in the latter Ages, (Edinburgh, October 1742).
63 J. Merrilie speaks of how in November 1742 she was discouraged 'at the thoughts that the great work that had been at Cambuslang was is some measure ceased.' McCulloch Mss., 1.374-5. In November 1743 Robe speaks of 'the former summer when ...the number of the awakened was like the cutting down and reaping in the harvest, it was in handfuls; but now it was only like the gleaning of grapes, when the vintage is done.' Christian History for 1744 (Boston, 1745), p 173.
Cambuslang to help in the work, 64 although it was not until 16 May before he saw any real evidence of spiritual awakening, when thirty people, twenty of whom belonged to the parish, were counselled concerning their spiritual distress. 65 By the time Whitefield preached in Kilsyth on 15 June, the revival was well established in the parish. 66 Robe, like McCulloch, was assisted by a number of visiting ministers, one of them being Thomas Gillespie who was so useful that Robe later asserted that 'of all others, the Rev Thomas Gillespie, Minister of the Gospel at Carnock, was most remarkably God’s send to me.' 67

Gillespie came to Kilsyth on Monday 5 July and stayed for ten days. 68 His preaching had an immediate impact and Robe speaks of three people being awakened as a result of his ministry. 69 On the Saturday when Gillespie was preaching, one women testified that 'she was filled with a Rapture of Love to the Lord Jesus Christ.' 70 When Robe followed the example of Cambuslang in holding a second communion in October, Gillespie returned to give further assistance. 71 Within the McCulloch

64 James Robe, A Short and True Account of the Wonderful Conversion at Kilsyth, (Glasgow, 1742), p 3.

65 Robe was honest enough to admit his disappointment that other nearby parishes had 'several persons...awakened at Cambuslang, and that I had not one' See Robe, A Short Narrative. pp 70, 74-6.

66 Whitefield wrote that he had preached twice at Kilsyth 'to ten thousand; but such a commotion, I believe, you never saw. O what agonies and cries were there.' L Tyerman, Life of Whitefield. Vol. 2, p 5.

67 Robe, A Short Narrative. p 96. News reached Henry Davidson who wrote to Thomas Davidson in Braintree that 'our brother Thomas Gillespie was made useful.' Davidson, Letters to Christian Friends. p 62.

68 Robe, A Short Narrative. p 96. The sacrament was celebrated on 11 July.

69 London Weekly History. No. 76, p 3. Robe speaks of how 'Gillespie could scarce be heard for weeping and crying.' Ibid.


71 Ibid., p 142.
manuscripts, several converts refer to the power and influence of his preaching, as well as to his usefulness as a counsellor. Gillespie had no doubt in his mind that the revival was a 'saving work of the Spirit of God,' and that the experiences of those who had been converted 'appeared solid, scriptural, and entirely agreeable with the sentiments of learned judicious divines, whom I have heard treat the subject of conversion, or whose writings on that head I have perused.'

Many other places, not only in the immediate vicinity of Cambuslang, but also in more distant parts of Scotland, began to report a significant awakening within their own parishes, including 'St Ninians and Gangunnock, Muthill...Torryburn and Carnock.'

The awakening in the Parish of Carnock is not documented in any of the literature of the period, and is not mentioned directly in the Carnock kirk session minutes. The knowledge of the revival which Gillespie had experienced in Cambuslang must have influenced his own preaching. It is not insignificant that the first celebration of communion which Gillespie organised at Carnock was on 26 June 1742, when one visible sign of a renewal of spiritual interest was the unusually large

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73 McCulloch Mss. 1:643.

74 Attestation by the Rev Thomas Gillespie dated July 20th, 1742 in Robe, A Short Narrative, pp 153-4. John Currie cites a similar letter, dated 20 August, 1742 in which Gillespie writes to a cousin in Glasgow, who was sympathetic towards the Seceders and who considered the work as being 'diabolical, dangerous and infectious' and Gillespie told him that he considered it 'a work of the Spirit of God, leading sinners to Christ.' A New Testimony unto and Further Vindication of the Extraordinary Work of God at Cambuslang, (Glasgow, 1743), pp 51 - 53.

75 Prince, Christian History, pp 351-355. John Erskine referred the fact that 'something of the same kind seems to be beginning at Torryburn' in October 1742. Signs of the Times Considered, p 17. John Currie speaks of Thomas Gillespie being 'for sundry days, even a part of three weeks, at and about Cambuslang, conversing with sundry there, and at Glasgow.' A New Testimony, pp 50 - 53.
offering which amounted to £66 Scots. As in many other parishes which were affected by the revival, the awakening soon subsided and by 1747 the kirk session was distressed by the 'departure of the Holy Spirit and thence the small success of the gospel conversion work at a stand, and in particular in this congregation,' and so they set aside Wednesday 23 December for 'solemn humiliation and prayer to God if it may be He will yet have mercy upon us.'

Many reasons have been given as to why the Scottish evangelical awakening occurred in 1742. Undoubtedly the expectations which had been built up as a result of the awakening in New England and the visit of George Whitefield in 1741 are central to any true understanding of the work. Yet there are two particular catalysts which the revival leaders themselves believed were crucial in the awakening being establish and sustained.

One of the most significant antecedents of the 1742 revival was the resurgence of interest in societies of prayer. In 1731, when McCulloch became the minister of Cambuslang, a parish which had a population of 934 persons, there were three societies in his parish meeting weekly for prayer, a number which would increase to more than a dozen by the end of 1742. McCulloch believed that the groups which

76 In 1736 the collection had amounted to only £36 Scots. In 1742 a new tent was constructed, a communion table was made and £1 4s was set aside from the offering 'for land spoilt by people going and coming at the Sacrament.' Records of the Kirk Session in Carnock, S.R.O. CH2/59.2 pp 110. In 1744 the collection was £88, in 1745 it amounted to £83, although in 1746 it only reached £76. The Communion in 1744 was spoken by W. Hetly of Muthill as 'an agreeable occasion.' The Christian Monthly History, Number VI, p 54.

77 Records of the Kirk Session in Carnock, p 171.


had met for prayer on three consecutive evenings in February 1742, in the manse at Cambuslang, had been instrumental in engendering a spirit of anticipation for the forthcoming weekly lecture, where the significant spiritual awakening first became manifest. 81

Religious societies, meeting for prayer, bible reading and Christian fellowship, were encouraged by John Knox as early as 1557. 82 During the troubled years of the 'killing times' the Covenanters advocated the use of such house meetings as a means of strengthening the faith and spiritual resolve of their people. James Renwick, in his last speech and testimony, counselled his friends to 'be careful in keeping your societies.' 83 Many of these societies became the United Societies of the Cameronians, although there were many less extreme groups who chose to remain within the Church of Scotland in 1689, and continued to hold their regular meetings in private houses on weekdays. 84

80 James Robe, A Short Narrative, p 316. McCulloch himself had 'for a considerable time bypast, been praying fervently for a Revival to decay'd Religion.' A True Account of the Wonderful Conversion at Cambuslang, (Glasgow, 1742), p 3. During 1742 the number of societies increased to more than a dozen, although by 1752 they had decreased to six. Robe, A Short Narrative, Ibid.

81 James Robe, A Short Narrative, Ibid., p 3.


83 The Life and Letters of James Renwick, Edited by W. H. Carslaw, (Edinburgh, 1893), p 261. The original Ms. is in New College Library, Edinburgh. Michael Shield's Faithful Contendings displayed has the subtitle of An Historical Relation of the State and Actings of the Suffering Remnant in the Church of Scotland, who subsisted in Select Societies... (Glasgow, 1770), Frontispiece. John Williston speaks of how 'our godly ancestors cleave to their meetings in this land in times of hottest persecutions...to enjoy the sweetness and benefit of Christian fellowship in private meetings,' The Duty and Advantage of Religious Societies, (Kilmarnock, 1783), p 8. Walter Smith, another Covenanter, wrote Rules and Directions anent Private Christians Meeting for Prayer and Conference to Mutual Edification. In Six Saints of the Covenant, Edited by Patrick Walker. (London, 1901), Vol. II, pp 83-96.

84 Fawcett, Cambuslang Revival, p 66.
The societies were encouraged to meet regularly during the week,\(^8^5\) for the purpose of scripture reading, prayer, fellowship, discussion of theological and practical subjects, and the sharing of spiritual experiences.\(^8^6\) They were designed for the members' spiritual nourishment and discipline. Each society normally met on a weekly basis and if there were several meeting in the same locality, then they would combine their numbers for a special monthly meeting called the 'association'. Delegates from the associations met on a yearly basis, when the assembled company was called the 'correspondence'.\(^8^7\) When the Secession occurred in 1733, it was from many of these groupings that the four 'brethren' derived their support, and which eventually formed the basis of new congregations.\(^8^8\)

Religious societies flourished during the revival. John Willison was delighted to hear about the increase of societies around Edinburgh in 1740 'especially among college students...which revives our hopes concerning the church, and the promoting of Christianity in the rising generation.'\(^8^9\)

By 1743, the practice of united prayer had extended beyond the boundaries of

\(^8^5\) The Christian History for 1743. p 243. Hepburn commends the practise of meeting on the Lord's day if no sermon has been provided. See Rules and Directions anent. p 5.

\(^8^6\) John Hepburn, Rules and Directions for Fellowship-Meetings. (Edinburgh, 1756), p 3. George Whitefield was particularly concerned that the societies did not content themselves with 'reading, singing and praying together; but set some time apart to confess your faults and communicate your experiences one to another' for acquainting 'each other with the operations of God's Spirit upon their souls...was the great end and intention of those who first began these societies.' A Letter from the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield to the Religious Societies of England. (Edinburgh, 1742), p 16.


\(^8^9\) J. Willison, Religious Societies. p 3.
any one parish. A report was printed that 'a Proposal from the Praying Societies at Edinburgh' desired 'to set apart Friday 18th now past for Thanksgiving...and Prayer.'

In these events, a seed was sown, which would eventually grow into the Concert for Prayer which was suggested at a meeting of Scottish ministers in October 1744. The initial outcome was that for two years individual Christians were encouraged to spend some time on Saturday evening and Sunday morning in prayer for revival, and that the first Tuesday of February, May, August and November would be set aside for special prayer 'either in private praying societies, or in public meetings, or alone in secret.'

Gillespie was totally committed to the concept and continued to hold Quarterly meetings for prayer 'for the down pouring of the Spirit' on a regular basis throughout his ministry, both in Carnock and in Dunfermline. He was convinced that the preaching of the gospel 'has so little success' because of the fact that those who listen are 'neglecting to pray for their ministers,' and so he encouraged his congregation to 'attend and join reverently in public prayer' for the 'happy success in conversion of sinners.' Gillespie believed that 'when the Lord God is to do any great and mighty work in the church and the world, he stirs up his people to pray for

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92 Ibid., p 321. The concept of the Concert for Prayer occupied the whole of the Christian Monthly History for April 1745. See the Diary of George Brown. (Glasgow, 1856) pp 10 - 11 for an illustration of a layman who was involved in the Prayer Concert during November 1744.

93 e.g. Sermon on 2 May 1758 on Psalm 94 vv 14 - 15 and on 3 May 1759 on Ezekiel 34 v 16 in Dunfermline Sermons for 1758. 7 May 1761 on Isaiah 60 v 1 in New College Sermons. Vol. 1, 2 February 1762 on Isaiah 43 vv 5 - 6 in New College Sermons. Vol. 3.


95 Ibid., p 169.

96 New College Sermons. Vol. 3, f56r.
it and about it.'

The second significant factor in the progress of the revival was the place which was given to the communion season. Within the structure of Scottish piety, the communion season was a highlight, not only for those who took the elements, but also for the hundreds, and sometimes thousands of hearers who often attended several sacramental festivals during the summer months. The connection between the sacrament and spiritual awakening, where the communion season became a 'converting ordinance' in the experience of many who attended, can be traced back to the 1630's and is best exemplified in the revival at Shotts.

Gillespie himself had been converted during one of the communion seasons in the Borders, under the ministry of Thomas Boston who regularly spoke of such occasions as 'sweet gospel day[s],' 'great days[s] of the gospel,' or 'sweet time[s] of the gospel.' Robert Wodrow speaks of the 'fair-days of the Gospel' indicating

97 Aberdeen Sermons. p 137.


99 John Livingston speaks of how 'the night before I had been with some Christians, who spent the night in conference and prayer...and enjoyed...such liberty and melting of heart as I never had the like in publick all my life.' Select Biographies. (Edinburgh, Wodrow Society, 1845), Vol. 1, pp 138-9. Robert Fleming recalls that 'near five hundred had at that time a discernible change wrought on them, of whom most proved lively Christians afterward.' Fulfilling of Scripture. Vol. 1, p 355.

100 Thomas Boston, A General Account. p 46.

101 Robert Wodrow, The Correspondence of the Rev. Robert Wodrow. (Edinburgh, Wodrow Society, 1842-3), Vol. 1, p 55. The involvement of ministers, not only in their own communion celebration, but in other nearby parishes can be seen in a letter from James Hog of Carnock to Wodrow when he says 'I have been so throng with communions in the neighbourhood, and my own work among this people before the sacrament, that I was obliged to drop for a time my correspondence.' Ibid., p 165. In a similar way Wodrow wrote to Abraham Taylor in London of how our communions in the country are all crowded in the summer time, and what by work at home, and assisting my neighbours from May to September, I am generally overburdened.' Ibid., Vol. 3, p 452.
that through the drama of the word and sacrament, many people were reborn and revived, as sinners were converted and believers were renewed in their faith. 102

The McCulloch Papers

From the very beginning of the revival, William McCulloch compiled a written record of those who had been converted. 103 He was convinced that one method of securing an endorsement of the revival as a work of the Holy Spirit was to publish evidence of the revival's transforming influence on individual lives. 104 Although the first volume of manuscripts, containing forty-six testimonies, was sent to a number of leading evangelical ministers for their editorial comments, they were never published during McCulloch's lifetime. 105

McCulloch's examinations record the spiritual experiences of 108 people from in and around Cambuslang, 106 representing about a quarter of the final number of

102 George Wemyss in his Preface to John Spalding, Synaxis Sacra, (Glasgow, 1750), speaks of 'Communion is Scotland' as being 'for the most part very solemn, and...many hundreds, yea thousands in this land, have dated their conversion from some of these occasions.' p viii. For one example of the effect of the communion season on lay piety see Diary of George Brown, pp 96, 145, 165, 192 and 246.

103 Robe, A Short Narrative. p 312.

104 In a letter from Lord Grange to McCulloch, dated 5 December 1743 'I have much the greater concern for the success of your book because I am fully of your opinion, that instances in fact of the power and influence of the Holy Ghost by the gospel on the hearts and lives of men is needful to convince the world of the truth of Christianity....And such are the subjects of your book' Edinburgh Christian Instructor, (1838), p 68.

105 Robe, A Short Narrative. p 312. It was only in 1847 that Rev D MacFarlane, Free Church Minister in Renfrew, published a selection of the testimonies, although they underwent significant alteration as a result of his editing. The Revivals of the Eighteenth Century, (Edinburgh, 1847) p 108. The original Manuscripts are now housed in the New College Library in Edinburgh.

106 Fawcett identified 106 cases. See Cambuslang Revival, p 6; Smout identified 110 cases. See T C Smout, 'Born again at Cambuslang : New Evidence on Popular Religion and Literacy in Eighteenth-Century Scotland,' Past and Present, Vol. 97 (November 1982), p 116. Leigh Schmidt notes that 'five cases in the first volume of the manuscripts are repeated in the second; three of the narratives in the first volume are fragments. These cases have led in the past to some confusion in tabulating how many cases there are. For the record, I have not counted duplicate cases, but have included the three
converts. They provide a wealth of material about the religious experiences of ordinary men and women who came under the influence of the revival. The similarity of structure throughout the two volumes suggests that the converts were responding to a common set of questions regarding their education, religious upbringing, the circumstances of their conversion and the lasting effects of the revival on their lives.

Several of the converts spoke of being awakened to a sense of their own sins by the preaching of Whitefield in Glasgow in September 1741, although actual conversions had only commenced in February 1742. There were several 'means of grace' which brought relief and comfort to those under spiritual distress. For many, it was verses from scripture, which appeared to come into their minds 'with great light,' 'with a strong impression,' 'with greater power and light than almost any word ever I had met with,' which brought a conviction that 'it was from the Spirit of the Lord.' On other occasions the singing of Psalms not only played a part in convicting some people of their sins, but were also vehicles of spiritual joy.

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107 McCulloch speaks of 'a fourth part of the persevering subject' in Robe, A Short Narrative, p 312.


109 McCulloch Mss, 1:123.

110 Ibid., 1:128.

111 Ibid., 1:323.

112 John Willson had encouraged this because it 'helps excite and accentuate the graces; it is the breath of love or joy; it is the eternal work of heaven' A Sacramental Directory (Edinburgh, 1716), p 100.

113 McCulloch Mss, 2:9-15 (Janet Barry); 2:447 (Margaret Clark).
Although most of the narrators neither experienced visions nor heard voices, there were several who found comfort from this source, some even believing that they heard the voice of Christ speaking to them. 115 It was a sight of the crucified Christ 'standing with outstretched arms of mercy, ready to receive' which brought comfort to Catherine Cameron. 116 Several of these, almost superstitious sensations, came under the editorial pen of Alexander Webster, John Willison, Thomas Gillespie and James Ogilvie, to whom McCulloch sent the manuscripts for their comments and suggestions prior to any possible publication.117

Webster and Gillespie were the two editors who were most diligent in weeding out any material which would have backed up the criticisms of the Seceders or brought ridicule on the revival. 118 Passages which referred to visions or fainting

114 Ibid., 2:351ff (Mary Colquhon) 2:480-81 (Jean Wark).

115 Ibid., 1:325; 1:339;

116 Ibid., 1:320.

117 Arthur Fawcett suggests the order of Webster, Gillespie, Willison and Ogilvie Cambuslang Revival, p 7. However the order in which the marginal editorial marking occurs is consistent with the above order. See especially 1:514 where there is an indication that Webster, Willison and Gillespie edited the Mss and then Webster once again read them over before finally handing them on to Ogilvie.

118 Statistically, Gillespie marked more material for deletions than any of the other ministers.

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spells were regularly excised, including the passage in which a convert had declared 'I never fainted or swarfed, nor did I ever see any visions.' 119

Strangely enough, the vivid, almost erotic language which the narrators used to speak of their communion with Christ was rarely censored by the eagle eye of the editors. 120 The reason for this is undoubtedly because of the way in which the Song of Songs, and other scripture passages were used, both by the Seceders and leaders in the Revival, to describe the intimacy of fellowship between Christ and the believer. 121 For this reason, the love for Christ which Catherine Cameron experienced was expressed in terms of ravishing love in which she was willing to 'give up my whole soul and body to him...and my heart was in a flame of love to him...I came home from that Sacrament with Christ in my arms.' 122

One area of theology which Gillespie routinely marked for omission was that of personal covenanting. 123 From his editorial comments and suggested alterations, it is apparent that Gillespie was concerned over Arminianism. Thus the testimony of William Baillie that 'I have frequently prayed to renew my baptismal covenant with God' is changed to 'I have frequently essayed to take fresh hold of God's covenant,' 124

119 McCulloch Mss, 1:283.

120 One exception which Gillespie alone marked for excision was that of Catherine Cameron who spoke of having 'great delight in prayer when I would sometimes have gone to bed, I thought I would have Christ between my arms: He was as a Bundle of Myrrh to me and sweet to my soul.' 1:327.


122 McCulloch Mss, 1:327, 335, 343.

123 Ibid., 1:2; 1:331, 335;
the emphasis being placed on God's initiative in the work of grace on the soul. Further, Baillie's statement, 'I saw it would be presumption in me to lay hold of the promise of Eternal Life, so long as I had not got parted with all my lusts,' is viewed by Gillespie as a remark which could be 'more orthodoxy expressed.' 

For Gillespie, the claim to see visions, to have verses impressed on their minds, and to experience premonitions of future events, were issues with which he felt no sympathy whatsoever, and he consistently marks such passages for removal. Gillespie was so concerned about this subject that in November 1746 he wrote to Jonathan Edwards to ask for his opinion concerning 'impressions respecting facts and future events, etc. whether by Scripture texts or otherwise, made on the minds of good people, and supposed to be of the Lord.' Gillespie believed that he had 'too good occasion to know the hurtful, yea, pernicious tendency of this principle....which has had, I know too well, very bad effects...in Britain, as well as in New England.' 

Gillespie later wrote on this subject in his Essay on the Continuance of Immediate Revelations of Fact and Future Events in the Christian Church. In this

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124 Ibid., 1:2. The comment by Catherine Cameron is similarly changed from 'I thought I got my covenant renewed ' to 'my interest in God's covenant cleared up.' Ibid., 1:335.

125 Ibid., 1:5. Gillespie is probably trying to make the distinction between legal and evangelical repentance which was the issue which sparked off the Marrow of Modern Divinity controversy.


127 Jonathan Edwards, Religious Affections. (Yale University Press, 1959), pp 470-471. In September 1748, in his second letter to Edwards, Gillespie confesses his disappointment that Edwards had 'said nothing...respecting supposed immediate revelations of facts and future events, as special favour conferred on some special favourites of heaven.' Ibid., p 498.


129 Thomas Gillespie, An Essay on the Continuance of Immediate Revelations of Fact and Future Events in the Christian Church. (Edinburgh, 1771) published with a preface by Dr John Erskine. Although this work was not published until 1771, it is evident that Gillespie had not only been thinking about the subject, but had actually written the bulk of the material in the 1740s.

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work, he was concerned that an acceptance of immediate revelations should lessen the authority of scripture. Gillespie was convinced by the arguments put forward by John Owen that all extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit had ceased to exist following the days of the apostles and the completion of the canon of scripture. 130 When he read the account of A. Bilsland, who claimed to have had certain scriptures impressed on his mind which led him to conclude that 'the Lord has been doing some great things abroad' and then maintained that 'within a little while we got notice of the Victory at Dellingen,' Gillespie inserted the comment 'the half of this and the whole preceding page I'd be sorry to see in print or ought like it.' 131

Gillespie was afraid that scripture, which he believed was the only 'object and ground of all divine faith' would be displaced by 'immediate revelations,' which he was convinced were nothing more than 'human fancy.' 132 The conclusion which he drew from the assertion that immediate revelations were still to be expected was that the canon of scripture itself must be less than perfect. 133 Furthermore, he feared that many Christians were recognising the authority of scripture only when they perceived that the Spirit had impressed particular verses on their minds with light and power. 134 He was convinced that claims to possess a knowledge of future events would prove a 'grievous snare' to believers. If the event was one which promised blessing, there would be a danger that Christians would not trust in God for daily grace, and if the event was to be unpleasant, it would produce feelings of 'despondency, dejection and


131 McCulloch Mss., p 131.

132 Gillespie, Essay, p 5.

133 Ibid., p 12.

134 Ibid., p 19.
Gillespie was aware that the issue of voices and visions was not new to Scottish Presbyterians. The days of the Covenanters had been filled with tales of supernatural signs. In the *Fulfilling of Scripture*, Robert Fleming, a former minister of Cambuslang, gave several instances of such phenomena, and Robert Wodrow compiled several volumes of *Analecta*, or 'remarkable providences.' In answering the argument from history, Gillespie replied that it was more probable that these 'were only applications of scripture-prophecies...declaring how it was to be expected the Lord would act toward them.' 

Furthermore, he believed that it was entirely possible for the devil to be active in these impressions, or that they may well have their origins in the human imagination.

The question of dreams was treated by Gillespie as being on a different level. His own opinion was that 'most dreams are the vain rovings of the imaginations occasioned by our thoughts and pursuits when awake' although they could also be 'the effect of the agency of good or evil spirits.' Gillespie was concerned that the devil was using these means to deceive men and women into a false sense of assurance, based upon their feelings rather than faith in the promises of Christ. He spoke of those who might attend a communion season although they had never been concerned about a life of godliness. These people would suddenly become impressed by a passage such as Isaiah 55 v 5 and draw the conclusion that 'the Lord is telling him he

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135 Ibid., p 10.
137 Ibid., p 14.
138 Ibid., p 15.
is his God and husband,' 139 No amount of discussion would dissuade that person from drawing any other conclusion. He was also concerned that some people, who might have been awakened to their sinfulness, would draw false comfort from these impressions and thus 'fall short of real conversion.' 140 Gillespie was writing out of his own experience as a pastor, with a real concern for people like Elizabeth Jackson, when he commented on her testimony as someone who was taking comfort 'without believing in Christ' and thinking that 'the impressions of scripture on the mind...is the intimation of his love, a mistake others appear to fall into.' 141

Almost from the very beginning, the revival came under the critical eye of ministers within the established Church, 142 Episcopalians, 143 as well as Seceders 144 and members of the Reformed Presbytery. 145 The basic premise, from which the

139 Ibid., p 20.
140 Ibid.
141 McCulloch Mss., 1:106
142 John Bissett, A Letter to a Gentleman in Edinburgh containing Remarks upon a late Apology for the Presbyterians in Scotland, (Glasgow, 1743). Whitefield had preached in Aberdeen through the invitation of James Ogilvie. In the afternoon of the same day Bissett took the opportunity to preach a sermon in which he attacked Whitefield by name, and praying 'the Lord to forgive the dishonour that had been put upon him, by my being suffered to preach in that pulpit....Most of the congregation were surprised...especially Mr Ogilvie, who immediately after sermon...stood up and gave notice, that Mr Whitefield would preach in about half an hour.' G. Whitefield, Works. Vol. 1, pp 328-9. The next day the town magistrates apologised to Whitefield for Bisset's behaviour. Hew Scott, Fasti. Vol. 6, p 2. See also A Letter to the Moderator of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, (Edinburgh, 1742). There were others who, although not sympathetic towards the revival, hoped that it would 'effectually destroy the Seceders, who are already greatly diminished, and are every day losing ground.' A Short Account of the Remarkable Conversions at Cambuslang in a Letter from a Gentleman in the West Country to his Friend in Edinburgh, (Glasgow, 1742), p 14.
143 Some Observations upon the Conduct of the Famous Mr W_field by a True Lover of the Church and Country, (Edinburgh, 1742).
144 Act of the Associate Presbytery anent a Publick Fast at Dunfermline, the fifteenth Day of July, 1742, (1742).
145 The Declaration of the True Presbyterians within the Kingdom of Scotland concerning Mr George Whitefield and the Work at Cambuslang, (August 1742).
Seceders and the Reformed Presbytery began their opposition, was the conviction that the Church of Scotland must be reformed before the Spirit would be outpoured in revival. The Cameronians were convinced that God would not 'honour men to be extraordinary instruments of an extraordinary Work of Conversion, who have so many Ways dishonoured and despised him, as at the present Time-serving Erastian Ministers in Scotland have done.' 146

In response to such criticism, John Willison of the Church of Scotland, declared his conviction that to place reform prior to revival was 'contrary to the method of God's preventing free grace....He must pour out his Spirit to cause us mourn and reform, before we can do either.' 147 John Erskine responded by accusing the Seceders of being Arminian because 'they think the Dispensations of Grace are connected with certain Qualities which dispose Persons or Church for, and render them worthy of them.' 148

Behind the antagonism of the Seceders to the revival was the conviction that they must not enter into fellowship with any who had opposed their secession testimony, including leaders of the revival, 149 because Church government was 'as essential...to the Mediator's Glory in the Church, as the Doctrine of Grace is unto the

146 Declaration of the True Presbyterians. p 31. See also Ralph Erskine, Fraud and Falsehood, pp 40; James Fisher, A Review of the Preface to a Narrative, (Glasgow, 1743).

147 John Willison, Preface to Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God, by Jonathan Edwards (Edinburgh, 1742). See also John Willison, A Letter from Mr. John Willison, Minister at Dundee, to Mr James Fisher, Minister at Glasgow, Containing Serious Expostulations with Him Concerning His Unfair-Declaring in His Review of Mr. Robe's Preface 2nd Edition (Edinburgh, 1743), pp 18-19; McCulloch Mss., 1:162.

148 John Erskine, The Signs of the Times Considered, p 19. John Currie makes the same point when he complains that 'it looks like the highest Presumption in them to prescribe to a Sovereign Lord what Instruments he shall work by, if he work at all.' John Currie, A New Testimony, p 46.

149 Act of the Associate Presbytery, p 6; Fisher, Review, p 45.
They saw the revival movement in the Church of Scotland as a special threat to their identity. John Willison was convinced that the real ground of their hostility was their fear that the act of secession 'may be diminished if these changes should be real, seeing you had given it out that the Spirit had left the Ministers and Ordinances of the established Church at your Secession.'

The Seceders were reticent about accepting the claims of those who asserted that during the revival they had passed through a work of conviction and conversion. This was partly a dispute over the question of sudden conversions versus a view of preparationism prior to an awareness of salvation. Fisher spoke of the 'present delusive Convictions' which had been brought on by the 'terrors of Satan' rather than 'the means of the word' whereby the Spirit 'convinces of sin as offensive to God.'

One of the earliest supporters of the revival admits that 'not all who have been convicted have actually been converted, nor that the Convictions of all have been alike deep, durable and genuine, yet I assure you there's been Days of Power there.' Gillespie was convinced that the experiences of people he had spoken to 'appeared solid, scriptural, and entirely agreeable with the sentiments of learned judicious divines, whom I have heard treat the subject of conversion.'

150 A. Gib, A Warning against Countenancing the Ministrations of Mr George Whitefield, (Edinburgh, 1742), p 41.
152 Fisher, Preface to A Review, p 14. In a similar way the Declaration of True Presbyterians spoke of 'true Repentance...being evidenced by a deep Humiliation and Mourning for their publick Sins and Iniquities.' p 24. See also A Conference between an Elder at Kirk of Shotts and a Parishioner at Cambuslang, (Glasgow, 1742), p 4.
153 A True Account of the Wonderful Conversion at Cambuslang in a Letter from a Gentleman in the Gorbals of Glasgow, as a satisfactory Answer to his Friend at Greenock, (Glasgow, 29 March, 1742), p 6. This anonymous writer was convinced that the Short Account, published even earlier 'has been at much more pains in searching for circumstances to slight this good work, than to set it in its true Light.' Ibid., p 8.
154 Robe, A Short Narrative, p 153.
Claims by the revivalists that the fruits which were being seen in the lives of converts were a valid evidence of regeneration, were refuted as being no more than the 'common influences of the Spirit' and perhaps even 'the Delusions of Satan.' Fish argued that the 'good fruits mentioned...are marks of outward Reformation' and 'not a sufficient Proof of a saving Work of Grace upon the Soul.' The revivalists countered this argument by presenting several evidences which they believed offered proof of a real work of the Holy Spirit in conversion. The anonymous writer of *A Warning and Reproof* asked if a spirit of delusion had ever made 'people forsake sin...cause people to walk according to the commands of God...turn Drunkards, Swearers, Whoremongers, Liars, Sabbath-breakers, Thieves, Backbiters, Defamers etc. to become new Creatures?* Gillespie concluded that the 'evidence of love to all who bear the image of Christ, and desire of the salvation of others' was solid proof of true conversion.

Gillespie and his fellow editors of the McCulloch manuscripts had been ruthless in their censorship of references to sudden impressions which the narrators spoke of as bringing them an assurance of salvation. None the less, when Ralph Erskine heard the oral accounts of the converts, he complained that the Cambuslang converts were too fast in claiming an assurance of salvation which he believed 'may require many Years...ere they come to know themselves.' Any assertion relating to being a child of God must never be based upon 'Impulses, Impressions, Motions, and what they feel within them, as if these were to be the Ground and Reason of their

156 Ibid., p 9.
157 *A Warning and Reproof with Advice from the Word to those who have spoken, and do speak Calumniously, and with Bitterness against the Work of the Spirit of God*, (Glasgow, 1742), p 4.
158 *Robe, A Short Narrative*, p 153.
159 Erskine, *Fraud and Falsehood*, p 19.
Faith and Hope; whereas the true feeling and sealing of the Spirit is the Fruit and Effect of Faith.'

The nature of the faith which was being encouraged at Cambuslang came under Erskine's critical attention, particularly the issue of 'imaginary ideas, or the images of spiritual things' which appeared to him as 'a new and strange divinity,' 'the very spring of the whole deceit.' Jonathan Edwards came under attack by James Fisher for being the originator of this concept which Fisher described as being the belief 'that we cannot think upon any thing invisible or spiritual without some degree of Imagination; or, that Images of spiritual things must be represented to our Fancy.' Fisher was convinced that this was not only a form of idolatry, but threatened to 'destroy and overthrow the nature of Faith, which is a believing the Record of God...a receiving of Christ in the Word...without forming the least imaginary conception of him.' The leaders of the revival believed that it was necessary for the mind to be stimulated by such images of Christ's suffering in order for conviction of sin and conversion to Christ to take place. James Robe responded by asking whether it was possible to think of the sufferings of Christ without using the


164 Ibid., p 13. See also Erskine, Fraud and Falsehood, pp 49, 51.

165 Fisher, Ibid., p 13. Erskine speaks of how 'the Object of saving Faith is no Image of Christ, seen by Fancy, or imaginary Idea; but Christ, who is, and as he is, the Image of the Invisible God, and Faith's acting upon this Object, is seeing of him that is invisible, and no Sight of Him visibly by the bodily Eye, or perceptible by natural Fancy and Imagination.' Ibid., p 51.
imagination to contemplate the vividness of the scene which the scriptures depict. 166 Although Ralph Erskine made much of this concept as being a new doctrine, 167 the vivid description of the suffering of Christ was well known in Scottish devotional piety. Duncan Campbell, in his Sacramental Meditations on the Sufferings and Death of Christ, 168 described the passion of Christ graphically, in order to transport his readers back to the Cross of Calvary. 169 One of the narrators in the McCulloch Mss speaks of 'a most lively and affecting representation made to my mind, of the Sufferings of Christ: I thought I saw Jesus Christ evidently set forth before my Eyes as Crucified...and that my Sin had procured his Sufferings,...I found the tears rushing down my Cheeks.' 170

Another aspect of the revival which the Seceders criticised was the physical phenomena which was reported at Cambuslang and Kilsyth. On behalf of the Seceders, Ralph Erskine condemned the effects of the Cambuslang revival on the bodies of those who came under conviction of sin as being 'nothing else, but the Effects of a strong Impulse upon the Imagination, and cannot possibly be the immediate Effects of any Acting of the superior Faculties of the Soul, such as the Understanding and Will; These can produce no such Effects as are mentioned here.'171 The Seceders knew that such bodily manifestations had been recorded in earlier examples of revival, although they maintained that such instances attended the

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167 R. Erskine, Sermon.

168 Duncan Campbell, Sacramental Meditations on the Sufferings and Death of Christ, (Edinburgh, 1703).


171 Erskine, Fraud and Falsehood. p 25.
ministry of those 'who were honoured to be most instrumental in carrying on Reformation Work.' 172

The leaders of the revival, while not denying the presence of such phenomena, tried to play down their significance by implying that the numbers of those affected were not as great as was claimed. 173 Furthermore, they argued that the work of the Holy Spirit in convicting men and women of their sin was not limited to the mind and will, but also included the emotions. It was to be expected that these convictions would 'produce fears and sorrows' which would 'in some constitutions naturally produce such outward effects as are now objected to.' 174 Gillespie believed that the 'uncommon symptoms with which the trouble of some is attended, do flow from the clear and deep discovery they receive of the evil of sin, and the danger and misery of one's being without interest in the Saviour.' 175 Whereas the Seceders used these instances of enthusiasm to oppose the revival, James Robe never claimed that 'convulsions, bitter outcries...are...considered in themselves as Evidences of Persons being under any Operations of the Spirit of God'. Rather, he simply maintained that 'they are not inconsistent with a Work of the Spirit of God upon the Soul...and even flow naturally from it.' 176

Finally, critics focused on the frequency with which meetings were being held,

175 Robe, A Short Narrative, p 153.
176 James Robe, Third Letter, pp 4-5, 14; Alexander Webster, A Letter to Ralph Erskine containing a Vindication of Mr Webster's Postscript to his second Edition of Divine Influences in answer to Mr Erskine's Charge of Fraud and Falshood, (Edinburgh, 1743), p 17.
and the resultant temptation for workers to neglect 'the necessary duties of providing for their Families, and doing Justice to their Landlords'. 177 Adam Gib contended that 'there is no Value in any Length or Frequency of religious duties beyond the divine Demand' of the Lord's Day. 178 Alexander Moncrieff estimated that the loss of work which was occasioned by the revival amounted to eight million sixpences a week. 179

Gillespie and his fellow editors were very careful to omit any passages in the testimonies which would lend credence to this charge. Passages which referred to having 'greater liberty to come to the Preaching at Cambuslang' or to spending 'the time in reading and religious exercises' instead of working were marked for deletion.180 James Robe was conscious of such accusations being levelled against the work at Cambuslang, and he therefore only held one service during the week at Kilsyth. 181 John Erskine pointed out that those who felt that their work had suffered when they were under conviction of sin 'have since that time been at double Diligence to make up the loss to their Masters;' 182 while John Currie spoke of how the revival had made workers 'more faithful and diligent to their Work than ever they had been.'183

The Results of the Revival

Although the Cambuslang revival eventually reached a number of towns and

182 Erskine, Signs of the Times, p 22.
latter day glory' was never realised. McCulloch and Robe faced several disappointments in the lives of professed converts, although in 1751 James Robe could testify that the vast majority of those who had been converted continued to be 'good Christians.' Indeed, almost twenty years after the revival began, the church at Cambuslang kept a day of fasting and thanksgiving 'in commemoration of the Reformation Work...in this place...about twenty years ago.'

In the short term, the revival did not fully realise the dream of John Erskine that it would bring a 'remarkable union among Christians.' On the contrary, it may have contributed further to the continued secession of many members from the national Church of Scotland. By the end of 1742 the Secession Church had twenty ministers, the most unexpected being Andrew Arrott, minister of Dunnichen in the Presbytery of Forfar, and brother-in-law to John Willison. His secession in October 1742, in the midst of the controversy over Cambuslang, must have brought heartache to Willison and great joy to his opponents.

On the other hand, there is also evidence that the awakening in 1742 had some effect in bringing many Seceders back into fellowship with the Church of Scotland and stopping others from leaving it. Out of the 108 accounts contained in the

184 Fawcett, Cambuslang Revival, pp 166-170. Minutes of the Cambuslang Kirk Session. S.R.O. CH2/415.2, p120 where we are told that 'some opposers have triumphed in the matter of backsliders that we concerned in the work'

185 Kilsyth Kirk Session Records. 19 March 1751 quoted by Fawcett, Cambuslang Revival. Ibid., p 171. Minutes of Cambuslang Kirk Session, p 120.

186 Minutes of Cambuslang, Ibid., p 431.

187 Erskine, Signs of the Times. p 194.

188 John McKerrow, Secession Church, pp 176-7. Fawcett, Cambuslang Revival. p 196.

189 Robe, Faithful Narrative. p 318ff.
McCulloch manuscripts, nineteen speak of worshipping at some time or another with the Seceders. Furthermore, in the following years, when the parishes of Cambuslang, Kilsyth, St Ninians, Torphichen and Blantyre, which were affected by the revival, experienced difficulties owing to unwanted settlements of ministers, it is significant that after the Relief Church had been formed it was to their Presbytery that congregations turned for support, rather than to the Secession Church. 190 For Gillespie, the fact that the awakening occurred within the Established Church of Scotland gave a fresh impetus to his own ministry in Carnock. There is no evidence that the exciting events of 1742 weakened his attachment to the national Church. Although his own personal ministry as a pastor, both within his own congregation and elsewhere, was busy, he took time to attend the General Assembly as a commissioner for the Presbytery of Dunfermline in 1742 and 1743. 191 At this time, he hoped that the revival would lead to further reform within the Church to which he had committed his life as a pastor.

Looking back on the revival, in the midst of the crisis of the '45 rebellion, Thomas Gillespie believed that 1742 had witnessed 'one of the most remarkable effusions of the Spirit on some corners of the land...since the Reformation.' 192 He was equally convinced that the only hope for peace in Scotland was for the Church to turn once again to God in prayer for his blessing upon 'King George...the Parliament...our armies...to give us an honourable peace and put an end to the present disturbances and...pour down his Spirit to dwell among us and cause His glory to

190 Fawcett, Cambuslang Revival, p 201. Chapter 7 of this thesis will examine the growth of these congregations in more detail.

191 See Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunfermline 1729-1745, S.R.O. CH2/105.6, pp 374 and 378.

192 Dunfermline Sermons for 1746, f80r.
dwell in our land. With that vision, Gillespie continued to deepen his own spiritual life and to encourage his congregation to experience God's blessing on their daily lives.

193 Ibid., f97v-98r.
Although the Evangelical Revival of 1742 was short lived in terms of the impact it made upon the religious life of Scotland, Thomas Gillespie continued his association with the leaders of the revival. This did not lessen his commitment to the general life of the Church of Scotland, as he continued to be involved in the various courts of the Church. In this chapter we will examine the events which led to the deposition of Thomas Gillespie at the General Assembly of 1752 and analyse the reasons why he was not 'reponed' to ministry in 1753. In this way we will explore the reasons for the formation of the Presbytery of Relief.

Until his appearance before the bar of the General Assembly in 1752, the focus of his ministry had been his own parish at Carnock. The parish records indicate that the kirk session remained a powerful force in the community, exercising an influence over the social, moral and spiritual life of the congregation. Although there were times when the imposition of discipline might appear harsh to our modern sensibilities, Gillespie and his fellow elders could also demonstrate a kinder and more compassionate side to their nature. In 1745 for example, they expressed their concern for a dumb woman who was pregnant, the father having moved out of the area. Realising that the woman was going to have difficulty in caring for the baby they

1 Ward makes the comment that 'like the revival in New England to which it was so closely linked, the revival in the Lowlands bloomed but for a day.' W. R. Ward, The Protestant Evangelical Awakening, p 339.

2 Gillespie was one of the principal preachers at the communion seasons which were celebrated at the Tollbooth Church in Edinburgh where Alexander Webster was the minister. In October 1748, when George Whitefield was in Scotland for a further visit, Gillespie and Whitefield were the preachers on the Thursday Fast day. His regular ministry at the Tollbooth, where his father-in-law Dr John Riddel was an elder, only ended with his deposition from the ministry. See Tollbooth Records of Sacraments, CH2/140.2.

3 According to the records of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, Gillespie attended the Presbytery meeting regularly, serving as Moderator on two separate occasions, and was appointed a commissioner to the General Assembly in 1742, 1743, 1748 and 1752. See Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, CH2/105.6, pp 374, 388; CH2/105.7, p 132 and CH2/105.8, p 65.
agreed to pay Jean Weily 'ten pounds Scots' to nurse the baby and also 'buy clothes for the child.' Sadly, a few weeks later the session agreed to purchase 'a coffin for the dumb woman's child.' ⁴

Like many other kirk sessions, the Carnock elders were concerned that several people in the parish did not attend Church regularly on the Lord's day; indeed it was decided in July 1745 that two of the elders should 'go through the town of Carnock Sabbath next, twixt lecture and sermon to see if any person do not attend public worship or other ways behave disorderly.' ⁵

There is evidence to suggest that Carnock continued to feel the effects of the Secession of 1733. In November 1746, Gillespie dealt with the case of Robert Sympsoun who was refused the sacrament of baptism for his newly born son. Although his wife was a member of the congregation, Sympsoun had 'joined with the Seceding congregation at Dunfermline and still adheres...to the Secession.' ⁶

Throughout his ministry, Gillespie remained committed to public prayer meetings in response to the physical as well as spiritual needs of the parish. In December 1746, following a severe epidemic of 'bloody flux' (dysentery) as a result of which several people in the parish had died, the elders 'set apart a day in this congregation for solemn fasting and prayer to God.' ⁷ The following year there was public prayer directed to the national crisis surrounding the war in Europe and

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⁴ Records of the Kirk Session in Carnock, CH2/59.2, p 151.
⁵ Ibid., p 156
⁶ Ibid., p 161
⁷ Ibid. Minutes of 7 December 1746.
especially to the 'departure of the Holy Spirit and thence the small success of the Gospel conversion work...particularly in this congregation.'

Gillespie attended the meetings of the Presbytery of Dunfermline on a regular basis, although his participation within the Synod of Fife was more sporadic. He took an active part in Presbytery business. In August 1743, reflecting his long-standing disquiet over the power of the civil magistrate in religious affairs, he dissented against the decision of the Presbytery to discontinue the call given to a Mr Ogilvie to the second charge at Dunfermline. This was because Ogilvie refused to subscribe to the Confession of Faith concerning 'the Magistrates Power about Religion and that of Synods and Councils.'

During Gillespie's ministry at Carnock, the nearby parish Church at Inverkeithing became vacant on two occasions. In various ways, the Presbytery of Dunfermline made their opposition to Patronage very clear, long before the dispute over Inverkeithing which led to Gillespie's deposition in 1752. In 1744 when Mr Buchanan was unanimously chosen to be the Minister of the parish, although the Presbytery concurred with the settlement, it made it quite clear that 'their allowing this Presentation...shall not be constructed an approbation of the thing itself, which they
look upon as a grievance.' In 1747 the Presbytery unanimously rejected the presentation of William Trotter to become minister of the second charge at Culross.

At another level, the Presbytery attempted to reform the laws of the Church relating to patronage. In November 1747 the Presbytery expressed their warm support for an overture which had been sent down from the preceding Assembly relating to the qualifications of persons claiming to vote during a call to a minister in a time of vacancy. The Assembly of 1748 turned this overture into a standing act of the Church, which prohibited any heritor who had attended an Episcopalian Church during the previous twelve months from voting. In 1749 the Presbytery concluded a similar discussion by stating that no one should be able to vote in the calling of a minister if that person had not attended worship in the Church 'at least once every Lord's Day, for a year preceding the vacancy as well as during it, without a reasonable excuse.'

It certainly should not have surprised anybody when the Presbytery began to oppose any imposition of a minister on the Parish of Inverkeithing when it became vacant once again in March 1749. At the meeting of the Presbytery on 19 July

11 Ibid., pp 477, 479.

12 What is particularly interesting about this case is the fact that John Erskine, a friend of Gillespie appeared at the Presbytery on behalf of his father to present Trotter as minister. There were only 12 people who indicated their support of William Trotter while all the magistrates and Town Council, the nine elders and 115 heads of families expressed their preference for Thomas Fernie of Dunfermline. At a later meeting John Erskine brought a letter signed by 47 heads of families for Wm. Trotter. See Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, CH2/105.7, p 116. Trotter later became minister of Selkirk. See Hew Scott, Fasti, Vol. II, p 195.


14 Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, CH2/105.6, p 220.

1749, John Cunningham, Provost of Inverkeithing along with two elders, applied to hear four different probationary ministers. 16 A month later, at the end of August, Captain Philip Anstruther appeared on behalf of Sir George Preston and claimed that the Preston family had the right of patronage. 17 Further, he conveyed a presentation in favour of Andrew Richardson, Minister of Broughton in the Presbytery of Biggar, along with a letter of acceptance from Richardson dated 29 August 1749. The Magistrates and Town Council, along with the kirk session protested against the presentation, but the Presbytery upheld the presentation. 18 In October, the Presbytery debated the question of whether or not North Queensferry was part of Inverkeithing parish or of Dunfermline. It would appear that a large number of heads of families and elders from North Queensferry opposed the settlement of Andrew Richardson.

Captain Charles Grieg, an elder from North Queensferry and a leading opponent of Richardson, disputed the legality of a call being given to Richardson 19 and named Mr William Adam, minister of the Gospel at Painswick in England, as the choice of the Magistrates, Town Council, elders and heads of families within the

16 The men in question were James Kid and James Paton, Preachers of the Gospel within the Presbytery, William Paton of Edinburgh and Alexander Pitcairn from St Andrews. See Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, CH2/105.7, p 248.

17 The Preston family had presented the previous two ministers to the Parish of Inverkeithing in 1731 and 1744.

18 Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, CH2/105.7, p 254.

19 Grieg protested against the Marquis of Tweeddale, the Earls of Morton and Hopetoun having any right of presentation on the basis that 'none of these persons reside in the Parish, nor probably will...whereas by Gospel Rules and Presbyterian Principles the Calling of ministers ought to be by the Daily hearers and attenders of public ordinances.' Ibid., p 263. He also 'objected that Mr Richardson is incapable of the presentation given in his favour by the Statute in the fifth year of his majesty King George the first. In regard that he is and at the time of his presentation was placed minister of Broughton for by the said statute it is enacted that if any patron shall present any person who then is a minister of another Parish such presentation shall not be accounted any interruption of the time allowed for presenting. But the Jus Devolutum shall take place and that...the Jus Devolutum being fallen into the Presbyteries hands the Parish may have a free choice of their minister'. Ibid., pp 264-5.
Parish. 20 Clerk Black of the Admiralty, acting on behalf of the supporters of Richardson, objected against heads of families being mentioned in the call to Adam as 'there was no law allowing these votes' and if they were to be considered at all it should only be as 'consenters.' 21 When a vote was taken to determine the call, eight heritors, along with five town counsellors, were in favour of Richardson while twenty four people, including one heritor and several counsellors, elders, deacons along with one hundred and fifty heads of families expressed a preference for William Adam. 22 Thus the Presbytery 'by a great majority' did not sustain the call to Mr Richardson 23 although they delayed, by a single vote, the decision to proceed with a call to William Adam. 24

20 William Adam, the son of Bailey William Adam of Culross, applied to the Presbytery of Dunfermline for ordination on 20 September 1738. He produced a 'licence to preach the gospel subscribed by six dissenting Ministers at London'. He had received an invitation to become the minister of a Congregational Church at Painswick in Gloucestershire, although he wanted to be 'ordained a Minister of the Gospel by his mother Church'. He subscribed to the Confession of Faith on 4 October 1738 and was ordained in Dunfermline on 17 October. See Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, CH2/105.6, pp 292, 300. It was this factor which led the supporters of Richardson to maintain that there was some doubt as to his commitment to Presbyterian principles. Ibid., p 265. Adam appears to have been the minister at Painswick from 1734-1750 when he left Painswick to go to Bedworth in Warwickshire. See The Cornelius Winter Memorial Congregational Church, p 16 and John Sibtree and M. Caston, Independency in Warwickshire, (Coventry, 1855), pp 166-167. By this time he had obviously given up any hope of being called to Inverkeithing. In 1762 Adam left Bedworth to become the minister of a Presbyterian Church in Soham, Cambridgeshire which was reconstituted as Congregational. He remained here until 1781. See 'Congregationalism in the Fen Country' in Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society, Vol. VII (1916-1918), p 13. See also The London Christian Instructor, Vol. II, (London, 1819), p 814 and A Modern Pattern for Gospel Ministers, (Gloucestershire, 1768) Title Page where Adam is mentioned alongside George Whitefield in a dedication to a dissenting ministers called Thomas Cole. Whitefield came from Gloucester and may have been instrumental in the connection between him and the Presbytery of Dunfermline.

21 Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, CH2/105.6 p 267.

22 A counter claim by the supporters of Richardson made the point that in a parish of 1,500 the rest of the heads of families 'must be presumed to be for Mr Richardson.' Ibid., pp 268-9.

23 Ibid., pp 275-6.

24 Robert Stark, minister of Kinross, asked that it might be recorded that he had voted for Andrew Richardson, and Mr Blackwood of Pitreavie entered a protest to the Synod of Fife. William Black Jun. also appealed to the Synod on the delay in proceeding with the call to William Adam. Ibid., p 276.
In December, the supporters of William Adam claimed that Andrew Richardson's call was signed by only six residing heritors, five town councillors and two elders along with one or two heads of families. In the meantime, a letter had been received from William Adam in which he signified his adherence to the Presbyterian form of doctrine, worship and Church government. 25 The Presbytery, however, felt that it could not proceed any further with the call to Adam, as an appeal, which had been made by the supporters of Richardson to the Synod of Fife, would not be decided until April 1750. 26 When the Synod met on 5 April it referred the whole affair to the General Assembly, which was to meet the following month in Edinburgh. 27

The Assembly of 1750 dealt with several issues which were closely related to the dispute over Inverkeithing. First of all the Assembly debated the issue of the augmentation of stipends, which would eventually be defeated in the following Assembly, and this took up much of the Assembly's time 28 The Popular party regarded the scheme as being too closely linked with patronage, and believed that any increase of stipend would lead to an extension in the influence which patrons would have on the choice of parish ministers. 29

25 Ibid., pp 287-8.

26 Gillespie was one of three members of the Presbytery who were appointed to a committee with the remit of drawing up answers to the appeal to the Synod of Fife. Ibid., p 256. During this period of time Gillespie preached in Inverkeithing on the 'third Lord's Day in February 1750' Ibid.

27 Records of the Synod of Fife 1738-1766, CH2/154.8, p 169. By this time, Gillespie had been appointed Moderator of the Presbytery. See Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, CH2/105.7, p 342.

28 A full account of the issue can be found in A Collection of All the Papers published in Relation to the Scheme for Augmenting the Stipends of the Established Clergy in Scotland, (Edinburgh, 1751). The debate in the Assembly itself lasted for nine hours. Ibid., p 22.

Secondly, the Assembly discussed the disputed settlement in Methven where the Presbytery of Perth had refused to obey instructions from the Commission to ordain James Oswald. Concern was expressed about 'frequent instances of Presbyteries disobeying the orders of the supreme court', and a committee was appointed to look into the matter. 30 Thirdly, the Assembly dealt with the case of the Presbytery of Linlithgow which had refused to go ahead with the induction of James Watson as the new minister. The Assembly appointed the Presbytery to proceed with the ordination and induction in September. 31 Finally, the case of Inverkeithing came before the Assembly, through the appeal from the Synod of Fife, and the whole matter was referred to the Commission, 32 which 'after some litigation' sustained the call to Andrew Richardson 'without a vote'. 33

When the Presbytery of Dunfermline met in June 1750, they received a request from the supporters of Richardson to 'bring about the settlement in a comfortable manner.' 34 The Presbytery appointed a committee to meet with the heritors, magistrates, town council and elders in order to inform them of the Commission's Act, and also to gauge the feelings of the congregation and try to bring about a 'speedy and comfortable settlement of the Parish.' 35 The report which came back to the

30 Morren, Annals, pp 168 -169. The committee was unable to come to any conclusions and the Assembly referred the matter to the next meeting of the Commission, empowering them to censure any Presbyteries which refused to obey the sentences of the Assembly. Although it is usually thought that the Reasons of Dissent of the 1751 Assembly first raised this issue of disobedience to the decisions of the Assembly, it is evident that a concern was raised in the previous Assembly which would have repercussions for the Presbytery of Dunfermline.

31 Ibid., p 181.
32 Ibid., p 183.
33 This meeting of Commission took place on 23 May 1750. See Morren, Annals, p 222.
34 Gillespie was at this time the Moderator of the Presbytery. Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, CH2/105.7, p 351.
Presbytery indicated that several people were 'violent' in their opposition, and that of the nine elders who were consulted, only one expressed his willingness to concur with the call to Andrew Richardson. 36 Within the Town Council some were 'very obstinate in their opposition to Mr Richardson', although seven members were prepared to submit to Richardson being their minister. 37 In response to the report, the Presbytery decided not to proceed with the call, but instead submitted a further protest to the Commission of the General Assembly. In January 1751, the Presbytery declined to consider a further representation to proceed with the induction at Inverkeithing. 38

At this particular point in the proceeding, the General Assembly considered the case of the Parish of Torphichen. The controversy surrounding the vacancy at Torphichen had begun on 2 February 1748, when Lord Torphichen had exercised his right as patron by presenting James Watson. There was an immediate opposition within the parish to Watson, and only five or six heads of families indicated their willingness to sign the call. 39 Although the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale sustained the call and the General Assembly affirmed this decision on 20 May 1749, the Presbytery of Linlithgow refused to ordain and induct Watson on the grounds that 'the whole parish (a very few excepted) were utterly adverse to submit to his ministry.' 40 When the issue came before the General Assembly in 1751 the Presbytery was censured for disobeying the authority of the courts of the Church, although a

36 Ibid., p 362ff.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., pp 406-407. Once again Gillespie was appointed to preach at Inverkeithing on the first Lord's Day of May 1751. Ibid., p 425.
39 There were about 1,000 heads of families within the parish. For a full account of the controversy surrounding Torphichen see Richard B. Sher, Church and University, pp 51ff.
Riding Committee was appointed by the Assembly so that the consciences of those who opposed the settlement would not be offended. Watson was eventually ordained on 30 May 1751 by a Riding Committee which included William Robertson, Hugh Blair and John Home. 41

The controversy surrounding the Torphichen settlement marked the beginnings of the Moderate party, a group of young men organised under the leadership of William Robertson who, although not fully supportive of patronage, were opposed to the attitudes of members of the Popular party who refused to obey the decisions of the Synods, Commission and Assembly. When the vote to merely censure the Presbytery of Linlithgow was carried, twenty one ministers and one elder, entered their dissent. There were others, however, including John Home and William Robertson, who moved that the members of the Presbytery be suspended from the office of Ministers. Robertson took the opportunity to present his view that if the authority of the state and the Church were to be upheld then members of inferior courts of the Church must obey the orders of superior judicatories. 42 Although the speech brought a measure of recognition for Robertson's principles, the motion was overwhelmingly defeated by 200 to 11 votes.

Following the 1751 Assembly, the Presbytery of Dunfermline was once again pressed on the issue of Inverkeithing when an extract from the minutes of the

41 N Morren, Annals, pp 198 - 212. This was the very last Riding Committee which was used to ordain or induct an unpopular presentee to any parish. Alexander Carlyle makes the comment that a 'select company of fifteen were called together in a tavern, a night or two before the case was to be debated in the Assembly to consult what was to be done....The business was talked over, and....we were confirmed in our opinion that it was necessary to use every means in our power to restore the authority of the Church, otherwise her government would be degraded, and everything depending on her authority would fall into confusion; and though success was not expected at this Assembly...yet we believed that, by keeping the object in view, good sense would prevail at last, and order be restored.' Scottish Diaries and Memoirs 1746 - 1843, Edited by J. G. Fyfe, (Stirling, 1942), pp 135 - 136.

42 Morren, Annals, Ibid., p 211.
Presbytery of Biggar was read at the meeting of the Presbytery of Dunfermline on 5 June. This indicated that the Presbytery of Biggar had 'transported the said Mr A. Richardson from being minister at Broughton to be Minister of the Parish of Inverkeithing' and had declared the Parish of Broughton to be vacant. Another committee was appointed to visit Inverkeithing to speak with the elders and Town Councillors to 'promote peace and harmony and also to learn...the sentiments of the congregation'. In its report on 31 July this committee reported that of the elders present, only one, Andrew Turnbull expressed his willingness to submit to the ministry of Richardson. Turnbull expressed the opinion that several members of the congregation 'had signified their willingness to submit' although another elder, George Dundas believed that the vast majority had not changed their minds. When the Town Council met with the committee, only one person out of the eleven who had formerly opposed the settlement said that he had changed his mind. In response to the report, the Presbytery did not proceed with the call, but submitted a further protest to the next meeting of the Commission of the General Assembly.

When the Synod of Fife met on 24 September, they expressed their disapproval with the action of the Presbytery in not obeying the Commission's instructions, and 'by a great majority' they instructed the Presbytery to proceed with the settlement. At the meeting of the Presbytery on 16 October, James Thomson

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43 Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, pp 452-453. The Presbytery felt that the action of the Presbytery of Biggar was improper and encroached on their own jurisdiction. Ibid., p 455.

44 The committee was made up of Robert Stark, Torryburn, Steedman, Thomson and Spence 'or any two of them'. Ibid.

45 Morren, Annals, p 224.

46 Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, CH2/105.8, pp 5-6. The Presbytery believed that 'their admitting Mr Richardson as Minister of Inverkeithing in the present circumstances of that Parish, would be of hurtful consequences to the interest of Religion within their bounds, and that the matter is attended with such difficulties as they cannot get over'. Ibid., pp 6-7.

and James Bathgate, ministers of Dunfermline and Dalgety, proposed that the sentence of the Commission should be obeyed. Thomson believed that the action of the Presbytery was 'destructive of all Government, contrary to the subordination of Judicatures established in the Church of Scotland' and would tend to cause a disturbance within the minds of ordinary Christians in the countryside. 48 The Presbytery responded to Thomson and Bathgate by drawing up some answers to their appeal in which they stated their concern that no one should be forced to give a 'blind and implicit obedience to the decisions of any body of men.' Otherwise, the Presbytery agreed to take no further action until they had presented the protest to the next meeting of the Commission. 49

At its meeting on 14 November, the Commission of the General Assembly rejected the case of the Presbytery and instructed the Moderator of the Presbytery, John Spence of Orwell, to preside at the admission of Andrew Richardson in January 1752, 50 with the warning that if they did not obey this order the 'Commission will at their meeting in March proceed against them to very high censure in case of their disobedience.' 51

At the next meeting of the Presbytery on 18 December 1751, the patron's agent, William Walker, produced an extract of the Commission's decision and asked

48 Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, p 24.

49 Ibid., pp 24-25. Gillespie was once again appointed to preach at Inverkeithing on the fourth Lord's Day in November 1751.

50 Spence asked that he might be excused from presiding at the induction because there was a Seceding congregation at Orwell already and he was concerned that his own involvement might provoke further secessions from his own congregation. See Morren, Annals, p 226.

51 David Hunter, John Spence asked for the right to appeal to the General Assembly and other ministers of the Popular party entered their dissent, viz. James Robe, John Currie, John Adams, George Lindsay, James Stirling, Robert Bryce, James Smith, James Milne and David Connell. See Morren, Annals. Ibid., p 227.
that they might concur with the judgement. The Presbytery, however, refused to proceed to the admission, believing that the opposition to Richardson was 'so riveted' that it would be impossible for them 'to remove the prejudices.' 52 In response to the criticism that their actions were disruptive and divisive, the Presbytery maintained that there had been several cases in the past when the Church had not forced those who had scruples over a particular action and 'thereby rights of conscience as well as the peace and authority of the Church had been preserved.' 53 Walker immediately appealed to the Commission to 'censure the Presbytery.' 54 In March, the Presbytery held a special meeting in Edinburgh at the British Coffee-house, to prepare for the approaching Commission. 55 Although the Presbytery agreed that the General Assembly was the supreme court of the Church, they expressed their concern that they were being forced to conduct an unpopular settlement in Inverkeithing which would 'do more hurt than good...the marring of their success and usefulness in their ministry'. 56 During the meeting, a motion to refer the matter to the Assembly was defeated, but when the question was raised concerning the threatened rebuke of the Commission, it was decided 'by a small majority' not to inflict such a censure. 57 The Commission then appointed the Synod of Fife to take responsibility for finalising the settlement of Richardson at Inverkeithing.

52 Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, p 37- 40.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid., pp 46 - 47.
55 Ibid., p 64. On 11 March, six members of the Presbytery, including Gillespie were present.
56 Morren, Annals, p 229.
57 Ibid., p 230. Fifteen members of the Commission entered their dissent at this decision, led by William Robertson and John Home. The next day a further member, George Logan, added his name to the dissent. They also made an appeal to the next meeting of the Assembly.
In the meantime, two documents were produced, which were seen as constituting separate manifestos of the two opposing sides in the issue, the Moderates and the Evangelicals. 58 Robertson, who appears to have been the author of the moderate document, the Reasons of Dissent, first of all argued that although private individuals might act in accordance with their conscience, as 'members of society, they are bound...to follow the judgement of the society', otherwise good government and order will be undermined. Although there might be exceptional circumstances when a person might oppose the decisions of society, it would be wrong for that person to continue to receive any benefits from society, otherwise the person was acting dishonestly as well as in a disorderly manner. Robertson was implying that any Minister who refused to obey the decisions of the General Assembly, yet continued to receive a stipend, was morally wrong. Secondly, he believed that the decision of the Commission not to censure the Presbytery of Dunfermline undermined the authority of the Church of Scotland which is 'not merely a voluntary society, but a society founded by the laws of Christ.' 59 It may well be that Robertson was thinking about men such as Gillespie who had been trained in the Independent academy of Doddridge at Northampton when he voiced his concern that 'such principles (of freedom of conscience) appear to us calculated to establish the most extravagant maxims of Independency'. Thirdly, Robertson held that the sentence of the Commission was inconsistent with Presbyterian principles, 'the parity of ministers, and the subordination of its judicatures', the latter being important in that it guarded 'against that anarchy and confusion which is the unavoidable consequence of the Independent

58 The Reasons of Dissent appeared in the Scots Magazine in April 1752 and were answered by Answers to the Reasons of Dissent on 16 May 1752.

59 I. D. L. Clark makes the comment that 'The Moderates...were thinking in terms of 'discipline' rather than of the rights or wrongs of Patronage per se'. I. D. L. Clark, Moderatism and the Moderate Party in the Church of Scotland, (Cambridge Ph D, 1963), p 26. See also Ian D. L. Clark 'From Protest to Reaction : The Moderate Regime in the Church of Scotland, 1752-1805' In Scotland in the Age of Improvement. Edited by N. T. Phillipson and Rosalind Mitchison, (Edinburgh, 1970) p 207 where he comments 'to the Moderates, acquiescence in patronage was the price which must be paid for their ideal of a Church occupying a central place in the national life'.

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Robertson was convinced that the whole Presbyterian system was in danger of crumbling if the decisions of the General Assembly were not accepted as an undisputed authority. If this course was not followed then all forms of Church discipline would disappear and anarchy would reign supreme.

The Answers to the Reasons of Dissent, which seem to have been composed primarily by John Witherspoon, put forward a strenuous argument for the right of every Christian to follow the dictates of his own conscience in religious matters, arguing that the ultimate authority to which every man must be subject is not a human court, civil or ecclesiastical, but God himself. In particular there is a rebuttal of the charge regarding Independency because 'we know no connection these principles have with the peculiarities of the Independent form of church-government.' On the contrary it is argued that Robertson's view would ultimately lead to the idea that the General Assembly was 'vested with infallibility.'

As the time of the General Assembly drew closer, Gillespie revealed some of his personal apprehensions in a letter written to William McCulloch of Cambuslang on 4 May 1752. He reaffirmed his conviction that the Presbytery had taken the correct decision not to proceed with the settlement of Richardson because 'not one in twenty

60 Morren, Annals, pp 231 - 235. Clark comments that 'it was the avowed aim of the Moderate leaders to ensure that the discussions of the Church courts were uniform and consistent, and that the orders of the General Assembly and its Commission were carried out promptly by the lower courts' Moderatism and the Moderate Party, p 35. It may have been this concern over the 'dangerous tenets of Independency' which Robertson believed had 'infected some of our own members' which led the opponents of the Dunfermline Presbytery to single out Gillespie for deposition. Jonathan Edwards may have been correct in his own assessment of the deposition when he wrote to Gillespie on 24 November 1752 and made the comment that 'it would appear, that some of your most strenuous persecutors hate you much more for something else, than they do for your not obeying the orders of the General Assembly.' J Edwards, Works, Vol. 1, p clii.

61 Varnum L. Collins, President Witherspoon, (Princeton, 1925), Vol. 1 p 33. See also R. B. Sher, Church and University, p 54.

six or twenty seven in the parish have yet signified they will submit to the ministry...if I remember right, not one in seventy did at the moderation, so that it is evidently a most violent one.' 63 While he understood that the Assembly would order the Presbytery to proceed with the induction, 'under the pain of censure, to be inflicted by the Commission in August,' he was apparently totally unaware of any threat of deposition. 'My concern,' he added, 'is that I may be enabled to act a faithful and consistent part, leaving events in His hand who will do all his pleasure.' 64

It is evident that several members of the emerging Moderate party within the Church of Scotland, as well as the ruling Argathelian party, 65 were determined to use the Inverkeithing case to uphold the case for ecclesiastical law and order, by disciplining those who refused to obey the orders of the Assembly. Nine days before the Assembly met, Gilbert Hamilton, minister of Cramond, preached before the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, warning its members of the dangerous consequences if the Church did not exercise its authority in matters of ecclesiastical discipline. 66

63 Letter of Thomas Gillespie to William McCulloch in 'Memoir of the Rev. Wm. McCulloch of Cambuslang' in the Edinburgh Christian Instructor, No. XXI, (September, 1839), Vol. II, pp 340 - 341. In the letter Gillespie makes it clear that he is not opposed to Andrew Richardson himself, because he describes him as a minister who 'stands well with his parish' but he is concerned that he is being imposed against the will of the parish of Inverkeithing. This appears to undermine the view of R. Sher and A. Murdoch who say that 'The pro-patronage majority in the General Assembly often had to deal with a recalcitrant presbytery, as in the case of Inverkeithing in 1752, rather than an angry congregation, and it is sometimes difficult to tell if the members of such a presbytery were refusing to induect a presentee because of their own opinions or because the congregation could not be brought to accept him.' 'Patronage and Politics' p 207. Their quote in Footnote 40, Ibid., p 218 from Drummond and Bulloch that Richardson soon became 'popular with the people of that pious parish' does not take into account the fact that an Associate Congregation was formed in 1752 as a result of a petition signed by 127 people. See R Small, History of the United Presbyterian Church, Vol. 2, pp 362 -363 and the names of members in the Records of the Associate Church at Inverkeithing, CH3/453.1.

64 Letter. Ibid. Gillespie had been appointed as a member of the Assembly. See Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, CH2/105.8 for 25 March, 1752.

in well with the desire which Robertson had expressed that the 'General Assembly...will...pursue such vigorous Measures, as may tend to restore and strengthen the decayed Authority of the Church, and revive its ancient Discipline'.  

When the Earl of Leven, the Lord High Commissioner, addressed the Assembly, he issued a strong plea against the danger of 'anarchy and confusion' and called the Assembly to put 'a stop to the growing evil' of inferior courts disputing and disobeying the decisions of their superiors.  

Patrick Cuming, who was the leader of the old Moderate group, was appointed as the Moderator. Although he did not share the aggressive tactics of Robertson, he was a man who was known to share many of their views on Church discipline.

When the Assembly finally debated the actions of the Commission in failing to censure the Presbytery of Dunfermline, they agreed that 'the Commission...had exceeded their powers, and had not done what they were bound to do'. A motion was then presented to the Assembly that the Presbytery of Dunfermline should meet at Inverkeithing on Thursday, 21 May, to induct Andrew Richardson to the charge. The motion further specified there should be at least five ministers as a quorum and that each minister within the Presbytery should give an account of his actions to the

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66 Gilbert Hamilton, *The Disorders of a Church and their Remedies*, (Edinburgh, 1752), especially pp 15, 17, 28, 30 and 31 where he says that 'the whole government and discipline of the church must fall into the utter contempt of the people.'

67 Short Narrative prefixed to the *Reasons of Dissent*, (Edinburgh, 1752), p v.


69 In a letter dated 13 March 1752, Cuming had written to Lord Milton concerning two vacancies in Edinburgh, the West Kirk and the Canongate to which he hoped two particular ministers, James MacKie and David Duncan might be appointed because 'they are sensible, honest, grateful and steady friends who may be depended upon. It is of great advantage to us to have this Presbytery right. We have now an opportunity and I hope care will be taken.' 'Patrick Cuming to Lord Milton' 13 March 1752, National Library of Scotland, Ms. 16678, ff. 116. Clark comments that 'The legal profession was usually present in force, and the advocates who sat in the Assembly were commonly related closely to the landed class which held the real strings of political power in Scotland' in 'From Protest to Reaction' p 203.

70 Morren, *Annals*, p 263.
Assembly on 23 May. Although the motion was passed by 102 votes to 56, several ministers dissented on the grounds that up until this time, three ministers had constituted a legal quorum and since there were already three ministers within the Presbytery who were willing to admit Richardson, the action of raising the quorum level was merely a means to force the consciences of the other members of the Presbytery. 71

When the Presbytery appeared before the bar of the Assembly on 23 May, three members were absent due to sickness and indisposition. 72 James Thomson of Dunfermline told the Assembly that although he had met with John Liston and James Bathgate they were unable to proceed with the settlement as their numbers fell short of the 'five required by the Assembly'. Robert Stark of Torryburn indicated that although he had gone to Inverkeithing on the Thursday morning to speak to the Church elders and other members of the congregation, it was evident that the majority of the parish were still opposed to the settlement. James Stoddart of Culross asked that the Assembly might excuse him from not attending because of his particular circumstances in Culross where his position as the minister was in dispute. Robert Stark of Kinross explained that although he had not been willing to identify himself with the settlement on Thursday, he was now willing to obey the Assembly if they renewed their request. David Hunter of Saline, Thomas Gillespie of Carnock, Alexander Daling of Cleish, Thomas Fernie of Dunfermline and John Spence of Orwell, along with Robert Stark of Torryburn, presented a humble presentation in which they protested against a forced settlement when the opposition within the parish was so strong. They expressed their conviction that they would either have to

71 Ibid.

72 John Liston of Aberdour and James Bathgate of Dalgetie had both gone to Inverkeithing but the former was indisposed and the latter had sickness in his family. Robert Steadman of Beith sent a medical certificate to explain why he had been unable to attend the induction at Inverkeithing. Ibid., pp 263 - 264.
disobey the order of the Assembly or go against the previous principles of the Church of Scotland. Their main reference was to the 25th Act of the General Assembly of 1736, where it was stated that 'no minister shall be intruded into any parish, contrary to the will of the congregation'.

They were concerned that the induction of Richardson would produce a further secession of Church members from the Church of Scotland. After some debate a motion that one of the six ministers should be deposed, was carried by 93 votes to 65. When the Assembly met on the following day, Gillespie made a further statement in which he amplified his objection to the law of patronage, a paper which was not entered in any official record of the Assembly or kept with other Assembly papers. This action may have led many people to feel aggrieved, because, when it came to a vote, the majority voted for Gillespie to be deposed, and for the other disobedient members of the Presbytery to be suspended from exercising any ministerial functions within any Presbytery, Synod or General Assembly. When the sentence of deposition was read out, Gillespie accepted it in a spirit of meekness and returned to Carnock, never again to preach within the parish church where he had worked so faithfully. Gillespie made a short statement after he heard the sentence being pronounced where he said 'Moderator, I desire to receive this sentence of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland pronounced against me with real concern, and awful impressions of the divine conduct in it; but I rejoice, that to me it is given in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.'

73 Ibid., p 267.

74 The final tally of votes were Mr Stark 1, Mr Daling 1, Mr Fernie 1, Mr Spence 1, Mr Gillespie 52, and 102 abstained from voting. Ibid., p 269. I. D. L. Clark makes the comment that 'so few actually opposed the Moderates, who thus won the case by default,' while the 'Popular Party was disorganised.' I. D. L. Clark, Modernism and the Moderate Party, pp 69, 71.

75 Morren, Annals, p 271. Gillespie is generally referred to with appreciation by those who knew him as 'laborious, pious and a useful minister.' An Enquiry into the Powers Committed to the General Assembly of this Church. (Glasgow, 1754), p 16. Even one writer who believed that the 1752 Assembly took the correct decision to depose him, speaks of him as a 'good man' who would be
The decision of the General Assembly to discipline Thomas Gillespie confirmed the power of the Moderates within the Church of Scotland. In bringing the Inverkeithing settlement to such a conclusion, Robertson and his colleagues, had expressed their fears over indiscipline and had confirmed the General Assembly as the undisputed authority in ecclesiastical affairs. In this way, the Moderates believed they were protecting the Presbyterian form of church government from any form of Independency. Robertson had expressed a very real concern over the danger of Independency within the Church of Scotland and, as we have already indicated, the fact that Gillespie had finished his theological education at Doddridge's Academy and been ordained in England, made him suspect in the eyes of the Moderates. The later history of the Relief Church appears to have confirmed his concern, because six of the ministers who were inducted into Relief congregations during Gillespie's lifetime, had been ministers of Independent or Presbyterian congregations in England.

Reactions to the Deposition

Gillespie left Edinburgh immediately, visiting Dunfermline to discuss with some friends what steps he should take. He arrived home late on the Saturday evening to the manse in Carnock where he told his wife the news that he was no longer the minister of Carnock, to which she is reported to have given the reply 'well, if we must beg, I will carry the meal-poke.' Gillespie did not attempt to follow the 'useful in this Church'. A Speech concerning the reponing of the Reverend Mr. Gillespie. (N.P., 1753), p 4.

76 see p 85 of Thesis.

77 Chapter 4 and 8 will give fuller details of these ministers and churches. Three ministers had been connected with Independent congregation. They were Thomas Colier in Colinsburgh, Joseph Neil in Anderson, Glasgow and Michael Boston in Falkirk. Three others has been ministers of Presbyterian churches in England and were J Warden in Logie, Thomas Scott in Auchtermuchty and Thomas Monteith in Duns.

78 James Baine, The Case of the Reverend Mr. Thomas Gillespie...fairly stated in a Letter to a Friend, (1 June 1770) p 10. Thomas Baine also wrote another letter entitled The Case of the Rev Mr. Thomas Gillespie reviewed in a letter to The Rev. Dr. Webster. (Edinburgh, 1770).
example of the early Seceders and continue to minister within the parish Church at Carnock, 80 and on the next day he preached to 'immense numbers' in the open air. 81 He avoided speaking about his deposition, and instead focused the attention of his hearers on the theme of 'Jesus and him crucified.' 82 Gillespie continued to preach to members of his own congregation in Carnock and also 'some persons of rank and opulence in the town and parish of Dunfermline'. 83 Apparently the majority of the Town Council of Dunfermline went to Carnock to indicate their support for the stand which Gillespie had taken over the settlement at Inverkeithing. 84 When a committee of the Dunfermline Presbytery came to Carnock they discovered that, apart from one

79 Gavin Struthers, History of the Relief Church, p 93.

80 John MacLaurin believed that the words used at the deposition prohibited Gillespie exercising his ministry within the Church of Scotland, but not from acting as a minister per se, 'accordingly, though the Sentence was pronounced in the name of Christ, yet do they not prohibit the Exercise of his Ministry in the Church of Christ but only in this Church.' Terms of Ministerial and Christian Communion. (Glasgow, 1753), p 139. This point is disputed by one writer who was convinced that 'Mr. Gillespie has been now for this Twelve-month past, no more a Minister of Jesus Christ, than he has been Minister of Carnock, whatever he or his followers may have thought or done in that period.' A Speech concerning, p 6. Gillespie had not been licensed or ordained by the Church of Scotland and so it would have been reasonable for him to assume that he was still a minister of the gospel, even although he had been deposed from the ministry of the Church of Scotland.

81 The Case...fairly stated, p 11. See also Struthers, who speaks of him preaching to an 'immense concourse of people' in History of the Relief Church, p 93.

82 A Letter from a Gentleman in Town to His Friend in the Country. (Edinburgh, 22 May 1752), p 14. The author of this letter makes reference to the reaction which greeted the news of the deposition on the Sabbath morning 'in Dunfermline, Inverkeithing, etc.' but unfortunately he decided 'to leave this to others, lest I might be charged as intending to increase the flame.' Ibid., p 15.

83 The Case...fairly stated, p 11.

84 'The Magistrates of Dunfermline had no sooner seen it their duty in the end of May last, to countenance Master Gillespie by attending his ministrations in Carnock but he [Thomson, minister of the Abbey Church in Dunfermline] instantly ceased putting up Public Prayer for them in the Church' Dunfermline Abbey Kirk Session Minutes for 14 June, 1753, CH2/592.1, pp 209-211. Six elders were called before the Session between April and June 1753 to give their reasons for non-attendance. They were John MacRaich, Andrew Dickie, Baillie David Turnbull, Robert Black, James Hog and Colin Angus. One of their complaints against the actions of James Thomson was that he had taken the lead in 'appointing supply to the Parish of Carnock though none in the Parish applied for it.' They were suspended from exercising the office of Elders and sitting in 'other Judicatures of the Church.' Ibid.
elder, the whole of the kirk session were attending the services conducted by Gillespie, although they continued to act as Elders within the parish. 85

Gillespie ministered to his newly enlarged congregation in Carnock until the winter began to approach, when the congregation moved to Dunfermline, and occupied 'a house' which had originally been used by Ralph Erskine, while his Church was built in the town. 86 Although he conducted services in this Church, he did not constitute a session or organise a formal congregation until after the 1753 Assembly. 87 Despite his difficult situation, Gillespie did not appear to suffer financially from his deposition. Jonathan Edwards speaks of how 'many have appeared, liberally to contribute to your outward support; so that, by what I understand, you are likely to be no loser in that respect.' 88

The support which Gillespie received from his friends within the Popular party was not only financial and practical, but also included an attempt to get the sentence of deposition reversed at the 1753 Assembly. Gillespie and his supporters held meetings at Linlithgow Bridge and Edinburgh on 23 and 25 June 1752 to discuss how

85 Records of the Kirk Session in Carnock, CH2/59/2, pp 216-217. The elders were John Morrice, smith in Carnock, John Tannochie and Thomas Downie, weavers in Cairnhill and William Anderson, late tenant in Newbigging. Robert Main, tenant in Easter Boniton and George Downie, weaver in Burnside were deacons. When George Adie was ordained to the parish of Carnock in November 1753 he had no elders associated with him. Ibid., p 233.

86 The Scots Magazine spoke of September as being the date when Gillespie moved to Dunfermline. The Scots Magazine, XV, (March 1753), p 157.

87 The term 'house' is used by McLaurin in The Terms of Ministerial and Christian Communion, p 139. Gillespie continued to stay in the Manse at Carnock until the summer of 1753. See Struthers, History of the Relief Church, p 102. John MacLaurin makes much of the fact that during the period between the General Assembly in 1752 and 1753, Gillespie did not appoint 'a Session nay, not so much as one Elder.' He also states that 'if the Parish of Carnock had been able to erect an House for him to preach in, he had never gone to preach in that House at Dunfermline.' cf. also A Juster View of the Constitution of this Church, (Edinburgh, 1753), p 51.

to proceed. 89 His supporters also issued a number of pamphlets in support of Gillespie. 90

One of the earliest of these pamphlets, made it clear that the action of deposition had taken members of the Popular Party totally by surprise. 91 The anonymous author observed with concern that the Assembly of 1752 had been very different in mood from that of 1751. In 1751, when the young Moderates 92 had called upon the Assembly to suspend the members of the Presbytery of Linlithgow over the Torphichen settlement 'their severity raised no small astonishment.' 93 He expressed his concern that if their influence in the Assembly continued to grow 'it will be owing to our sinful sloth.' 94 He called upon Presbyteries throughout the country to be more diligent in the selection of elders to serve as commissioners to the General Assembly. 95 John Lawson, minister of Closeburn, expressed a similar concern that

89 Struthers, *History of the Relief Church*, p 120.

90 Ibid., pp 557 - 558 for a list of the pamphlets.


92 John MacLaurin speaks of 'almost all the young men' who are coming into the ministry are 'of the same opinion' as those who deposed Gillespie. *Terms of Ministerial and Christian Communion*, p 11. He also expressed his concern at the way in which 'the young Gentleman Lawyers that have in a great measure, got the leading of the Assembly'. Ibid., pp 41 and 61. In fact he believed that 'there was not above one of the Dissenters from the Commission in March 1752, that were above ten years standing in the Ministry.' Ibid., p 106. In the *Loud Cry for Help to the Struggling Church of Scotland*, (Edinburgh, 1753) MacLaurin says 'I am informed, that the Promoters of this tyrannical Measure are very proud, that they have, almost all the Lawyers, who are Members of the General Assembly, upon their side' p 23.

93 *A Letter from several Elders, Lovers of Peace and Moderation to their Brethren of the same Principles*, (Edinburgh, August 1752), p 3.

94 Ibid., p 5.

95 Ibid., pp 6-7.
elders were being chosen to attend the General Assembly who were 'not qualified' according to the 9th Act of the General Assembly of 1722. The five qualifications which Lawson referred to in this act were faithfulness 'in the discharge of their respective offices, tender and circumspect in their walk, and punctual in their attendance upon ordinances, and strict in their observation of the Lord's Day, and in regularly keeping up the worship of God in their families'.

In July 1752, an article appeared in the Scots Magazine which questioned the powers which the General Assembly had assumed in deposing Gillespie from the ministry. In a series of questions addressed to the General Assembly, the anonymous author, who designated himself T G____n, asked how it was possible that Gillespie could be deposed for refusing to be involved in an unwanted settlement when previous General Assemblies had condemned Patronage in several Acts. Further, the General Assembly was a human court, whose representatives changed on a yearly basis. Was it right to depose Gillespie for disobedience to what was merely a human, and not a divine court of law?

The anonymous author of A Juster View of the Constitution of this Church believed that the Confession of Faith was correct in asserting that 'all Synods or Councils...may err, and many have erred', and that the Second Book of Discipline affirmed the role of private conscience in determining the conduct of a Christian when it declared that 'in the policy of the Kirk, some are appointed to be Rulers, and the rest of the Members to be ruled, and obey according to the Word of God.' To the


97 The Scots Magazine, Vol. XIV, (July 1752), pp 343ff. See also Private Judgement Defended. (Edinburgh, 1752), where it is asserted that 'we are only to obey our Superiors in the Church according to the Word of God' and thus 'no Society nor Church under Heaven has any authority to censure or cast out from their Society any of their members, unless they can show such Members have transgressed the Royal Law of Christ.' pp 19-20, 28 - 29.
accusation that Gillespie had been disobedient to his ordination vows in not obeying the commands of the Assembly, the anonymous author distinguished between active and passive obedience, the latter being seen as 'submitting to a very unjust sentence' while the former would be obedience 'to a sinful command.' Indeed, insistence on the limits of obedience due to human institutions formed one of the core arguments of Gillespie's supporters. For example, John MacLaurin asserted that 'we pay a higher Defence to none but God himself.' Thus, he continued, the Presbytery of Dunfermline had acted properly 'because they apprehended it to be sinful in them to execute' the decision of the Commission in March 1752 to proceed to the induction of Richardson.

Another issue which concerned Gillespie's supporters was the way in which the Assembly had proceeded against him so quickly, failing to observe the Form of Process, which specifically required the Assembly to demonstrate that the person being disciplined had done something 'censurable by the Word of God, or some Act, or universal custom of this national Church'.

98 A Juster View, p 5. He is quoting from The Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 31, section 4 and the Second Book of Discipline, Chapter 2, Paragraph 1. See also Private Judgement Defended, 'to concur in such settlements, is to go contrary to sundry Acts of our General Assemblies in former times' pp 26

99 Juster View, Ibid., p 9. See also Private Judgement Defended, p 6, and John MacLaurin in Terms of Ministerial and Christian Communion, pp 16 and 38 where it is stated that 'our earthly Superiors are to be obeyed in all lawful things, but not actively in such things as appear to be unlawful for us to do.' The concept is refuted by the author of Some thoughts relating to that Submission and Obedience due to the Authority and Decisions of the Supreme Judicature of the Church, (Edinburgh, 1753), who asks the question 'Does not Obedience imply Action? What then is passive Obedience? It is...standing still and doing nothing, when you are so commanded'. pp 15 - 16.

100 Terms of Ministerial and Christian Communion, p 19.

101 Ibid., p 40.

102 A Juster View, p 41. One of Gillespie's earliest defenders had pointed out that he had been deposed 'without a Libel, or any formal Process, arraigned, cast, and condemned, all in the space of 24 hours'. A Letter from a Gentleman in Town to His Friend in the Country, (Edinburgh, 1752), p 9.
However it was the 'old chestnut' of the rights and wrongs of Patronage, and the issue of what constituted a call and the election of a minister, which occupied much of the debate which surrounded the production of the pamphlets. 103 The supporters of Gillespie and his fellow dissenters in the Dunfermline Presbytery claimed that earlier Acts of the General Assembly made it clear that no minister could be appointed to a charge 'contrary to the Will of the Congregation.' 104 The author of a Juster View observed that although a Patron and the Elders of the congregation may be members of the congregation, they are 'far from being the congregation', and that the Act must refer more generally to the regular congregation which meets on a weekly basis for 'divine worship of the Lord's Day'. 105

Although they were equally opposed to the principle of Patronage, 106 the Moderates refused to accept that ordinary members of any congregation, even during periods when Patronage was abolished, had any power of election. 107 The only power which they were willing to concede was that of dissenting, although the Presbytery would make the final decision when a presentation was disputed. They believed that the power of actual election lay in the hands of the 'Presbytery, Heritors and Session.' 108 To this argument, the counter claim was made that the notion of the

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103 The author of Private Judgement Defended refers to violent settlements as the 'corrupt Fountain whence at this Day our Divisions and other Maladies do flow', p iv.

104 This is a reference to the XIVth Act of the General Assembly in 1736. See Acts of the General Assembly, p 641.


106 A Just View of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland, (Edinburgh, 1753), p 21 where it is stated that 'the Church of Scotland has always looked on patronage as a grievance'.

107 Ibid., p 20. See also A Friendly Admonition to Such well-meaning and conscientious Persons as have already joined, or incline to join the Secession from the Church of Scotland, (Edinburgh, 1753), who comments that with reference to Scripture 'there is no direction to call for the Votes of the People' in the settlement of ministers, p 13.

108 Ibid. The author believed that no previous Act of Assembly had 'declared what shall be deemed a sufficient concurrence in order to the settlement taking place, or that the consent of the majority of
'Assent of the People' was to be found in the *Second Book of Discipline*. 109 and that 'the only ecclesiastical Rule about Election that stands unrepealed is the Act 1649, which gives the Power of Election to the Elders.' 110

When the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr met at Glasgow on 10 April 1753, they started a campaign, which began to gain momentum among several other Presbyteries and Synods throughout the country. They urged local Presbyteries and Synods to send overtures to the General Assembly requesting it to repone Gillespie to the ministry of the Church of Scotland. 111 There was a minority of five Presbyteries and one Synod 112 who directly opposed this request, the Presbytery of Dunkeld being particularly unhappy at the way in which 'some ministers' were 'writing to many and distant corners of the Kingdom....the purpose of which letters generally is to influence Elections of Members of Assembly, to bring up Instructions and Overtures from Presbyteries and Synods'. 113
The Synod of Glasgow and Ayr produced several overtures which received support from many other ecclesiastical courts throughout Scotland. First of all they called upon the Assembly to refrain from threatening ministers who declined to participate in unpopular settlements with deposition. The Synod maintained that if earlier Acts of the Assembly condemned such settlements, then the refusal to participate in unpopular settlements could not be seen as undermining the constitution of the Church of Scotland. Secondly, they appealed to the Assembly to ensure that in the future no Minister would be deposed without following the recognised form of process, which included presenting the accused with a libel and allowing him at least ten days to give his reply. Several Presbyteries were distressed at the way in which Gillespie had been summoned to the Bar of the Assembly and deposed within a period of only three days. Thirdly, they requested the Assembly to remove the sentences of deposition imposed on Gillespie and suspension imposed on his fellow ministers in the Dunfermline Presbytery.

Along with the above issues, several other Synods and Presbyteries added further overtures for the consideration of the Assembly when it met in May. The Synod of Angus and Mearns expressed concern about the use of the phrase 'in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ' which had been used during

114 Ibid., f 189 r. The Presbytery of Dundee were equally clear on this point that there was a 'superior authority of Conscience' which came under the 'Holy Scriptures, the only rule of our faith' which superseded the 'orders of a fallible Council of their earthly Superiors, when in their apprehension these orders are not agreeable to the Will of their heavenly master.' Ibid., f 186 r - 187 v.

115 Ibid., f 177 r; Records of the Synod of Dumfries, S. R. O. CH2/98.3, p 108; Records of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, CH2/449/10, p 298; Presbytery of Dunfermline, Assembly Papers, Ibid., f 188 r; Presbytery of Glasgow, Ibid., f 208 r; Presbytery of Auchterarder, Ibid., f 213 r.

116 Ibid., f 189 r; The Records of the Synod of Angus and Mearns, CH2/12/8, p 36' Records of the Synod of Perth and Stirling, p 298; Presbytery of Penpoint in Assembly Papers for 1753, Ibid., f 176 r; Presbytery of Dunkeld, f 186 r; Presbytery of Perth, f 210 r; Presbytery of Glasgow, f 208 v; Presbytery of Auchterarder, f 213 r.
Gillespie's deposition. 117 Several courts were also disturbed over the powers which had been devolved to the Commission of the Assembly. The Synod of Dumfries asked that the Commission should not be allowed to 'judge or determine in any Question relating to a Church Settlement, but such as hath previously been before the Assembly in the regular way.' 118 Furthermore, the Synod of Dumfries and the Presbytery of Penpont asked that the quorum of the Commission might be raised from thirty one members to sixty whenever 'they are to judge of any question referred to them concerning a Church Settlement'. 119 The Presbytery of Glasgow, evidently concerned over the prominence of the Edinburgh Moderates in ecclesiastical affairs, asked 'that of the four annual meetings of the Commission, two at least shall be in other cities...one at Glasgow and another at Perth.' 120

One of the major sources of opposition to overturning the deposition of Gillespie came from the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale where several of the young Moderate leaders were ministers. At the meeting of the Synod on 10 May, a request from the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr to support their overture to the Assembly was rejected on the grounds that it would 'weaken the Authority and Subvert the good order and Government of this Church.' 121 When the Synod decided to reject the overture from Glasgow, John Adams, Alexander Webster, George Wishart and

117 The Records of the Synod of Angus and Mearns, p 36.

118 The Records of the Synod of Dumfries, p 110. See also the Presbytery of Penpoint in The Assembly Papers for 1753, f 176 r, and the Presbytery of Glasgow, f 208 r.

119 The Records of the Synod of Dumfries, p 110; Assembly Papers for 1753, f 176v.

120 Assembly Papers for 1753, f 208 r.

121 Ibid., p 278. This was the major point which was taken up by the Presbyteries of Dunkeld, Paisley, St Andrews and Aberdeen in their opposition to the reponing of Gillespie. See Assembly Papers for 1753, f 177 r, f 190 r, f 200 r, f 203 r. The Presbytery of St Andrews did open the door of Gillespie being reponed, but only on the basis of his making 'a plain and open confession of his disorderly practices, and give proper Evidence of his Sincere Resolution to obey the Just Authority of this Church, for the future'.

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George Lindsay dissented against the decision. 122 During this Synod two overtures relating to the method of settling vacant parishes were transmitted for consideration. The first related to a proposal by the Moderates within the Synod to encourage the Assembly to come to an agreement about the way in which vacancies should be settled when the responsibility lay with the local Presbytery. 123 The right of election was placed firmly in the hands of the heritors and elders who would meet 'in the Presence of the Congregation'. The proposal of 'one to be Minister of the Parish...elected by the Heritors and Elders in a Conjunct body' would be presented to the congregation 'for their Assent.' If the congregation refused to acquiesce with the election, they would have the opportunity to present their reasons at the next meeting of the Presbytery who would give a final judgement about 'the sufficiency or insufficiency of them' and either 'sustain or reject them'. 124 Secondly, during a later session, the Synod asked the Assembly to continue to enforce a strict discipline upon any Presbytery which refused to execute the orders of the Assembly. John Adams, minister of Falkirk, dissented against the overture being debated, since it was of 'such great importance and universal concern' and yet it had been introduced for debate on the last day of the Synod when so many ministers had left Edinburgh. 125

When the General Assembly met on the 24 May, Alexander Webster, a member of the Popular party was elected Moderator, over against Professor William

122 The full text of the Reasons of Dissent is found in N Morren, Annals, Vol. 2, pp 4ff.

123 The overture had originated in the Presbytery of Edinburgh where it was presented by Gilbert Hamilton. See Assembly Papers for 1753, f 191 r - f 191 v. The Synod appointed William Wishart, James Naithsmith and William Robertson to present the overture to the General Assembly in 1753. See The Records of the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale, S. R. O. CH2/252.12, pp 268 - 270.

124 Records of the Synod of Lothian, p 269. The overture was carried by 37 votes to 8, with 3 abstentions. See Scots Magazine, XV, (May 1753), p 245.

125 On this basis Adams claimed that 'whatever judgement should be given in this affair it ought not to be considered as a proper evidence of the sentiments of the majority of the Synod.' See Records of the Synod of Lothian, CH2/252.13, f 89 v.
Leechman, the Moderate candidate. This was an apparent victory for those who supported Gillespie. On Wednesday 30 May, a petition was presented to the Assembly from some heritors, elders and heads of families from Carnock, describing the many benefits which they had received through Gillespie's ministry and asking the Assembly to remove the sentence of deposition and restore him 'to his ministry and labours among them.' 

Further petitions from the Presbytery of Dunfermline expressed their sense of loss in not having Gillespie, Hunter, Daling and Spence as members of their court, and asked that the Assembly 'upon such application from themselves' might 'appoint Mr Gillespie to supply the vacancy at Carnock.' 

Several other overtures relating to Gillespie were read to the Assembly, after which the Moderator asked if any petition had been received from Thomas Gillespie or the other three ministers, either directly to the Assembly or indirectly through any commissioner, the answer being 'no'. After a lengthy debate, the question was put to the Assembly 'repone the said Mr Gillespie or not.' It was clearly understood that 'by reponing meant restoring him to the Exercise of his office as minister of this Church' while those who voted against this proposal were saying 'that it shall be open to Mr Gillespie to apply when he pleases to the General Assembly for his being reponed.' 

The final vote went against Gillespie being immediately restored to the ministry by the small majority of three, 


127 Ibid., p 518. James Thomson and James Bathgate had dissented against this decision on the grounds that 'none of the Brethren mentioned in the petition had signified their desire to the presbytery to make such an application in their name.'

new schism in this Church.' 129 It may be, however, that other members of the Assembly considered that the door was now open for Gillespie to seek restoration himself.

The question which remains to be answered is why, given the obvious support among the majority of Presbyteries and Synods, the appointment of a sympathetic Moderator and the apparent majority of 'ten or twelve' which Gillespie had been told were present in the 1753 Assembly, the vote went against him? 130 Gillespie believed that the crucial factor was that 'our friends broke among themselves - their measures were disconcerted.' Apparently Gillespie had made it abundantly clear that he would never make any approach to the Assembly to be reponed to the ministry because he believed that the action which he had taken in 1752 was consistent with previous Acts of the Assembly. He believed that the question of maintaining the honour of the Assembly and the authority of the Church, which the Moderates and the Popular party had spoken of within their overtures, was 'quite inconsistent with the due support of the glorious cause for which I had suffered.' Gillespie had made it quite clear at various meetings which he had attended that he disapproved of the measures which they were suggesting. He argued from the recent history of the Church of Scotland that 'no petition was demanded or expected from the Seceders, Mr Glass, or any other ever deposed not for immorality, and reponed, though none of them ever suffered on so plain, honourable, and important grounds as I.' Gillespie was convinced that it would be 'sinful' to take the first step, although he was willing to offer a petition to the

129 Morren, Annals, Ibid., Vol. 2, p 23. A motion was presented on the Friday morning, asking that the Commission might be empowered to consider the situation, should Gillespie make any application to be reponed to the ministry. This motion was defeated by four votes. Scots Magazine, XV, (May 1753) p 253.

130 The information and conclusions which are drawn in this latter section come from a letter written by Gillespie on 23 June 1753 to a Mr John Laupsay, tenant who lived near to Kilsyth. It is found in G Struthers, The History of the Relief Church, pp 118 - 121.
Assembly once 'the sinful term of communion was removed out of the way by the mentioned sentence being reversed.'

It would appear that the members of the Popular party were not united, either on the basis of their opposition to patronage, or on the methods which they adopted to bring Gillespie back into the Church. Gillespie believed that they were guilty of compromise when they made any suggestion that the 1752 Assembly had not been entirely wrong in the decisions it had reached. Throughout the whole process of seeking his restoration to the ministry of the Church of Scotland, Gillespie was disappointed that several of his former friends and colleagues within the Church did not even vote to repone him. He confessed to John Laupslay that 'the loss of Mr Robe' was 'very great.'

Gillespie himself comes across, once again, as a man with strong convictions and an unbending commitment to what he regarded could not be compromised. In this, he was not entirely alone, because Spence, Hunter and Daling who had also refused to attend the induction of Richardson as minister of Inverkeithing, would have to wait thirteen years before their sentence of suspension was lifted.

Once the final break had been confirmed, Gillespie returned to Dunfermline and took steps to establish a congregation by preparing to dispense the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper on 29 July. 131 He issued invitations to several of his former associates but was already aware that no one would stand by his side and so, with a deep sense of sadness, he tells his friend in Kilsyth 'if no minister will assist me, I am to do it alone.' Gillespie would continue in that state of being alone for the following

131 Although Gillespie was not assisted by any Ministers, Struthers speaks of 'several of the most respectable persons in Dunfermline joined in. Persons came from a distance to hear him....crowds of serious persons flocked to his communion from Edinburgh, Glasgow, and various other quarters, at the dispensation of the Lord's Supper.' History of the Relief Church, p 125.
thirteen communion seasons in Dunfermline, until once again he returned to the Border country of Scotland, where his personal spiritual pilgrimage would be recalled, as he would stand, side by side, with Thomas Boston Jnr. and dispense the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Jedburgh. 132 In that act of Christian fellowship and service the seed would be sown, from which the plant of the Relief Church would grow and flourish in Scotland.

132 Ibid., p 153.
Chapter 4 : The Relief Presbytery

The formation of the Presbytery of Relief in 1761 deepened the divide within Scottish Presbyterianism, which had already undergone radical transformation over the previous thirty years. The religious map of Scotland was becoming increasingly diverse - now containing two separate Synods of the Secession Church, 1 the small Reformed Presbyterian Church, the Relief Presbytery and the Church of Scotland, not to mention the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Roman Catholics. By 1830, it is estimated that a third of Lowland Protestants joined one of the dissenting Churches. 2 Even by the time of the Schism overture of 1765-1766, the General Assembly was warned that defections from the Established Church were rumoured to have reached 100,000. 3

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the immediate effects of Gillespie's ministry within the Dunfermline area and to trace the circumstances which led to the formation of the Relief Presbytery in 1761. We will attempt to understand the reasons why the three churches which formed the Relief Presbytery did not join with one of the other Secession movements, and how they understood their own relationship with the Church of Scotland. In this way we will seek to discern some of the essential principles of the Relief Church which were to distinguish it during its eighty-six year history. 4

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1 The division followed the schism of 1747 over the Burgess Oath.


3 Scots Magazine, XXVII, (May, 1765) p 277. For a fuller discussion of the schism debate see R.B. Sher, Church and University, pp 130 - 135.

4 The Relief Church united with the Original Secession Church to form the United Presbyterian Church in 1847. See further details in the conclusion to the thesis.
By the time Gillespie had established his congregation and kirk session in 1753, Ralph Erskine's congregation in Dunfermline had become vacant due to the death of their minister on 6 November 1752. The long and protracted vacancy, during which the Burgher congregation made tentative and unofficial approaches to Gillespie to allow himself to be nominated as Erskine's successor, appears to have strengthened the unity of the congregation which gathered round Gillespie's ministry.

Dunfermline was one of the most populous towns in Fife. Although Edinburgh could be seen in the distance across the Forth, access to the capital city of Scotland involved a long journey by ferry and land. The Dunfermline community was close-knit and dominated by the linen industry and farming. The growing independent spirit among handloom weavers and small tenant farmers influenced the town which became one of the leading centres of dissent within Scottish Presbyterianism. This manifested itself in the ministry of Ralph Erskine and also in the protests which the Dunfermline Presbytery made during the Inverkeithing settlement.

When the General Assembly of 1740 had finally deposed Ralph Erskine from his ministry in the Church of Scotland, the Abbey congregation lost many of its members, with only five elders remaining to serve the parish. It appears that the Town Council, and more prosperous members of the community, remained within the Establishment, while the bulk of Erskine's congregation was drawn from the weaving community and tenant farmers within the surrounding countryside. The religious situation of the Town Council and social elite had changed dramatically by the time that Gillespie was deposed from the ministry at Carnock.

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5 Hugh Watt, 'Thomas Gillespie' in Records of the Scottish Church History Society, Vol. XV, p 94. Gillespie's supporters had purchased the Associate congregation's old meeting house in Chapel Street. See A. S. Cunningham, History of the Secession and Relief Churches in Dunfermline, (Dunfermline, 1899) p 22.
James Thomson, one of the two collegiate ministers at the Abbey Church, had been a bitter opponent of Gillespie and the other ministers of the Dunfermline Presbytery who had opposed the Inverkeithing settlement. Thomson represented the Moderate party within the Presbytery. On the other hand, his colleague, Thomas Fernie, sympathised with the Popular party, and believed that any harsh treatment which the protesters experienced would only fan the flames of dissent within the parish.

In 1753, the internal divisions in the Abbey Church between the two ministers, and also between Thomson and several of his elders came to a climax. In April 1753, the Abbey kirk session decided to initiate disciplinary proceedings against six elders in the session who had been attending the ministry of Gillespie. Thomas Fernie, however, immediately protested that this action would only 'increase our unhappy divisions'. The Town Council and Magistrates then indicated their own inclinations when they presented to the kirk session a petition which proposed that Colin Angus, one of the elders who had been attending Gillespie's ministry, should represent the Burgh at the forthcoming General Assembly. The debates which followed in the Dunfermline Presbytery indicated that not only had the six elders become the focus of Thomson's opposition, but that he had ceased to pray for the Town Council and Magistrates within the Sunday services, after they had shown support for Gillespie following his deposition.

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6 Dunfermline Abbey Kirk Session Minutes, 19 April, 1753, CH 2/592.1, pp 190ff. The elders were John McCraich, James Hog, Andrew Dickie, Baillie David Turnbull, Robert Black, and Colin Angus, the last four of whom had been appointed to the Session in 1745.

7 Ibid., pp 191-2. At a meeting of the Dunfermline Presbytery on 2 May 1753 the representation was sustained despite the objection that Angus had attended the 'publick worship in the Parish Church of Dunfermline only in the forenoon of the Lord's Day, and in attending in Mr Gillespie's meeting house in the afternoon, almost ever since his deposition by the last General Assembly.' Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunfermline 1751-1760, CH 2/105.8, pp 135-6.

8 Ibid., pp 209-210
The breakdown in fellowship within the Abbey kirk session and between the Town Council and the Abbey Church became major factors in the support which Gillespie gained during the initial years of his Dunfermline ministry. Whereas Erskine had gained adherents from the lower social orders, Gillespie won more influential supporters in the Town Council and the trades within the town. This support, along with that of his former congregation in Carnock and of many people who had left Ralph Erskine's former Secession congregation during its vacancy, enabled Gillespie to attract probably the largest congregation within the town, and also one of the most influential. 9 The Baptismal Roll for 1754 showed the names of David Beatson, a farmer; Robert Wellwood, an advocate; John MacKie, convener of trades; James Wilson, town clerk, as well as weavers, farmers, tenant farmers and other tradesmen. John Rocksburgh of Inverkeithing is also mentioned during this year, a further indication that although an Associate congregation had been formed in Inverkeithing following the disputed settlement of Richardson, there were some of the parish which preferred to support Gillespie. 10

Although the elders and deacons from Gillespie's former parish of Carnock attended the Church in Dunfermline, 11 they also continued to act as elders within the Carnock parish because they indicated that 'they want to keep by the principles of the

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9 Between 1752 and 1774 at least two, and perhaps four, of the Provosts and a number of the Baillies belonged to Gillespie's congregation. See Gordon Jenkins, Dunfermline Dissent, (Ph.D., University of Edinburgh, 1988) p 40. These facts appear to substantiate Callum Brown's assertion that 'in the burghs, the Burghers and the Relief Church developed as the largest dissenting churches, becoming popular amongst the middle and higher echelons of the industrial and commercial population.' Religion and Social Change, p 150.

10 Jenkins, Dunfermline Dissent, pp 35ff.

11 When George Adie was ordained the new minister of the parish of Carnock on 29 November, 1753 he complained that he had 'no elders to sit and judge in Session with him.' Records of the Kirk Session in Carnock, CH 2/59.2, p 233. John Tannochy told a Presbytery Committee on 29 January that he had 'no inclination for the preaching at Carnock nor would he hear any Established appointment by the Presbytery.' Minutes of Presbytery of Dunfermline, CH 2/105.8, p 152. Prior to the final decision of 1753, John Morrice had continued attending the Parish Church but following the General Assembly he also went to Dunfermline.
Church of Scotland and in full communion with it. 12 This latter attitude shows their unwillingness to see themselves as being part of a schismatic movement. Later, the Jedburgh and Colinsburgh congregations, which united with Dunfermline to form the Presbytery of Relief, also expressed the hope that they would be seen as continuing to hold the principles of the Church of Scotland in terms of theology and Church government.

The Jedburgh Dispute

During the first five years of his ministry in Dunfermline, Gillespie continued to work within the framework of his own local congregation and community. There is no evidence that he even preached outwith his own building. This situation, however, changed in 1758 when an independent congregation was formed in Jedburgh following a dispute over patronage.

It has been suggested that the Relief Church consisted of groups of evangelicals within Scottish Presbyterianism who had a 'desire for sound teaching.' 13 This statement is only partially true. If the Relief Church had only been concerned with orthodox Reformed doctrine it would have found its spiritual home with the Seceders. 14 Furthermore, the Jedburgh case clearly indicates that the question in

12 Minutes of Presbytery of Dunfermline, CH 2/105.8, p 159. When the Presbytery decided to suspend these elders and deacons, Stark of Torryburn and Fernie of Dunfermline entered their dissent.


14 In August 1761 the Associate Synod issued an Act concerning Preaching which indicates their desire, not only to be sound in their doctrine but also to avoid any modern style of preaching. They cautioned their ministers to 'guard against an affected pedantry of style and pronunciation, or politeness of expression, in delivering the truths of the gospel; as being an using the enticing words of man's wisdom, and inconsistent with that gravity which the weight of the matter of the gospel requires; and as proceeding from an affectation to accommodate the manner of preaching, which, if not timely prevented, may at length issue in attempts to accommodate the matter of it also, to the corrupt taste of a carnal generation.' Scots Magazine, Vol. XXIII, (1761), p 443.
people's minds was not that of securing a 'sound' evangelical minister but rather the minister of the people's choice.

When James Winchester, minister of Jedburgh since 1734, died in September 1755, it could have been expected that the Marquis of Lothian would present an evangelical as the new minister. The Marquis, along with Lord Rae and the Earl of Leven, had been closely associated with George Whitefield during several of his visits to Scotland. When the Marquis lived in London in 1747, moreover, he associated with a group who met with Lady Huntingdon. He strongly supported Whitefield's ministry in Great Britain and America during the years following the 1742 revival.

Soon after the death of their previous minister, the elders of the parish, along with the Town Council, indicated to the Marquis that they would like Thomas Boston, Minister of Oxnam, some three miles from Jedburgh, to be their next Pastor. Boston was well known to the Marquis, indeed he had moved from Ettrick to Oxnam as a result of a previous presentation in 1749. It would appear, however, that a personal dispute had spoiled their relationships and in a move of personal pique, the Marquis presented John Bonar, another member of the Popular party within the Church of Scotland and minister of Cockpen.

When the presentation came before the Presbytery on 4 February 1756 it was accompanied by a letter of acceptance from John Bonar. The presentation, however, was immediately opposed by John and Alexander Ainslie, two elders from the Jedburgh parish, on the grounds that it would not 'be agreeable to by far the majority

17 Thomas Somerville, My Own Life and Times 1741-1814, (Edinburgh, 1861), p 169.
of the parish'. 18 Two weeks later, on 20 February, the Magistrates and Town Council, along with the seventeen elders of the parish and numerous heads of families, indicated their disappointment that John Bonar had accepted the presentation, as Bonar had been informed by two letters from the elders and the Town Council of their desire to have Thomas Boston to be their minister. 19 They insisted that one of the fixed principles of the Church of Scotland was that congregations should be able to have ministers 'with their own consent' and sought to prove their case for Boston being issued a call by observing that only three heads of families had indicated their support for John Bonar while about two hundred and fifty had signed a paper in favour of Boston. 20

Following various delays within the Presbytery and the Synod of Merse and Teviotdale, the General Assembly in May 1756 took the decision that although the presentation to John Bonar was perfectly in order, it would not be expedient to allow it to proceed. By that time, Bonar had received a call to Perth, where he became the minister of the second charge in July 1756.

18 Records of the Presbytery of Jedburgh, CH 2/198.11, p 146. As early as October 1755, the Town Council, elders and deacons had written to the Marquis of Lothian informing him that at a 'meeting of the whole Trades and Elders and a great many of the inhabitants...they found it is the unanimous inclination not only of the Town Council, Trades and Elders of the Session but of the whole inhabitants both of Town and Country parish that Mr Boston be the person whose settlement your Lordship may be assured will be most peaceable.' National Library of Scotland, Ms3431 ff. 149. In a later letter to the Marquis written in November, Bailey Gordon indicated that 'all the pains possible to represent Mr Bonar and his qualifications in the clearest light and exerted all the interest we were capable of to reconcile the people to him but all in vain.' Ms3431 ff. 150.

19 Records of the Presbytery of Jedburgh, Ibid., pp 149-150.

20 This paper which was produced to the meeting of the Presbytery on 20 February was dated 22 October 1755, indicating how soon the two parties within the parish had formed their relative support. Ibid., p 155.
Once again Boston was passed over, and the next candidate presented and
then called was John Douglas, minister of Kenmore. 21 The call to Douglas, however,
was objected to within the Presbytery on several grounds. First of all, the Popular
faction argued that since six months had elapsed since the death of the previous
minister the Jus Devolutum ought to take place, placing the responsibility of the call in
the hands of the Presbytery. 22 Secondly, they claimed that the call was signed by
non-resident heritors, some of whom were not even members of the Church of
Scotland, 23 and that only a few parishioners had indicated their support for Douglas,
whereas the total number of parishioners was nearly five thousand. 24 Some credence
was given to these arguments by the Presbytery on 13 October 1756 when they
agreed that the 'consent of the congregation is made indispensably necessary to the
lawful and orderly calling of a minister; as without which no pastoral relation can be
established.' 25 Thirdly, when the question came to the General Assembly in 1757 it
was stated that several Acts of Assembly strictly prohibited the settlement of any
minister in the lowlands of Scotland who, like Douglas, was fluent in the Irish
language. 26 The General Assembly of 1758 finally ordered the whole of the
Presbytery to be present to admit John Douglas as minister of the parish, with the
induction to take place on 28 July 1758.

21 The call was dated 2 June 1756.
23 Ibid., p 223.
24 Jedburgh must have been one of the largest parishes within Scotland although R Houston has
shown that 'many Scottish Parishes were very large in both areas and population, meaning either that
it was difficult to reach the church, or that there were too many parishioners for the authorities to
25 Ibid., p 250. See also Assembly Papers for 1757, CH 1/2/99, f 118v.
Prior to this final decision being taken by the General Assembly, Thomas Boston demitted his charge on Sunday 4 December 1757, informing the Presbytery of his decision on the following Wednesday. 27 The fact that he demitted his charge to the kirk session rather than to the Presbytery may indicate his own conviction that the local congregation, the community which called him, represented the people to whom he was accountable, rather than the Presbytery. He did attend the Presbytery on the 7 December and the meeting drew so large a crowd that 'there was such a concourse of people in the church of Jedburgh as broke down most of the pews.' 28 A large meeting house had already been built, with construction following the 1757 Assembly and Boston was admitted as Pastor of the new church on Friday 9 December 1757 by Roderick Mackenzie, a dissenting minister from England. 29

As in Dunfermline, there are indications that Boston's actions were not to be interpreted as being a final break with the Church of Scotland. As early as 1753, he had written a preface to his father's sermon on the Evil and Danger of Schism, in which he opposed the Secession Church because it had done little, he maintained, to advance the 'revival of real religion'. On the contrary, it had only encouraged 'envy and bitterness against all but those of their own party'. 30 He acknowledged that 'a Secession from the established Church' might have beneficial effects for Christian life and nurture, but only if it was 'managed with prudence and temper, and with the sole view of promoting Christianity'. 31

27 Kirk Session of Oxnam, CH 2/1232.3, f 4 v.
28 Morren, Annals, pp 154-5.
29 Boston's call had been signed by all the Town Council, elders and all the heads of families except five. Subscriptions towards the cost of the new church building also came from neighbouring parishes such as Minto, Hawick, Lilliesleaf, Maxton, Crailing and Morebattle. G Struthers, History of the Relief Church, p 141.
30 Thomas Boston, Evil and Danger of Schism, (Edinburgh, 1758), pp v - vi.
31 Ibid.
It seems that this desire was still in his mind when he presented a letter to the Presbytery of Jedburgh offering his demission from the pastoral charge at Oxnam. 32 In it he clearly stated his desire to 'hold ministerial and Christian communion with all who faithfully avouch the Gospel system' and justified his 'partial secession' as being a response to the unlawful use of patronage. 33 When he was inducted to his new independent congregation, he promised to 'hold communion with...his brethren in the Lord, if an opportunity shall be afforded him' and added that he intended to keep himself from 'Sectarianism'. 34

The General Assembly of May 1758 did not try to remonstrate with Boston, but accepted his demission and, as in the case of Gillespie, the Assembly prohibited any minister of the Church of Scotland from inviting Boston to preach or to assist in any ministerial function. 35 Therefore, when the Jedburgh church decided to celebrate

32 Scots Magazine, XIX (Nov. 1757) p 610 quotes from a letter which was published in the Edinburgh Journal dated 7 December which states 'This day Mr Thomas Boston gave in to the presbytery of Jedburgh a demission of his charge as minister of Oxnam: and though the presbytery rejected his demission, it is assured, that Friday next he is to be admitted minister to the town and parish of Jedburgh in the dissenting way, by Mr Roderick Mackenzie, who it is reported is shortly to be settled in the same way, in a dissenting congregation at Nigg in Rossshire.' Mackenzie had been ordained minister of Lochbroom, by the presbytery of Gairloch, on the 9 February 1743 but on a complaint by the Earl of Cromarty, the patron, his settlement was reversed by the Assembly of 1743. Scots Magazine, Ibid., p 668.

33 Morren, Annals, Vol. 2, p 157. In the December issue of the Scots Magazine a further letter was printed, dated 15 December from Jedburgh which said that after Boston had given in his demission he read a paper, as his speech, containing his reasons for doing so: in which he declares his dissent from the present church-judicatures, and at the same time his willingness to hold ministerial and Christian communion with all who faithfully avouch the gospel-system, and aim at a sincere discharge of its duties; he professes his utmost aversion at dividing the congregations of his brethren bearing that worthy character, and justifies that his partial secession, by the almost universal conduct of the present judicatures in intruding pastors upon reclaiming congregations, contrary to scripture, to our ecclesiastical laws, and to sound reason; at the hazard of alienating the people from our happy constitution in church and state.'

34 Ibid., p 155. 'On the day of admission, the bells were rung, and the magistrates and council, in all their formalities, and the people, amounting to at least 2000, repaired to the new church....the audience was so numerous, that many of them sat without, opposite to the windows, which were opened; and about fifty who could not hear, went to the old church, where Mr Rogers minister of Hunam was preaching by appointment of the presbytery; whose whole auditory, it is said, did not exceed eighty.' Scots Magazine, IX, (1757), pp 667 - 668.

35 Morren, Annals, p 159.
its first communion season in August 1758 it was to Thomas Gillespie that Boston turned for assistance. 36 Although Gillespie did not manage to attend the communion season in 1758, his journey to the Borders in 1759 forged a strong bond between two men whose spiritual past owed much to Thomas Boston of Ettrick, and whose future would be inextricably linked.

In August 1759, Boston arranged for the communion season to take place beside the banks of the river in Jedburgh. Once again Gillespie's arrival in Jedburgh was delayed and Boston began the communion services on the Sabbath by announcing a psalm and leading the large congregation in prayer. During the prayer, Boston was aware that someone had entered the temporary pulpit. When he finished praying, Boston turned round and warmly welcomed Gillespie back to the Borders.

The Kilconquhar Dispute

After a breathing space of only two years, the General Assembly faced yet another disputed settlement, this time in the parish of Kilconquhar. Kilconquhar was a parish situated in Fife, and it had a population of around 2,000. It was made up of four villages, Colinsburgh being the most densely populated, Earlsferry, Barnyards and Kilconquhar, where the parish church was to be found. The parish contained a Praying Society, the members meeting, at least weekly, for prayer and discussion. The Society met at Colinsburgh and maintained correspondence with a similar one in Edinburgh. 37

36 Struthers suggests that Gillespie did not actually come to Jedburgh until August 1759. Although this may well be true, the Manuscript sermons of Gillespie for 1758 show that he prepared a sermon to preach on the Sabbath evening of 27 August, 1758 on Revelation 1 v 18. Dunfermline Sermons for 1758ff. It may well have been that Gillespie was hindered in coming in 1758 and so his coming in 1759, recorded by Struthers was thought to be the first invitation he had received. See Struthers, History of the Relief Church., pp 152 - 153. See also James Tait, Two Centuries of Border Church Life. (Kelso, 1889), Vol. 1, p 275.

The parish became vacant in March 1759, following the death of Rev James Clidsdale. The Earl of Balcarres, whose family had held the right of patronage within the parish since the Reformation, presented Rev John Chalmers, minister of Elie in Fife in May 1759. The immediate reaction of the parish was to gather a petition, indicating a strong opposition to the proposed settlement. Four petitions, from different parts of the parish, were presented to the Presbytery, which did not proceed with the call. Once again the issue involved not merely the personality of the patron's presentee, but also the rights of 'the parishioners...of choosing their Minister, which they used in times past in this Church'.

It soon became evident that there was a strong opposition to Chalmers receiving the presentation. Out of nine elders, only one indicated that he would support the presentation while another elder, Alexander Scott, indicated that several hundred heads of family had attended the meeting of the Presbytery to declare their opposition against Chalmers. Protest was also made on the basis that several heritors who supported the call were not of the communion of the Church of Scotland or had not attended worship for 'ten or twelve years.' Patrick Chalmers, however,

38 Kilconquhar was 'a parish consisting of about two thousand examinable persons.' Assembly Papers for 1760, CH 1/2/101, f.9r. Robert Dick, History of Colinsburgh United Presbyterian Church. (Colinsburgh, 1883), p 7.

39 In a letter to the presbytery of St Andrews, the Earl of Balcarres mentions that his family has had the right of presentation 'since the Reformation' and that this right 'has been exercised' until this time 'without any objection'. St Andrews Presbytery Minutes, CH 2/1132/6, p 124.

40 Kilconquhar Session Minutes, CH 2/210/11, pp 86-87. It was later claimed that 'all but one of the elders, were against the settlement'. Assembly Papers for 1760, CH 1/2/101, f.9r.

41 St Andrews Presbytery Minutes, p 332.

42 Ibid., p 341. Their opposition to Chalmers on practical terms was that the parish was numerous, that his voice could not be heard in church, that his 'gifts are not acceptable to our capacities' and his age (he was 48 and lived until he was 80) indicated that 'it cannot be expected he will be long able to discharge the duties of a minister in this parish.'

43 Ibid. pp 337-338.
claimed that among the people who opposed the call 'the cry of a promiscuous crowd, in which there was not so much as heads of families and many, who are not parishioners....these petitions are filled up with the names of persons and subscribers who can neither read nor write and among them are persons who, if they were not under the influence of fear, would declare sentiments quite the reverse of what is contained in these petitions, as can be instructed from what they have said in private conversations.' 44

When the Synod of Fife met in October 1759 the Earl of Balcarres made it very clear that he did not believe that members of the congregation should have any voice in the selection of their minister. He was convinced that if he had asked their opinion it would have only 'flattered the people with notions of power, which they never had, nor now have any right to'. 45 Despite Balcarres' pressure, the Synod refused to sustain the call to Chalmers. 46 However, the General Assembly met in May 1760 and proceeded to sustain the call to Chalmers, and he was subsequently inducted to the parish on 19 June 1760. 47

During the debate on the Kilconquhar case, Dr John Witherspoon, 48 an opponent of the policy of the Moderates regarding the enforcement of patronage,

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44 Assembly Papers for 1760, Ibid., f 60 r

45 Minutes of the Synod of Fife, CH 2/154/8, p 269.

46 Although the Commission ordered the Presbytery of St Andrews to proceed with the call, they refused and the whole matter was brought to the General Assembly in May 1760.


48 Witherspoon was the minister of Paisley, the author of the satirical essay on Ecclesiastical Characteristics which poured scorn on the Moderates, a member of the Popular party who vigorously opposed the patronage system. Henry Davidson described his Ecclesiastical Characteristics as 'describing the spirit and conduct of the young clergy in their sermons and Kirk management in the courts....it provokes highly'. H Davidson, Letters to Christian Friends, p 211. He was particular
criticised his protagonists on the basis that if the settlement was to continue the parish would have a 'pastor without a people'. Witherspoon rejected the view that 'any Christian has a right to call a minister'; however, it was equally wrong to impose a minister on a parish when 'nobody will adhere' to his ministry. Witherspoon was convinced that 'every man' had a 'natural right' to 'adhere to any minister he pleases.' To impose a minister upon a parish would rob them of the rights of natural justice. Witherspoon evidently believed that any 'choice' which a congregation might make of their minister referred to their right to either indicate their acceptance of the presentation or to show their displeasure. He asked the Assembly to oppose the settlement of Chalmers and thus show 'a proper tenderness' towards the convictions of the congregation, so that the establishment might continue to exercise influence in the lives of the people. Witherspoon feared that if the Assembly insisted on proceeding with such a settlement it would be more honest to 'call our charges no more parishes but livings' because the ministers who were inducted in such circumstances would be lifting a stipend but not be ministering to the people of the parish.

Less than two months after the induction of Chalmers to the parish of Kilconquhar, on 4 August 1760, a dissenting congregation was formed in Colinsburgh. The congregation consisted of people from Colinsburgh, Kilconquhar, Largo and Carnbee, along with five former elders from Kilconquhar parish. By the


50 The title page of the Colinsburgh Congregation is dated 4 August 1760. CH3/60/1.

51 Ibid. pp 8-16. Only one elder remained within the establishment. The five other elders, Alexander Scott, William Ramsay, Andrew Wilson, George Taylor and Thomas Russel were suspended by the new Kilconquhar kirk session in October 1761. See Dick, *Colinsburgh*, pp 34-35.
15 August the people had purchased ground and began to build a large meeting-house, which was completed in the following spring.\(^{52}\)

During the intervening period it appears that the congregation went to neighbouring parishes to worship, although the ministers in those parishes were reluctant to baptise their children or allow them to receive communion. Even Thomas Gillespie did not come to Colinsburgh until 17 March 1761 and only after he had been approached on several occasions. It is interesting that the Seceders offered the congregation ministerial help which they refused, seeking to avoid what they termed 'the sin of schism.'\(^{53}\) Although Gillespie did not preach in Colinsburgh until March 1761 he had written to the congregation suggesting the name of Thomas Scott, dissenting minister in Hexham, England, as a suitable minister. A delegation was sent to Hexham to hear Scott and although a call was subscribed by the congregation, Scott did not accept the call because of the state of his health.\(^{54}\) Soon after this, Thomas Colier, minister at Ravenstondale, Westmorland in England preached in Gillespie's church in Dunfermline and then for two Sundays in Colinsburgh, after which he received a unanimous call.\(^{55}\)

\(^{52}\) As well as receiving subscriptions from the above mentioned places, money was also received from well-wishers in Newburn, St Andrews and elsewhere. See Dick, Colinsburgh, Ibid., p 33. The ground which was purchased had been previously occupied by three houses bought from David Lister, David Ure and Alex Scott for total of £36.7.00. When a manse was purchased in October 1761 the title deeds signed by the 'Managers of the Society erected for religious purposes at Colinsburgh' and included 'William Aitken, tenant in Comilaw, David Carstairs, feuair in Barnyards of Kilconquhar and David Robertson, feuair in Largo ward.' Ibid.

\(^{53}\) Minute Book of the Colinsburgh Congregation of the Relief Church, CH3/60/1, p 21.

\(^{54}\) Thomas Scott and his brother James were natives of the Wilton parish, near Hawick. It appears that they were both licentiates of the Established church. Thomas was ordained in Hexham on 24 November 1756 by the Northumberland Class and James was ordained in a Presbyterian congregation in Brampton, Northumberland in 1774. Thomas later became the minister of the Relief Church in Auchtermuchty in August 1763 and James the minister of the Relief congregation in Jedburgh in September 1783. See Robert Small, History of the United Presbyterian Church, Vol. 1.165 and Vol. II.376.
The induction of Colier to the church in Colinsburgh was set for 22 October 1762 and both Thomas Boston and Thomas Gillespie agreed to be present and to conduct the services. It was on this occasion, following the induction services, that the three ministers and an elder from each of the three congregations met together and constituted themselves into the Presbytery of Relief. They stated that they were acting 'for the relief of oppressed Christian congregations' and that the Presbytery would fulfil the same purpose as that of 'members of the Established Church of Scotland.'

The Relief Presbytery saw themselves as acting in exactly the same way in which they had done while they were part of the Church of Scotland, and did not want to be regarded as schismatics. Indeed when the History and Principles of the First Constituted Presbytery of Relief was published in 1795, the author was concerned to make it clear that the ministers of the Presbytery did not consider themselves as Seceders but shared 'the same principles which the clergy of the popular interest of the said church profess'. Gillespie, Boston and Colier were all concerned to 'hold Christian and ministerial communion with their brethren of the popular interest of the church of Scotland' which they believed was representative of 'the greater number of her ministers' who were 'sound in doctrine, and do all in their

55 Colier was a native of Fife. It is interesting that whereas Thomas Scott had refused to come to Colinsburgh because he was concerned that his health was not strong enough for such a large congregation, Colier became ill in 1764 and he eventually died in 1769.

56 Dick, Colinsburgh, p 46.

57 David Gellatly, The History and Principles of the First Constituted Presbytery of Relief, (Edinburgh, 1795), p 34. James Smith, who succeeded Gillespie in Dunfermline, wrote in 1783 that the members of the first Relief Presbytery 'did not dissent from the constitution of the Establishment, nor did they voluntarily abandon the communion of that church; they were cast out and persecuted for acting according to their views of presbytery.' Historical Sketches of the Relief Church, (Edinburgh, 1783), p 10. When Colier was inducted at Colinsburgh he was required to make a 'solemn and public profession of his faith in God, his belief of the scriptures, his approbation of Presbytery, according to reformation principles, and his adherence to the constitution of the Church of Scotland, as exhibited in her creeds, her canons, confessions and forms of worship.' Ibid., p 11.
power to bring her back to all her reformation principles'. 58 Indeed, the early Relief Presbytery believed that their principles and constitution reflected the Church of Scotland at its best with regard to 'doctrinal articles, ordinances of divine worship, in principles of government, and Christian comprehensive communion.' 59 They were also clear in their conviction that every member of every congregation should have a vote in the election of their own minister, and although they acknowledged that this could be the basis of division, they urged the minority to acquiesce with the view of the majority of the congregation. 60

Gillespie, and other members of the Relief Presbytery refused to identify with the strictness of the Seceders who wanted to impose the covenants on their members. In an age of increasing division among Presbyterian groups within Scotland, the Presbytery of Relief, although at first sight appearing to be another schismatic group, actually sought to maintain fellowship with all Christians, within every section of the Church. Unfortunately, the attitude of the General Assembly towards Gillespie and Boston hindered them from developing any formal expressions of working with other ministers within the Established Church. The short-sighted viewpoint of the Moderates within the Church of Scotland in attempting to enforce a rigid policy on patronage led, not only to more and more congregations associating with the Relief Church, but also impeded ministers of the gospel in working together for the growth of the kingdom of God. The Relief Church thus became a symbol of the liberality of

58 Ibid., p 35. They were willing to 'hold communion occasionally with such as were visible saints' from other denominations. See Smith, Historical Sketches, p 30. James Baine, writing in 14 June, 1766 states that 'whatever may be said of others, slander itself will almost blush to say that the Presbytery of Relief have any separating principles. They dare not decline communion with any who have the knowledge, the visible uncorrupted profession of real Christianity.' Memoirs of Modern Church Reformation, (Edinburgh 1766), p 12.


60 Ibid., p 36.
the grace of God which it preached, and expressed the Enlightenment concepts of
toleration and freedom, virtues which would eventually bring about the healing of
some of the divisions within Scottish Presbyterianism in 1847.
Chapter 5: Gillespie's Preaching

From the moment he received his license to preach the gospel on 30 October 1740 until his death in January 1774, Thomas Gillespie gave pride of place to preaching in his work as a minister. Standing, as he did, in the Reformed tradition, he held that 'Preaching the Word' was the prime, almost the only, duty of the minister. 1 The majority of the innovations that took place at the time of the Reformation in the theology, liturgy and structure of the Church were still in place during Gillespie's ministry. The Westminster Directory for Public Worship made the centrality and dominance of the sermon perfectly clear. Out of twelve pages describing the normal Sunday service, ten are taken up with 'Public Prayer before the Sermon', 'Of Preaching of the Word' and 'Of Prayer after Sermon'. The only other elements in the services were to be the reading of the scriptures and the singing of psalms. 2 Preaching is described as 'one of the greatest and most excellent Works belonging to the Ministry of the Gospel'. 3 The Church of Scotland made ample provision of sermons for each individual congregation: two on the Sabbath, and a third, often a lecture, on a weekday. 4 Gillespie concluded that 'week day sermons are often more blessed than them delivered on the Lord's Day' because special attention and expectation is found in those who attended such services. 5


2 The Confessions of Faith. (Glasgow, 1764), pp 198ff. Although the Directory for Public Worship did not have its statutory authority restored in 1690, Act X of the General Assembly of 1705 'seriously recommends to all ministers and others within this National Church the due observation of the Directory for the Public Worship of God.' Acts of the General Assembly, p 387.

3 Ibid. p 214.

4 When Daniel Defoe visited Scotland in 1707, he spoke of the eagerness with which congregations gathered to hear preaching. It was 'as though they wished to eat the words as they left the minister's mouth' and he described how 'In a whole church full of people, not one shall be seen without a Bible...if you shut your eyes when the minister names any text of Scripture, you shall hear a little rustling noise over the whole place, made by turning the leaves of the Bible.' D. Defoe, Memoirs of the Church of Scotland, (Perth, 1844), p 355. This was similar to Whitefield's own experience when he preached in Dunfermline in 1741. See L. Tyerman, The Life of George Whitefield, Vol. I, p 508.
Gillespie maintained that the 'offices and ordinances' of the ministry had been 'appointed' by the 'Lord Jesus as King and Head of his church' for the express purpose of the 'edification of his members and for gathering in his elect'. Preaching received a priority in the ministry of the gospel because God had ordained that 'sinners' are 'effectually called by Christ by His Word' and that through 'Gospel Ministrations' the Church of Christ is built up. He asserted that men and women will be 'regenerated by Christ's Word preached by ministers as well as written' and thus the pulpit, and the resulting body of sermons he produced, constituted the focal point of his diverse interests and activities.

Gillespie lived in a time when the sermon was still the common vehicle for popular communication. The minister was the voice of authority in the community and sermons were eagerly anticipated and enjoyed. He had heard powerful and successful preachers such as Thomas Boston, Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine, George Whitefield and Philip Doddridge. His spiritual mentors exemplified a simplicity of style, instructing their congregations in the central doctrines of the Christian faith and

5 New College Sermons. Vol. 1 for 1761, p 23.
6 Dunfermline Sermons for 1747, f 105v- 106r.
7 New College Sermons. Vol. 1 for 1761, p 12.
8 Ibid., p 15.
10 Gillespie had been converted through Boston's sermons and several of them had already been published prior to, and during, Gillespie's ministry. See Thomas Boston, A General Account of my Life, pp 358-361.
11 During the time that Gillespie was at Doddridge's Academy in Northampton he would have been asked to preach. See Malcolm Deacon, Philip Doddridge, pp 74-77. Doddridge in particular must have influenced Gillespie. Deacon points out that 'Job Orton noted that Doddridge's sermons were more admired for the direct assistance they furnished than for literary excellency'. Knowing his people and their particular needs gave Doddridge much material for his sermons; 'he came home to his hearers' bosoms', wrote Orton, 'and led them to see their real characters, wherein they were defective, and how far they might justly be comforted and encouraged.' Ibid, p 75.
applying their sermons in practical and experimental ways, relating to conversion, faith and communion with Christ. The General Assembly of 1736 drew attention to the requirements of the *Directory* that ministers should 'make it the great scope of their preaching to lead sinners from a covenant of works to a covenant of grace for life and salvation and from sin and self to precious Christ.' 12 As the Popular party grew within the Church of Scotland, the people began to distinguish between preachers who were 'yill ministers' 13 and those who were 'kail pot preachers', 14 because their fervency in delivery as well as the subject matter, kept the attention of their hearers 'all forgetful of the Sabbath kail simmering in the pot at home'. 15 For Gillespie, true preaching was not merely the transmission of information but involved earnestness, passion and zeal in seeking to apply God's word to the consciences of his hearers. He knew of the danger of preaching only to 'influence the affections for a season', a ministry that did not to seek to 'change the understanding and will', 16 and

12 *Acts of the General Assembly*, p 636. The context of this particular Act is an attempt to conciliate the Seceders and their contention that the Church of Scotland was drifting away from true evangelical preaching. Later Moderate preaching has been described by R. Sher as having the 'primary goal of... moral teaching... to make men virtuous and happy, which is to say, benevolent in thought and deed and appreciative - to the point of personal sacrifice and civic commitment - of the established social, political, and religious order.' See Sher, *Church and University*, p 211. In contrast to this, evangelical preaching during the same period spoke more of 'the love of God and of the blessings of the redeemed as a means of motivating people to renounce sin.' Article on 'Preaching' in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, p 670.

13 A description given to a preacher who, when he rose to speak, made many of his hearers leave to quench their thirst in the public house. Strangely enough William McCulloch of Cambuslang received this description prior to the revival. See A. Fawcett, *Cambuslang Revival*, p 39.

14 Kail or Kale is a variety of cabbage, especially one with wrinkled leaves and no compact head.

15 Henry G Graham, *The Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*, (London, 1909), pp 307-308. We have already noticed the correspondence which existed between Gillespie and Jonathan Edwards and it is more than likely that he would have read Edward's sermon on 'The True Excellency of a Minister of the Gospel' (1744) in which the New England divine insists that a minister must be 'both a burning and a shining light'; that 'his heart burn with love to Christ, and fervent desires of the advancement of his kingdom and glory,' and that 'his instructions be clear and plain, accommodated to the capacity of his hearers, and tending to convey light to their understandings.' Edwards, *Works*, pp 955ff.

16 *New College Sermons*, Vol. 3, f 2r.
so he encouraged all ministers to 'beseech them...your duty is to compel them.' 17 Preachers must 'deal closely with their consciences' and be 'unweary' in speaking to 'stubborn and obstinate sinners.' 18 Gillespie believed in the sovereignty of God in election and calling, but this did not minimise his conviction that ministers must do all they could to bring sinners to Christ. 19 He experienced a tension between his commitment to expend his human energies in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and the doctrine of predestination. This combination of faith and fervency meant that ministers should not be discouraged at seeing little evidence of success in their preaching, because ultimately the conversion of sinners is 'in the hand of his great Lord.' 20

Scripture was the source of Gillespie's sermons. He believed that the word of God was 'the infallible rule', 21 the sole authority for the faith of the Church, and he gave a central place to scripture in every aspect of Church life. His sermons were heavily laden with scripture citations. He compared the note of authority found in the bible to that of the 'King' who 'speaks only by his proclamation' 22 and this alone ought to be the source of the preacher's sermons as he seeks to bring 'belief of fundamental truths' which find their origin in the 'Lord's testimony speaking in his word, thus resting on his authority'. 23

17 New College Sermons. Vol. 1 for 1761, p 3
18 Ibid., p 5.
19 Ibid., p 22.
20 Ibid., p 27.
21 New College Sermons. Vol. 6 (1762), f 39r.
22 Dunfermline Sermons for 1747, f 186r.
23 New College Sermons. Vol. 6, f 34v. Gillespie viewed the bible not only as being a source of doctrine but also as the 'perfect and unerring rule of faith and practice in all generations'. Dunfermline Sermons for 1758, f 31r.
An analysis of the fifteen extant volumes of manuscript sermons that are still available for consultation, reveals that Gillespie preached from both the Old and New Testaments, although his favourite passages were drawn from the Psalms, Isaiah, Gospels and Paul.

Gillespie believed that ministers should find spiritual sustenance for their people in a variety of different portions of God's word. This motivated him to preach from various biblical books, and over and over again he demonstrated his great knowledge of the bible by quoting different verses to bolster his interpretation of a particular passage which he dealt with, fortifying various 'reasons' as supports for the doctrine which he taught. It is likely that Gillespie's sermon notes, which are very full in content, indicate that he took several Sunday services to preach through his text, seeking to show the relevance of the study of the word of God to the lives of his

24 The volumes are found in New College (10 volumes), Dunfermline Public Library (4 volumes) and Aberdeen University (1 volume). The sermons were preached in 1741-3, 1746, 1747-50, 1758, 1761-1764, 1771.


26 Psalms - 10 texts. Isaiah - 19 texts. Gospels - 13 texts. Paul - 13 texts. A fuller breakdown of the texts which Gillespie used indicates the breadth of biblical material that he used.

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people. One whole volume is dedicated to expounding Ephesians 1 v 18, 27 and another contains two sermons on Isaiah 57 v 18 and Hebrews 12 v 2. 28 Such minute attention to the letter of Scripture, combined with an insistence upon the literal and historical meaning prior to application, indicates a high view of the bible. 29 Gillespie maintained that 'the whole Word of God as His Word' had been 'dictated by the Holy Ghost in every jot and tittle of it as a perfect Rule of Faith and Practice in all things to the Church in every age.' 30

Gillespie emphasised the literal and historical meaning of the texts he expounded. He normally set the particular verse/s he explained within the context of the chapter of scripture, usually giving a brief verse by verse exposition of approximately twenty verses. 31 In this way Gillespie demonstrated his conviction that any deviation from the primary sense of scripture led to a dangerous subjectivity in interpretation. In dealing with Isaiah 57 v 18, he makes it clear that although he will later apply the term 'healing' to spiritual issues, the primary meaning of the passage referred to the way in which 'God healed the Jews from the scourge of the Chaldeans'. 32 Once he made the literal and historical meaning clear, Gillespie proceeded to interpret 'Scripture in the fullest compass and latitude agreeable to the analogy of faith'. 33 He believed that it was essential to ensure that every legitimate

27 New College Sermons. Vol. 5 preached in 1762.

28 New College Sermons. Vol. 7 preached in 1764.

29 This high view of scripture is reflected within the Westminster Confession. See Camic, Experience, p 21.


31 The majority of Gillespie's sermons are written out in full, although there are some occasions when he only wrote out an outline. One such example contains 5 heads that are subdivided into 31 points, concluding with 11 inferences.


33 New College Sermons. Vol. 5, f 23v.
interpretation helped to make the message of scripture relevant to the contemporary Church. There were even times when he used the allegorical method of interpretation. Speaking of Ezekiel 37 and the Prophet's vision of the valley of dry bones, he referred to this as being a picture, not only of the resurrection of the body but of the believer's experience of gradual sanctification for 'these are not all raised at once but gradually. First bones came together, then sinews were stretched on these. Next flesh came upon the one and the other and last of all skin covered all the above. In like manner, divine power gradually raises believers in newness of life, every new degree of holiness is parallel to the mentioned figure until by degrees believers attain the resurrection from the dead, perfection in holiness'.

In preaching on Luke 11 vv 21, 22 he treated a parable as an allegory, taking every aspect of these verses and spoke of the work of Satan. He also interpreted some of the psalms Christologically. For example, Psalm 45 was used to refer to the 'glory of Christ's person' and the 'triumphs of his grace' as well as the 'excellency of his Kingdom'.

Gillespie obviously took care in preparing his sermons to examine the original languages and made reference to Hebrew and Chaldee, as well as the 'first language' of Greek. Even though he was not preaching to an intellectual elite, he thought it was appropriate to mention various textual variants that gave rise to different marginal readings. In 1764, when he preached on 1 Peter 1 v 6, he stressed the

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34 Ibid., f 54v.


37 Sermon on Ephesians 1 v 19, where he speaks of how 'the terms may properly be rendered from the first language' Ibid., f 35r. See also *New College Sermons*, Vol. 7, pp 9 and 142 where, speaking of Hebrews 12 v 2 he says that 'the literal meaning of the term according to the grammatical sense of the word is he continued under the cross that is, he did not shake off the suffering of the cross and did not disengage himself from it'.

38 *New College Sermons*, Vol. 7, pp 14, 17, 18, 62,
way in which a Greek word could be translated in various ways to bring out the spiritual application. 39 Such careful exegesis did not mean that Gillespie relied on the wisdom of 'philosophers' in his interpretation of Scripture. He was convinced that 'many things in Christianity' are to 'carnal reason' totally 'inexplicable', and that the believer who experienced the influence of the Spirit, would be 'enlightened' and passages of scripture 'invested with a peculiar glory and beauty.'40

The structure of Gillespie's sermons follows a definite pattern throughout his ministry, consisting of doctrine, reasons, and uses. He preached in a traditional way. The compilers of the Westminster Directory gave the following instructions to preachers for composing sermons:

'in raising doctrines from the text his care ought to be, First, that the matter be the truth of God. Secondly, that it be a truth contained in, or grounded on, that texts that the hearers may discern how God teacheth it from hence. Thirdly, that he chiefly insist upon those doctrines which are principally intended, and make most for the edification of his hearers.'41

Gillespie sought to declare God's truth, giving an explication, exposition and application of the biblical basis of the Christian faith. The first two parts of his sermons were directed towards the hearer's reason, whereas the final part was aimed at warming the affections and moving the will of the congregation. He endeavoured to make his preaching relevant to the experience of his people, and directed their thoughts to various mundane attitudes and actions in their day-to-day lives, giving specific advice in the light of the sermon's doctrine. He consistently concluded the

40 Dunfermline Sermons for 1746, f 1r.
41 The Confessions of Faith, p 215.
vast majority of sermons with an appeal to those who were unconverted to 'fly to Christ for refuge'.

Gillespie was an exponent of a plain and simple style in preaching. John Erskine, a close friend who remained within the ministry of the Established Church, spoke of his writing and preaching as 'judicious and accurate' but not one that was noted for 'elegance of style, or even exact regard to grammatical propriety.' Gillespie intended his sermons to be plain and persuasive to his hearers. He appealed both to the reason and to the emotions of his listeners, aiming to make his applications as extensive as possible, and apply God's word with conviction. He did not cultivate any pulpit oratory, but had the clear desire to make the exegesis and application of Scripture the focus of his ministry to the sturdy farmers and tradesmen who made up the majority of his congregation. He would have agreed with Samuel Rutherford, a commissioner to the Westminster Assembly, that learning was needed in the study but should not be advertised in the pulpit. 'The pot may be used in the lithing, but not brought in with the porridge', was Rutherford's summary view of the art of preaching.

In seeking to make his sermons interesting and illuminating, Gillespie used apt illustrations and vivid language. Speaking of sinners who do not appreciate the wonders of the gospel, he says that for them 'divine exercises are tasteless and insipid like the white of an egg.' Comparing the earth to the greatness of God's universe, he stated that 'the whole Turkish Empire in [God's] sight is but like a bone thrown to

42 Dunfermline Sermons for 1746, f 15r-v.
45 New College Sermons, Vol. 3, f 92r.
a dog.' 46 Other vivid phrases include the 'belly of conscience', 47 'bastard sinners', 48 'the gales of death', 49 'womb of overflowing joy'. 50 The work of the Holy Spirit in convicting sinners is described as 'flashing fire in the face of the sinner', 51 and sinners are the 'spawn of hell'. 52 In this way Gillespie sought to drive home his points in monosyllables whenever possible, using homely illustrations, so that all his hearers might understand what he was saying.

It is difficult to tell exactly how long Gillespie's sermons actually lasted because the notes for sermons that we have may well have covered several services. In 1720, Thomas Boston once preached for an hour and a half, 53 although the record may well have been held by Ralph Erskine who in 1724 delivered an action sermon which lasted for four hours. 54 Gillespie evidently preached several sermons at stated occasions, such as Fast Days and Communion Services, which each must have lasted approximately an hour. Gillespie prepared full notes for his sermons and he undoubtedly took these into the pulpit with him.

To understand the importance Gillespie assigned to the sacramental occasion, we must first consider the way in which communion was celebrated in early modern

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46 New College Sermons. Vol. 5, f 11r. Gillespie uses the same metaphor when speaking of Christians who have lost their sense of joy through fear. See Treatise on Temptation, p 35.

47 New College Sermons. Vol. 6, f 19r.

48 New College Sermons. Vol. 8, p 79.


50 Dunfermline Sermons for 1746. f 139r.

51 Aberdeen Sermons, p 237.

52 Ibid., p 243.

53 Thomas Boston, Memoirs, p 348.

54 Burnet, The Holy Communion, p 226.
Scotland. The hope of early reformers that communion should be restored as a weekly sacrament was never accepted, and even the recommendation of the Book of Common Order for a monthly celebration was not followed. The religious tradition of communicating only once a year, at Easter, was too strong a pattern to break. The First Book of Discipline (1561) indicated that a quarterly celebration would suffice in towns and one half-yearly in the country. The pattern that eventually developed throughout the country meant that communion seasons took place during the summer months. Christians travelled from different congregations, making these weeks special events, real 'holy fairs.' Communion seasons had their own forms of ritual and would normally begin on Thursday, a service that took the form of a 'fast day' when the congregation 'examined themselves' and prepared to come to the table to 'eat and drink worthily'. On the Saturday, a preparatory service was held as well as a thanksgiving service on the Monday which followed the Sabbath. On the morning of the Sabbath, as people came forward to sit at 'communion tables' each person who took the bread and wine, received a short exhortation from a suitable passage of Scripture. The preparation of communion sermons occupied much of Gillespie's time and energy in the early years of his ministry in Dunfermline. For several years after 1753, he did not receive any assistance at the communion seasons which were held. At each of thirteen sacramental occasions, he preached no fewer than nine sermons and exhorted at seven or eight tables. Gillespie believed in the importance of the sacrament and spared no effort to ensure that his people were spiritually fed during the event. The detail with which Gillespie prepared for these services and sermons is

55 Leigh Schmidt shows that communion seasons were festivals which in many ways 'paralleled the eucharistic traditions of late mediaeval Catholicism' and that 'evangelical Presbyterians thus would build their success on a tradition of popular festivity that they repudiated only to rehabilitate.' Holy Fairs, pp 20-21.

56 Willison, for instance, spoke of 'many serious exercised Christians who communicate almost every Sabbath during the summer season' as they travelled from one parish to another, to participate in these festivals of faith. John Willison, Sacramental Directions, (Edinburgh, 1716), pp xv-xvi.

57 Treatise on Temptation, p vii.
clearly seen in several of the volumes of sermons which are still preserved.  
At each of these services, strong emphasis was given on the priority of preaching, almost to the extent of minimising the actual sacramental moment itself.

One further example of the type of sermon which Gillespie preached on special occasions is that of the Jeremiad. Within the context of the distinctive predestinarianism of Scottish Calvinism, Gillespie shared the strong belief in acts of special providence. This conviction looked for the hidden hand of God at work in the events of national, ecclesiastical and individual life. It was possible to see the smiles and frowns of God in the events of everyday life. During times of danger and disaster, the church held special days of fasting and humiliation that encouraged congregations to pray to God for mercy. At other occasions, days of thanksgiving were also kept, to offer praise held to thank God for his deliverance. This concept appeared within the instructions of the Westminster Directory for Public Worship which spoke of days of fasting when a large 'portion of the day ... is to be spent in public reading and preaching of the Word, with singing of hymns to quicken affections...especially in prayer.' These special preaching events presupposed a covenant relationship between God and his people. The structure of the day involved an acknowledgement of God's sovereign control over the whole of human life, a recognition of God's righteousness in judging human beings as a result of their sin, and imploring God to be merciful on both Church and nation. He encouraged those

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58 In 1747 he served 3 tables at the Tollbooth Kirk in Edinburgh. In Jedburgh in 1758 he served 4 tables. In 1762 he prepared 68 separate exhortations to serve at the first table and 47 for the second table. See New College Sermons, Vol. 6, f 31vff.

59 We will examine the theology of communion which Gillespie held in the next chapter when we look at his theological thought in general.

60 The Confessions of Faith, p 237.
who attended to adhere to God's commands and threats but also to believe in his promises. 61

Gillespie was a Hanoverian and not a Jacobite in his politics and he held a day of fasting at Inverkeithing on 1 November 1745 in connection with the Jacobite Rebellion. 62 He specified various sins that had given rise to this judgement of God, including 'luxury in living and diversions...going above our stations in furniture...and acting so as tends to impoverish, if not their own families, the community.' 63 Although some would have viewed the rising as a restoration of the true king by a benevolent God, Gillespie believed that the judgement of God was thoroughly deserved, indeed 'it must be owned that we deserve the worst than can be inflicted on us.' 64 He mentioned the striking fact that God's wrath had occurred so soon after

61 See R. B. Sher, who says that 'The jeremiad builds on four fundamental premises: the absolute sovereignty of God, the sinful nature of man, the intelligibility of Providence and the existence of a covenant between God and his chosen people.' 'Witherspoon's Dominion of Providence' p 50.

62 Dunfermline Sermons for 1746, f 76v. This sermon, preached in 1745, is included in the volume with 1746 on the spine. Several sermons were published in connection with these special days of fasting in connection with the rebellion. Gillespie mentions that 'many in the land are deprecating the Lord's wrath. Public fasting and humiliation has been observed in many corners of the nation.' Ibid., f 81r. See also Adam Ferguson, A Sermon Preached in the Ersh Language to His Majesty's Highland Regiment of Foot...on the 18th Day of December, 1745 (London, 1746). Ferguson was a member of the Moderate party and among the Edinburgh Literati. See R. B. Sher, Church and University, p 5. See also High Blair, The Wrath of Man Praising God. A Sermon Preached in the High Church of Edinburgh, May 18, 1746. (Edinburgh, 1746) which was preached on a Day of Thanksgiving related to the rebellion during the General Assembly. It is interesting that Blair and Ferguson, both Moderates, shared the same view of divine providence as Gillespie. Sher concludes that 'the Moderates' preoccupation with moral teaching and preaching is at least partially attributable to their steadfast belief that moral transgressions are to blame for national misfortune and that moral regeneration is necessary for national well-being.' Church and University, p 44. In 1771, Gillespie preached at a congregational fast on the truth that 'the Lord God is the righteous ruler and governor of the world who will and does resent and punish a trampling of his authority, violation of his laws'. Aberdeen Sermons, pp 1-2.

64 Ibid., f 79r. In 1771 he specifies the sins of 'deism, infidelity and denying the truth of the Scriptures as the Word of God and disclaiming Divine Revelation...disbelieving future state of rewards of grace and punishments that are eternal...all ranks and conditions of persons running down the hands as a mighty stream of errors prevailing among them that are called Christians.' Aberdeen Sermons, p 4.
'one of the most remarkable effusions of the Spirit on some corners of the land' 65 and concluded that this was often God's way of working. He went on to cite two other instances, one from the history of the German Reformation, and secondly of the six-mile revival in Antrim immediately before a 'dismal massacre', to indicate that 'a remarkable reviving may go before awful suffering.' 66 Gillespie felt that although many similar occasions of fasting and prayer were being held in different parts of the country, 'people are not acting the part they did in the year 1740 when famine was threatened and soon averted.' 67 Within this sermon Gillespie displayed a very real patriotic spirit in seeking God's blessing upon 'King George' so that he might 'preserve his person, direct his counsels and prosper his armies' and 'preserve the life of the Duke of Cumberland.' Yet he also encouraged the congregation to 'pray for our enemies that the Lord may forgive them and open their eyes to see that they fight against him in the course on which they are now engaged' and thus bring about a state of peace within the nation 'without any further effusion of blood.' 68

In January 1763, during a day of fasting observed by several congregations connected to the Presbytery of Relief, Gillespie spoke about the 'departure of the Spirit' and the 'low state of religion' in Scotland. Speaking historically, he referred to previous occasions when the congregation had met together to fast and pray, such as the threat of famine in 1740, the rebellion of 1745, the war with France in 1755 and the threat of invasion in 1756, the threat of a French invasion in 1759 when an army of 25,000 men were frustrated and their naval power broken. These events in the past

65 Ibid., f 80r. In 1771 he speaks of the way in which God can judge his people by sending famine when people 'die the painful death of hunger' or by means of the 'sword of a foreign or domestical enemy.' Aberdeen Sermons, p 12.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid., 87v.

68 Ibid., f 87v, f 97v-98r.
encouraged Gillespie to believe that 'the Lord has threatened or inflicted strokes by intervals to engage the generation to return to him by faith in the redeemer, show repentance and reformation of heart'. 69 There is one example of a day of thanksgiving, held in December 1761, to offer praise for the 'preservation of the cropt (sic)' when rain threatened to affect the harvest and God intervened. The congregation met to give praise to 'the Lord's goodness' which he believed 'ought to be wonderful in our eyes.' 70

Gillespie preached during special days of prayer for the revival of religion. 71 These were special occasions when he stressed the priority of prayer in the life of his congregation. He assumed that any movement of God's Spirit was a sovereign work of God who could give blessing when and where he chose. This meant that 'the rain of heaven' could fall 'on one city, one soul but not on theirs.' 72 However, Gillespie remained convinced throughout his ministry that any spiritual awakening which constituted a revival of religion within the church would begin when the 'hearts of believers' were stirred by a united concern for the needs of lost sinners. 73 The Church of God that prayed with perseverance would discover that 'though for a time he has shut out their prayers...there will be an acceptable time when he will hear their prayers for revival of his work'. 74

69 New College Sermons. Vol. 6, f 65v-66r.
70 New College Sermons. Vol. 4, f19r, 30v-31r.
71 Sermon on 2 May 1758 on Psalm 94 and on 3 May 1759 on Ezekiel 34 in Dunfermline Sermons for 1758. On 7 May 1761 he preached on Isaiah 60 in New College Sermons, Vol. 1 and on 2 February 1762 on Isaiah 43 in New College Sermons, Vol. 3.
72 Dunfermline Sermons for 1747, f 68r.
73 New College Sermons. Vol. 2, f 55v. In 1771 he speaks of how 'when the Lord God is to do any great and mighty work in the Church and world, he stirs up his people to pray for it and about it' because 'great changes in the world are in answer to prayers put up by the Church'. Aberdeen Sermons, pp 137-8.
74 Dunfermline Sermons for 1758, f 3r.
In 1761, shortly after the formation of the Presbytery of Relief, he indicated his concern that the ordinances of outward religion had become 'barren' and that the Church was seeing little 'success in the conversion of sinners' and the 'edification of believers.' He believed that revival, which came as a result of the prayers of God's people, could be withdrawn because of the sins of the Church. In 1747, he reminded the congregation of Kilsyth that they had enjoyed a 'remarkable revival of religion' since March 1742 until 'you provoked the Spirit of the Lord to withdraw his influences after wonders of mercy were wrought among you.' In 1762 he warned against divisions within the Church, but encouraged his hearers not to fear or doubt 'that they shall be again united...he who has divided them up in anger will gather them into one in mercy.' Although he had been involved in the formation of a new denomination, this sermon indicates that he looked forward to a day when the divisions of eighteenth century Presbyterianism would be healed.

Gillespie's preaching ministry was valued in congregations in Fife, Edinburgh and the central belt of Scotland where he preached during his ministries in the Church of Scotland and following the establishment of the Relief Church. John Erskine knew Gillespie from his connections with his family in Carnock, and attended the local church for several months. He admired the boldness of his preaching, which declared 'the whole counsel of God, giving law and gospel, comfort and terror, privileges and duties, their proper place.' He concluded that he had never encountered a ministry which was 'better calculated to awaken the thoughtless and secure...to point out the differences between vital Christianity and special counterfeit appearances of it.'

75 New College Sermons, Vol. 3, f 54v - 56r.
76 Dunfermline Sermons for 1747, f 66r.
77 New College Sermons, Vol. 3. (quote is found on the inside cover of this particular volume). In 1758 he had also spoken of a time when God 'will hear their prayers for revival of his work...gathering the dispersed of Israel into one.' Dunfermline Sermons for 1758, f 3r.
78 T Gillespie, An Essay, p viii.
William Lindsay, Gillespie's nineteenth-century biographer, concluded that his 'sermons were admirably adapted for awakening and converting sinners, for comforting and establishing the minds of believers, and for delivering those who were agitated and depressed [in their spiritual pilgrimage].' 79 The characteristics of his preaching, combining boldness with sensitivity to spiritual needs, spoke to the lives of many people and made Gillespie the spiritual leader to whom many people, both within and without his own congregation, looked for spiritual direction. As we have seen, Gillespie stood within the Reformed tradition of Scottish preaching. During his pastoral ministry he strove to be faithful to the text of Scripture and apply the biblical message to the daily needs of his congregation. Unlike many of his contemporaries his sermons were never published. Yet, they were never intended to become specimens of polished oratory. They were designed for ordinary men and women within his congregation in Dunfermline and he enabled them to deepen and develop their faith in God, their love for Christ and their determination to be faithful followers of their Saviour.

Chapter 6: Gillespie's Theology

Speaking of the sixteenth century, A. L. Rowse once complained that 'it was full of the useless fooleries of disputes about doctrine.' So in the eighteenth century, it might be argued that 'useless fooleries of disputes,' over theology plagued the ecclesiastical life of Presbyterianism. The Westminster Confession of Faith formed the acknowledged expression of Reformed theology, and constituted the basic framework of theological studies for clergy and instruction for laity in the eighteenth century. The church's insistence on enforcing the orthodoxy of the Confession of Faith is evident in the work of kirk sessions who tried 'to detect and call to heel a [confessional] deviant before he imperilled his own soul and began to infect those of the rest of the flock.' Although a whole series of disputes occurred over the interpretation of its articles in early eighteenth century Scotland, this generally 'occurred well within a framework of otherwise orthodox assumptions.'

For example, when the Marrow of Modern Divinity controversy took place in the 1720s,


2 See earlier comments on Deism, the trial of John Simson and the Marrow controversy in chapter 1. During his ministry Gillespie specifically mentions the dangers of Deism in New College Sermons, Vol. 1, f 43v and Aberdeen Sermons, pp 4 as well as Socinianism, Pelagianism, Arminianism and Quakerism in New College Sermons, Vol. 1, f 44r.

3 The Westminster Confession of Faith was the central accomplishment of the Westminster Assembly of Divines which met in 1643. The Assembly was comprised of English Puritans and several Scottish theologians. The Confession of Faith exercised an enormous influence on the history of Scottish theology.

4 The Westminster Confession of Faith was 'approved and established ...as a special means for the more effectual suppressing of the many dangerous Errors and Heresies of these times.' Westminster Confession of Faith, p 266.

5 Ian D. L. Clark, Modernism and the Moderate Party, p 246.


7 Charles Camic, Experience and Enlightenment, p 31. Camic points out that 'to claim that every breathing soul in Scotland from 1700 until 1740 accepted an identical brand of Westminster Confession Calvinism would be to propose a sociological miracle.' Ibid. p 30.
both sides in the dispute believed that their own theological perspectives were faithful to the Confession of Faith. Gillespie, it will be recalled, had encountered the Westminster Confession of Faith during the early years of his theological studies. 8 Throughout his ministry Gillespie displayed a concern for doctrine which 'was traditional in Scottish Presbyterianism.' 9 However, during the two years he spent in Doddridge's Academy in Northampton, he encountered a more open theological approach, evangelical in its outlook, but not the narrow Calvinism of Scotland. Doddridge was criticised by some early nineteenth-century evangelicals for 'furnishing [students] with the wrong as well as the right in theology, error as well as truth...[allowing] opposite doctrines an equal chance.' 10 It seems clear, however, that Doddridge's openness to Enlightenment concepts may well have had a formative influence on Gillespie's thinking, 11 and in this chapter we will try to discern some aspects of Gillespie's theology which related to the ethos of the Enlightenment.

1. Scripture

Gillespie agreed with the Westminster Confession in its emphasis on the central place which scripture should occupy in theology. Following the Magisterial reformers, the Westminster Confession stressed the perspicuity and preservation of scripture, underlying the hermeneutical principle that 'The infallible rule of interpreting...

8 In chapter 1 we saw that Gillespie completed a three year course in Philosophy and was nearing the end of a further three years study in Divinity, when he left the University of Edinburgh in 1738. Following a short stay of only ten days at the theological hall of the Secession Church, he completed his theological education at Philip Doddridge's Academy at Northampton.


11 W. R. Ward makes the comment that 'Doddridge's evangelicalism...served the cause of enlightenment in religion.' See 'Enlightenment and Religious Revival' in Reform and Reformation: England and the Continent c1500-c1750. Edited by Derek Baker, (Oxford, 1979) p 297. Geoffrey R. Nuttall has detected the influence of Pietism on Doddridge in his chapter on 'Continental Pietism and the Evangelical Movement in Britain' in Pietismus und Reviel, Edited by J. Van Den Berg and J. P. Van Dooren (Leiden, 1979), pp 227-231.
Scripture is Scripture itself.' 12 Gillespie rejoiced in declaring that the Bible was the 'perfect infallible rule of faith and practice.' 13 He acknowledged the value of wider literature and, on more than one occasion, quoted from the Spectator magazine. 14 Yet he also warned his congregation against the danger of laying 'the Bible aside' and reading 'books that stuff their fancies with unprofitable ideas'. 15 He admonished them to beware of particular writers from whom 'the things of God are hid.' 16 In contrast, he assured people that although many theological truths 'to carnal reason seem inexplicable, or absurd', to the believer who is 'enlightened from above and under the influence of the Spirit', these same truths 'are invested with a peculiar glory and beauty.' 17 Paradoxically, Gillespie's comment on those who undermine the authority of scripture on the basis of reason, could be seen as a criticism of some aspects of the Enlightenment whereas he uses the terminology of 'enlightened.' Along with other evangelical preachers he uses the metaphor of 'light' to describe the work of God in revealing himself in scripture, as well as describing the experience of conversion. 18

12 Westminster Confession of Faith, I.ix. In 1758 Gillespie speaks of the biblical writers as 'persons under infallible inspiration and direction of the Holy Ghost in declaring the Lord’s mind and will in writing to His church as a perfect and unerring rule of faith and practice to it in all generations.' Dunfermline Sermons for 1756. f30v.


14 See Treatise on Temptation, p 134 where he cites Vol. 2, Number 106. John Dwyer speaks of the Spectator as a periodical which gave advice 'on a wide variety of subjects, ranging from how to deal with unruly servants to how to choose a marriage partner' and as a 'moralistic journal.' 'Enlightened Spectators and Classical Moralists: Sympathetic Relations in Eighteenth-Century Scotland' In Sociability and Society. Edited by John Dwyer and Richard B. Sher (Edinburgh, 1993), pp 103, 107. Philip Doddridge 'was a great believer in the Tatler and Spectator as models of prose, but also as disseminators of polite and civilised standards of conduct.' Jones, 'Polite Academy' p 169.

15 Ibid., p 25.

16 Dunfermline Sermons for 1746, f124v.

17 Ibid., f1r.

This emphasis on the inspiration and authority of Scripture did not prevent Gillespie from following Doddridge's advice to preachers that they should read widely, choosing 'authors of various strains', ranging from leading Puritan divines through to both Anglican and Dissenting writers of the eighteenth century. Gillespie quoted from a variety of authors, including many of those whose names had been recommended by his mentor at Northampton. The majority of the authors whom Gillespie read were Calvinistic in their theology, and it appears that he did not favour the more moderate form of Calvinism which he had encountered in Northampton.

2. Trinity / Deism

Deism made a significant impact in Scotland between 1690 and 1760, a fact that is reinforced by numerous references to its influence within the writings of

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21 Writers since 1700 included John Evans, Wright, Isaac Watts, Grove, Matthew Henry (who is recommended for quoting writers such as Grotius, Calvin and Poole), Earle, Bradbury, Boyse, Bennett, Harris, Jennings, Grosvenor. Ibid., pp 432-434.

22 Authors which Gillespie mentions in his sermons and books which Doddridge had commended include John Owen, Matthew Poole, Grotius, Thomas Goodwin, Clark, John Calvin, M Henry. Other authors, not mentioned by Doddridge, are Elisha Coles, Dutch Annotators, Parius, Glasius, Theodore Beza, Martin Luther, Shorter Catechism, James Durham, Pelagius, Augustine and Robert Fleming.

23 The extent of Gillespie's Calvinism will be investigated in the course of this particular chapter.

24 The General Assembly of 1696 complained about Deists and referred to them as being Atheists. See also A L Drummond and J Bulloch, The Scottish Church, pp 47-48. Gerald R. Cragg says that 'Though the Deists were not a large group, and never formed a party in any formal sense, it was clear that they appealed to an extensive reading public.' The Church and the Age of Reason 1648-1789, (London, 1962), p 161. J. C. D. Clark feels that 'By the 1740s, Deism was a spent force...in the early part of the eighteenth century, however, its impact was considerable.' English Society 1688-1832, (Cambridge, 1985), pp 280-281.
Gillespie and other Presbyterian ministers in the eighteenth century. The General Assembly expressed a 'constant outrage over...deist literature.' Deism, as a system of thought, developed in England in the late seventeenth century. One striking feature of Deist thought was a reliance on natural religion, which they held was either inherent in each person or accessible through the exercise of reason. They advocated a rationalist religion and questioned the traditional reliance on any supposed supernatural revelation. Later Deists, such as Anthony Collins and Matthew Tindal, took this a step further when they rejected any idea of a miraculous element in the bible. Deists proclaimed a faith in God as the maker of the world, without any specific Trinitarian emphasis, which gave rise to a Unitarian tendency in men such as John Simson, Francis Hutcheson and William Leechman. They viewed God as the creator who 'subsequently stood aside from his creation to allow it to run according to its own rules.' Eventually the majority of Deist writers rejected any idea of divine providence or a supernatural plan of salvation.

25 Camic, Experience and Enlightenment, p 36.
26 As early as 1624, Lord Herbert of Cherbury set out five fundamental propositions of natural religion: the existence of God, the duty of worshipping him, the importance of piety and virtue as the chief parts of this duty, the propriety of repentance and the existence of a future state of rewards and punishments. See Norman Sykes, Edmund Gibson: A Study in Politics and Religion in the Eighteenth Century. (Oxford, 1926), p 244. Although Thomas Halyburton speaks of Herbert as 'the first who licked Deism', Sidney Lee believed that Herbert was closer to the Cambridge Platonists than to later Deist thought. See Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. IX, p 631.

27 Gerald R. Cragg points out that 'everyone [not only Deists] conceded the reality of natural religion. The crucial question was whether natural religion was sufficient. The Deists said Yes; and the Christians said No.' The Church and the Age of Reason, p 160. Norman Sykes argues that 'Orthodox defenders argued that, thanks to the dimming of man's natural reason by the Fall, his apprehension of the nature of God and his capacity to obey the moral law had been enervated, so that further aid was necessary and this was supplied by revelation.' From Sheldon to Seeker: Aspects of English Church History 1660-1768. (Cambridge, 1959), pp 161-2. 'Reason' which was first 'offered as the basis of faith...gradually became its substitute.' Mark Pattison, Tendencies of Religious Thought in England, 1688-1750' In Essays, Edited by Henry Nettleship, (Oxford, 1889), p 48.

28 Thomas Aikenhead was hanged in his youth in Edinburgh for mocking the Trinity in 1697. Simson, Hutcheson and Leechman were all Professors at Glasgow University.

29 Clark, English Society, p 280.
Deism undermined personal religion and was vigorously opposed, especially by members of the Popular party within Scotland who emphasised the importance of 'a personal relationship between Redeemer and redeemed.'

Gillespie held to orthodox Trinitarian theology as the central tenet of the Christian faith, affirming that God is one, personal, and triune. He spoke of comprehending 'the glorious mystery of the adorable Trinity,' that there was 'One God in Three Persons. Three in One and One in Three.' He believed that this mystery of 'the Trinity of persons or subsistences in the Divine Essence' could only be known by 'Revelation.' Trinitarian doctrine was not peripheral to faith, but fundamental to a belief in the personal nature of God, the incarnation, atonement and the ultimate experience of salvation.

Gillespie made frequent reference to God the Father as 'God essentially considered' without diminishing the place of Christ as 'the second of the adorable three,' the one who is able to declare 'I am the supreme Most High God, equal with God the Father and the Holy Ghost.'

30 Ibid. Clark also points out that 'Deists gave themselves considerable scope to their other tenets (or lack of them); belief in a future life, and in rewards and punishments, were all called into question.' Ibid. Mark Pattison says that 'The Deists, in general...drew the inference that the rewards and punishments of Christianity...could not be a divine ordinance, inasmuch as they were subversive of morality.' 'Tendencies of Religious Thought in England, 1688-1750' p 62.

31 Walsh, 'Origins of the Evangelical Revival' p 149.


33 New College Sermons, Vol. 2, f 70r.

34 New College Sermons, Vol. 5, f 39r.

35 New College Sermons, Vol. 6, f 4v; Dunfermline Sermons for 1758, f 74r; Dunfermline Sermons for 1747-1750, p 168; Aberdeen Sermons, p 350.

36 Dunfermline Sermons for 1758, f 74r.
One of the earliest developments within the doctrine of the Trinity is known as economic Trinitarianism, which insists upon the distinct, yet related roles of Father, Son, and Spirit within the plan of salvation. Economic Trinitarianism maintains that the entire process of salvation, from the moment of creation, to the final event of human history, is the work of the one and the same God. The divine action in human history bears witness to the unity of God and also to the distinctive contribution which each person of the Trinity makes to the achievement of salvation. Gillespie stated that although there are three persons within the Trinity 'they have only one Being and Essence' and are engaged in 'one work.' Yet, he added, that 'they have three several subsistences, they have three different and distinct manners of working.' Gillespie adopted this Trinitarian model, not only as a means of understanding the Godhead, but also to explain the work of salvation.

Gillespie did not ignore the work of God in creation, but he concentrated on the plan of salvation which was 'laid by God the Father' who 'decreed to save a part of Adam's posterity.' The foundation of this eternal plan was laid by the Son of God, and the application of it and preparation for that application were accomplished by the Spirit of God, who came to act as Christ's 'vice-regent on Earth in

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38 *New College Sermons*, Vol. 5, f 73v. He is insistent that each person of the Trinity works together and thus 'the whole Trinity act in man's recovery.' Aberdeen Sermons, p 350.

39 He makes the comment that 'there is every reason to believe that the economy of salvation through Christ was designed to discover the glorious mystery of the Trinity.' *New College Sermons*, Vol. 5, f 39r.

40 The work of salvation is seen as a 'stage or rather theatre created by God upon which to bring forth, display, exercise all His Attributes or Perfections to act their parts and be glorified to the uttermost.' *New College Sermons*, Vol. 5, f 39r.

41 Aberdeen Sermons, p 350.

42 *Dunfermline Sermons for 1747-1750*, p 167.

43 Aberdeen Sermons, p 350.
application of Redemption, the part he had undertaken in the Economy of Salvation.\textsuperscript{44} Although he employed a human analogy to describe the nature and work of God, he was apprehensive of attributing any description of human emotion to the Godhead. In this connection, he referred to Scripture passages which spoke of human beings as 'vexing the Holy Ghost' and said that the bible was 'speaking after the manner of men, for it is needless to mention that as the Holy Ghost the Infinitely glorious God has no passions, he cannot properly be vexed.' \textsuperscript{45} Gillespie was thus reflecting the Greek concept of the impassibility of God who cannot be touched by human emotions or suffering. \textsuperscript{46}

Gillespie attributed the activity of the Triune God to the motivating forces of grace and love because 'Grace is the free favour of all the three Divine Persons...the free favour of all the three persons alone bestows all salvation.' \textsuperscript{47} Not only did Gillespie believe the love of God for sinners to be expressed within the Trinity, but he also spoke of how believers came to experience communion with this God of love. In a sermon on John 16 verse 7 he encouraged his congregation to 'prize communion with the Lord and to aspire after it.' \textsuperscript{48}

\section*{3. The Person and Work of Christ}

In 1729 the General Assembly accused John Simson, Professor of Divinity at Glasgow University of denying the essential divinity of Christ. This was the second time that Simson was before the Assembly. In the event, the Assembly decided not to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{44} \textit{Dunfermline Sermons for 1747-1750}, p 168.
\item \textsuperscript{45} \textit{Dunfermline Sermons for 1747}, f 146r - 146v.
\item \textsuperscript{46} See McGrath, \textit{Christian Theology}, pp 213-219.
\item \textsuperscript{47} \textit{New College Sermons}, Vol. 6, f 50r.
\item \textsuperscript{48} \textit{Dunfermline Sermons for 1747-1750}, p 163.
\end{itemize}
depose Simson, although it did suspend him from his teaching functions (though not
the stipend of his chair). Thomas Boston of Ettrick dissented from the decision of the
Assembly, and the lenient treatment of Simson was one of the issues cited by the
leaders of the Secession of 1733 for their disaffection from the Church of Scotland.

The Christology which Gillespie upheld was in agreement with the classical
creeds of the Church. The creeds of Nicea (325) and Constantinople (381) reaffirmed
Christ's full deity and full humanity. The Council of Chalcedon (451) spoke of the
unity of Christ's person, the two natures of Christ being united in one person.
Gillespie declared that 'The Lord Jesus is very man as well as the true God' 49 for he
is 'God and man in one person.' 50

The deity of Christ was never an issue for Gillespie. Speaking of Christ,
Gillespie concluded that 'He is God over all blessed for ever, infinite in holiness', 51
although there are indications that he struggled with understanding the full humanity
of Jesus. He spoke of how 'he took not the person of a man' although he 'assumed his
whole nature, a true substantial body as well as a reasonable soul. He had the whole
constituent parts of man, though he had more the Divine nature, [although he] was
truly and really man.' 52 This statement indicates that Gillespie rejected any kind of
docetic Christology which treated Christ as a purely divine being who only had the
appearance of being human. However, on another occasion, in describing the way in
which Christ came down from heaven, he asserted that Christ 'came down from
Heaven though He was still in Heaven in respect of his Divinity everywhere present', 53

50 New College Sermons. Vol. 5, f 52r.
51 Dunfermline Sermons for 1747. f 99v.
53 New College Sermons. Vol. 6, f 11v.
this suggests that Christ had not fully entered into the pathos of human existence. Indeed, Gillespie might be described of leaning towards a Nestorian view of Christ in distinguishing so sharply between the divinity and humanity of the mediator. Although he spoke of Christ being the ‘mediator’ of sinners 'in our nature as united to His divinity', it is clear that 'His divinity' is 'incapable of suffering' and so although 'divine and human natures concurred in the offering' which was made for the salvation of sinners, 'the human only suffered.' 54 Thus Gillespie's Christology may have suffered in minimising the importance of Christ's bodily presence (though without giving way to Docetism). This in turn, resulted from his concern to emphasise Christ's deity, perhaps in response to the challenge of the Deists.

Gillespie often spoke of the person of Christ in order to bring out the significance of the work of Christ. He believed that the identity of Jesus was revealed through his on-going involvement in the salvation of sinners, and he developed an organic link between Christology and soteriology. In other words, the theme which dominated Gillespie's Christology was his belief in Christ's redemptive role as mediator between God and man. He would have readily assented to Melanchthon's statement that to know Christ is not to study his natures, but rather to experience his benefits. So the humanity of Christ becomes the vehicle for the purposes of God to be fulfilled as Christ lived a holy life, making it possible for him to offer up his life as an act of perfect obedience. Christ's incarnation enabled him to offer 'perfect obedience to the precept of the moral law', 55 so that 'he is holy so as no man is'. 56

54 New College Sermons. Vol. 3, f34v.
55 New College Sermons. Vol. 3, f33v; Dunfermline Sermons for 1746, f161r.
56 Dunfermline Sermons for 1747, f99v.
Gillespie adopted the framework of covenant theology to expound the work of Christ. Covenant (or federal) theology developed among some of the Reformers such as Heinrich Bullinger and Zacharias Ursinus, although by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Reformed theology in Scotland had accepted it as the foundational principle around which other aspects of theology were systematised. James Walker expressed the view that 'the old theology of Scotland might be emphatically described as covenant theology.'

The earliest exponents of covenant theology had held that all God's dealings with humankind are to be understood in terms of the two covenants which he made with the two representative men, Adam and Christ. The first of these covenants was the covenant of works, made with Adam, who was created, not simply as a private individual but as the representative of the whole human race. In it, God promised to bless Adam, together with his descendants, on the condition that he and they kept God's laws. The disobedience and consequent fall of Adam meant that the covenant of works was broken, an event which affected the whole of the human race. Most works on covenant theology began with an exposition of the covenant of works, indicating the sinfulness of humanity and emphasising the gracious nature of God's intervention in providing a way of salvation.

Gillespie spoke of Adam as the 'federal representative' of the human race and maintained that Adam's act of sin meant that all humankind 'violated it [God's law] in him, sinned in him, fell with him, in and by his first transgression.'


58 New College Sermons, Vol. 2, f 29v. Adam is described as 'our first Father and federal head and natural root' who fell 'from his integrity and purity' and thus involved 'all his posterity in guilt and pollution.' Ibid., f 66r.
employed the covenant of works to spell out the sinfulness of humankind and the total incapacity of human nature to liberate itself from the power and penalty of sin.

The second covenant in most expositions on covenant theology was the covenant of grace made between God and the elect which offers salvation to sinners. The basis of this covenant was the work of Christ, the federal head of the elect, who takes the 'punishment of the sins of elect sinners', 59 so that there would be an 'exchange...twixt him and every elect soul in their name' and 'for their salvation he should fulfil all righteousness.' 60 Gillespie maintained the orthodox Reformed view that the atonement of Christ was indispensable to salvation and limited to the 'redemption of an elect world' 61 as he 'fully paid the debt of an elect world'. 62 This meant that the covenant of grace was 'designed for them [i.e. the elect] and for that reason the covenant is said to be made with them'. 63

Beginning with the writings of David Dickson from Irvine, many theologians in Scotland began to speak of three covenants, dividing the covenant of grace into two: the covenant of redemption, an eternal covenant made between the Father and the Son, and the covenant of grace, made between the Son and the elect. According to Gillespie, Christ 'freely engaged in the covenant transaction with the Father to offer himself...upon the proposal made to him by the Father in the council of peace'. 64

60 Dunfermline Sermons for 1746, f 38r.
61 New College Sermons, Vol. 3, f 35v. See also New College Sermons, Vol. 2, pp 2-3; Vol. 2, f 69v where he states that 'Christ was not made an atonement intentionally for the whole world'.
62 New College Sermons, Vol. 2, f 84r.
63 Dunfermline Sermons for 1746, f '135v. Gillespie spoke of Christ being the 'Saviour of an elect world actually and eventually' New College Sermons, Vol. 8, p 146.
64 New College Sermons, Vol. 3, f 35v. The covenant of redemption is clearly found in Scottish theology in David Dickson's The Sum of Saving Knowledge (Edinburgh, 1650) and Samuel Rutherford's The Covenant of Life Opened (Edinburgh, 1655).
Gillespie shared in the broad consensus among federal theologians that Christ's mission was a response to the eternal purpose of God the Father, who had proposed a plan of salvation, laid down various conditions which Christ had to meet, and then promised that through the Son's life of obedience and his substitutionary death, the elect would be redeemed. 65 Gillespie knew that Thomas Boston, one of the leading proponents of the Marrow theology, had rejected the notion of a covenant of redemption, believing that 'the covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace are not two distinct covenants, but one and the same covenant'. 66 However Gillespie did not deviate from speaking of a 'federal transaction 'twixt God the Father and him [Christ]' 67 in which an agreement was reached 'for the redemption and salvation of a lost elect world'. 68 Gillespie thereby spoke of the Trinity in terms which implied a separation of divine wills. He spoke of how 'it was proposed to the Son by God the Father, representing the Trinity in the transaction of the New Covenant 'twixt the adorable Divine persons....For them it was stipulated by God the Father that when the Lord Jesus should have made his soul an offering for sin...so he should receive the glorious reward'. 69 Gillespie implied that there was a separation between the Father and the Son in determining how salvation would be accomplished and that the achievement of redemption depended on various conditions being met and rewards being offered. Gillespie was insistent and crystal clear that 'God the Father stipulated' that Christ fulfilled 'the conditioning part of the new covenant'. 70

65 Gillespie speaks of Christ offering 'obedience to God the Father' whereby he complied 'with his will' and performed 'the obedience required from him' and fulfilled 'the engagement he came under to him in the transaction of the new covenant.' New College Sermons. Vol. 7, p 141.

66 Thomas Boston, Works Vol.. 8, p 396.

67 New College Sermons. Vol. 6., f 27r.

68 New College Sermons. Vol. 7, p 139.


Most Reformed theologians of the eighteenth century emphasised the gratuitousness of God's grace and avoided, as far as possible, language which implied conditionality. Yet they also insisted that the human response to the gracious offer of God affirmed the necessity of faith. For Gillespie, who took the view that the only conditions of the covenant were Christ's obedience to the law of God and bearing of humanity's sin at Calvary, yet the response of faith was not a condition, but a requirement, which was produced by God in the elect.

This belief enabled Gillespie to stress the free offer of the gospel, which he preached to every person without distinction, while at the same time he asserted that Christ had died only for the elect. In a sermon on Psalm 68, for example, Gillespie referred to the 'elect souls for whom he [Christ] died intentionally', while at the same time adding that this message ought to be proclaimed to 'the greatest sinners, of the most grievous transgressions, persons whose iniquities are of the deepest dye, the most atrocious dishonourers and offenders of their great judge.' Gillespie also proclaimed that 'the greater the sinner' the 'more welcome to the Saviour' who is

would be 'injurious to the doctrine of free grace' because it led to thinking of God's grace in terms of conditions being fulfilled by Christ. Works ibid., Vol. 8, p 396. On reading Boston's 'Fourfold State' Jonathan Edwards confessed 'I do not understand the scheme of thought presented in that book' J Edwards, Works, Vol. 1 p xci. Edwards adopted a federal theology which included the covenant of redemption.

71 'His death and perfect obedience flowed from a nature absolutely holy.' He 'made atonement and satisfied justice for the offences of his people and merited and purchased for them all saving mercies and blessings brought in everlasting righteousness and fulfilled the proper condition of the new covenant'. Dunfermline Sermons for 1747-1750, pp 249-250.

72 The distinction between faith as a requirement and not a condition expressed a concern to maintain a balance between divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Faith was understood as being a means whereby salvation was received rather than a condition to be performed. Within the Marrow it is asserted that 'in this Covenant there is not any Condition or Law to be performed on Man's part; no, there is no more for him to do, but only to know and believe that Christ hath done all for him.' The Marrow of Modern Divinity. (London, 1647), pp 116-117.


74 Ibid., p 29.
'able to save the greatest sinners from the most grievous guilt, from ever so many, even ten thousand of offences'. 75 The limitation of the atonement to the elect did not hinder Gillespie from affirming that 'all and every man have a right to' salvation 'in him and through him.' 76 In sermon after sermon, he directed the final exhortation towards unconverted men and women: 'lost sinners are exhorted to fly to Christ for refuge...the Father offers him as he exhibits himself to the sinner. No impediments are in the way to their accepting him and they are allowed instantly and should without delay lay hold of the...absolute free promise.' 77 This offer was a real offer. Although it had been 'tendered to multitudes who never accept it', 78 the 'extensiveness of the gospel offer comprehends all sinners'. 79 It was also a very direct offer, given to each person 'as particularly as if to none other....to believe in the Saviour instantly, without delaying one moment to be better prepared...by believing the absolute free promise of grace'. 80 Gillespie's desire to emphasise the free offer of the gospel in relationship to limited atonement suggests that he was struggling to hark back to the particularism of Calvinism while admitting the universalism of the Enlightenment. 81

4. Ordo Salutis

Reformed theologians from the eighteenth century used the Latin phrase Ordo Salutis, which means 'order of salvation', in order to explain the process by which a

75 New College Sermons, Vol. 6, f 14v.
77 Dunfermline Sermons for 1746, f 15r-v.
78 Ibid., f 25r.
79 Ibid., f 46r.
81 See Camic, Experience and Enlightenment.
person experiences salvation in Christ. 82 In Scottish theology, discussion centred on the relationship between election, the place of the law, faith, repentance and assurance of salvation, especially as it affected the individual Christian. Like the Puritans, Scottish preachers tried to ensure that their hearers 'achieved proper conversions.' 83

The subject of predestination and election is often perceived as the hallmark of Reformed theology, marked by harshness, legalism and a fatalistic attitude towards salvation. 84 Predestination formed a central motif within the theology of John Calvin in Geneva and John Knox in Scotland. 85 The magisterial Reformers debated whether God had elected and reprobated sinners to eternal destinies in heaven or hell, or he had saved some and passed over others. Calvin's understanding of the doctrine of election concurred with his proclamation of the sola gratia principle, and he did not shrink from speaking of double predestination as the logical corollary of the sovereign action of God in eternity. 86

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82 A. T. B. McGowan says that 'it was Reformed theologians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who gave most attention to the development of an ordo salutis' although 'the term itself first appeared early in the eighteenth century.' Article on 'Ordo Salutis' in Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology, pp 636-637.

83 Landsman, 'Revivalism and Nativism,' p 159. See Jerald C. Brauer's comment that Puritans 'preached for conversion from the pulpit, carefully nurtured its coming in parishioners, and constructed a precise and elaborate ethical system based on its consequences....conversion was the religious center.' 'Conversion: From Puritanism to Revivalism' The Journal of Religion, Vol. 58 No. 3 (July 1978), pp 235-6.

84 See Camic, Experience and Enlightenment, pp 18-22.


86 Eventually the doctrine of double predestination became the cornerstone of Scottish Reformed theology and from that scheme flowed a commitment to limited atonement.
Gillespie tried to handle the subject with caution, although his views could never be described as those of moderate Calvinism. He asserted that the doctrine was fundamental to a proper understanding of God's saving activity in the world; indeed 'right apprehensions of this doctrine are the clue that enable us to form right conceptions of every other part of Scripture truth.' ⁸⁷ However, this statement came in a sermon preached in 1761 in which he also stated that 'we have never insisted upon it [predestination] in the course of our ministry', although he was convinced that it was 'an incumbent duty to treat the subject of sovereignty.' ⁸⁸ The doctrine provided a source of comfort and encouragement to believers to know that their eternal destiny was in the hands of God. It was not to be interpreted as being a 'speculative truth but a practical principle,' ⁸⁹ one which confirmed that 'salvation arises from...his love of good will fixed on the elect person in eternity...and for no other reason whatsoever.' ⁹⁰

Gillespie referred in one sermon to the 'Reprobate world, those whom the Lord passed over in His eternal Decree, to whom he purposed not to give saving grace and mercy through Christ but to suffer them to fall into sin and not to recover them from the ruins of their apostasy'. ⁹¹ This was close to the infralapsarian position which held that election presupposed the fall of humanity and that God's decision to

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⁸⁷ *New College Sermons*, Vol. 4, f 31r. Calvin stated 'I confess that this decree must frighten us.' Quoted in A. E. McGrath, *Christian Theology* p 396.

⁸⁸ Ibid., f 31v. He speaks of the 'doctrine of God's sovereignty is the foundation of all religion, the key of the Bible, the touchstone by which all principles are to be tried, the standard by which every controversy is to be decided and finally determined'. Ibid., f 57v.

⁸⁹ Ibid., f 73v.

⁹⁰ *New College Sermons*, Vol. 6, f 49r.

⁹¹ *New College Sermons*, Vol. 2, f 69v. In 1746 he says that 'The Love of the Father in His choosing the person to Salvation in Christ while others were passed over, not for worth in them, but for His name's sake, to the glory of His Grace and Sovereignty'. *Dunfermline Sermons for 1746*, f 38r. In 1758 he states that 'no elect soul makes himself to differ from another who is left in the ruins of his apostasy.' *Dunfermline Sermons for 1758*, f 102v.
predestine some to election and leave others to damnation was a response to the events of the fall. 92 In 1761, when he preached several sermons on Romans 9, he spoke of the problem of reprobation, of 'those' whom 'he hardens'. 93 He referred to the reprobate as people whom God left 'under the blindness of their minds.' 94 This action of God did not actually 'instil actual hardness into their minds' as this would imply that God was the 'author of sin'. 95 Gillespie understood reprobation to mean that 'the Lord hardens,' by 'withholding softening grace.' 96 He spoke of God 'taking away that common grace he had bestowed on them and which they had misimproved'97 and 'permitting Satan to blind and harden those persons on whom he is never to have mercy'. 98 He explained the use of the word 'hate' in Romans 9 in terms of 'not loving them when he loved others' because his 'eternal purpose' was to 'leave the greatest number of Adam's lost family in the ruins of their apostasy without recovering them and to suffer them to bear the consequences.' 99 His response to objections regarding the justice of God, is to direct people to the sovereign activity of God who 'has the fullest right to dispose of you as should be pleasing in his sight'

92 Gillespie also speaks of God 'suffering sin to enter the world, by allowing the Devil to fall.' New College Sermons, Vol. 2, f 66r. The Supralapsarian position, associated with Beza, regarded election as prior to the fall; the fall being a means of carrying out the decree of election.

93 New College Sermons, Vol. 4, f 35r.

94 Ibid., f 40r.

95 Ibid., f 42v.

96 Ibid., f 43r.

97 Ibid.

98 Ibid., f 44r.

99 Ibid., f 46r. Gillespie indicates here that the number of the elect will be smaller than the number of those who are lost. In an earlier sermon preached in 1761 he states that 'it has been apprehended that the number of Angels that fell is the same with the number of the elect of mankind recovered from the ruins of their fall and apostasy from the Lord' Ibid., f 1 r-v. Gillespie refers, without actually quoting, several writers, including Glasius, Partus (a judicious commentator), John Calvin and Theodore Beza.
because he has 'determined from eternity in and with himself.' His views on predestination and reprobation reflect the standard exposition found in the Westminster Confession.

Within Reformed theology the chief function of the law was understood to be the means by which sinners were convicted of their sin because 'unless we realise our own helpless misery, we shall never know how much we need the remedy which Christ brings, nor come to him with the fervent love we owe him.' Calvin believed that the law both revealed the righteousness of God and condemned human iniquity. It also had the function of restraining sinners 'by means of its fearful denunciations and the consequent dread of punishment' although the believer is not 'dragged by force of fear.' Finally, the law fulfilled a positive purpose for the believer by indicating the will of God as 'the eternal rule of righteousness.' This meant that the law enabled God's children to discern 'what that will of the Lord is which they aspire to follow' and they were thus encouraged 'to the study of purity and holiness, by reminding them of their duty.' Calvin did not believe that any dichotomy should be introduced into discussions of the relationship between law and

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100 Ibid., f 81v. He did not agree with the argument that 'it is better to be miserable (in eternity) than not to be at all' This did not seem a logical conclusion because that 'misery' of the 'eternal world' would never end. Ibid.

101 John Calvin, Commentary on Isaiah 53 v 6. The importance which Calvin attributed to this aspect of the law is seen in the treatment which he gave to preaching through the Ten Commandments over a period of forty two days.

102 John Calvin, Institutes of Christian Religion. II.vii.6. Calvin believed that the 'Law awakens man to sin' and 'yet law cannot teach of the deepest sin'. See Holmes Rolston, John Calvin versus the Westminster Confession (Richmond, 1972), p 61.

103 Institutes, II.vii.10.


105 Institutes, II.vii.12.

106 Ibid., III.xix.2.
gospel. Indeed, as the historian John T. McNeill observed 'the phrase "gospel and law" rather than the more common "law and gospel" is appropriate to Calvin' 107 who exhorted believers to delight in the law of God and obey it, freely, from the heart.

In the theological and pastoral tradition of Scotland, the place of the law in convicting men and women of their sin was so strong that according to one student of the period 'during the revivals of 1742, some outsiders charged that conversions were spurious where "the law was not the first means of awakening these persons."' 108 Gillespie encouraged ministers to preach 'with solemnity and some suitableness the doctrine of the Law' 109 within the framework of covenant of works. Gillespie followed the general scheme of theological thinking in Scotland when he spoke of God leading sinners to accept the offer of the covenant of grace by first condemning them through the covenant of works. 'When the Lord works faith He carries home the Law in its spirituality and extent in its commanding and condemning power as a Covenant of Works on the person's conscience by the Holy Ghost.' 110 In this way the Holy Spirit was able to convince 'elect souls of their malady' and thereby 'set forth the glorious remedy in producing in them the fruit of the gospel'. 111 Gillespie held law and gospel together. The law 'reflects the holiness and wrath of God upon the conscience' whereas the gospel 'reflects the glory and love of God upon the heart' but

107 Quoted by B. W. Farley, John Calvin's Sermons, p 99. Cf. Karl Barth 'The Gospel is not law, just as law is not gospel; but...the law is in the gospel, from the gospel, and points to the gospel.' in K. Barth, Community, State and Church: Three Essays (Garden City, 1960), p 72.


110 New College Sermons, Vol. 5, f 57r. In another sermon he says that God uses 'the law, the doctrine of the first covenant carried home on the heart and conscience.' New College Sermons, Vol. 8, p 158. Thomas Boston had written in a similar way when he said that the role of the law is make sinners 'deeply sensible of their sin and misery' Thomas Boston, Works, Vol. 11, p 337.

111 New College Sermons, Vol. 2, f 30r.
both aspects of God's message were needed to bring men and women to faith in Christ. 112

Gillespie continued to believe that the law had a part to play in the life of the believer because it was the 'eternal rule of righteousness' and in accepting Christ, the believer came 'under the law to Christ' as a 'rule of life.' 113 There was never any suggestion in Gillespie's preaching that the obligations of the law were lessened by the gospel. Indeed 'this point is the touchstone of a true gospel of Christ.' 114 Grace will lead God's people to keep the law 'from evangelical motives' 115 so that 'grace' will have the 'first place and duty' will follow. 116 In this way the 'obedience' of the child of God would arise from 'evangelical motives influenced by the love of God.' 117

Gillespie emphasised the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing people to faith and repentance. Conversion did not occur through the Spirit's works of 'common grace', 118 which Gillespie defined as flowing from 'good education, moral seriousness'. 119 True conversion was the result of the work of the Spirit, who seeks to 'provoke fear in the soul at the consideration of this, its sad state'. 120 The fear

112 Aberdeen Sermons, p 268.
113 New College Sermons, Vol. 6, f 36r.
114 Ibid., f 36v.
115 Ibid., p 40r. Believers are 'under the Law to Christ' Dunfermline Sermons for 1747, f 22r.
116 Ibid., p 36v.
117 New College Sermons, Vol. 7, p 34. 'giving him the throne in the heart by the subjection of the conscience to him in all things in obeying the precepts of the moral Law.' Dunfermline Sermons for 1746, f 109v.
118 New College Sermons, Vol. 3, f 9r.
120 Gillespie used the phrase 'the Spirit of Bondage' from Romans 8. See New College Sermons, Vol. 5, f 64r. Aberdeen Sermons, p 281. The fear was produced as the Spirit convicted sinners of the guilt and the reality of the judgement of God. Ibid., p 236.

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which the Spirit endeavoured to inspire, however, should not lead sinners to despair, because the Holy Spirit only convicted people of their sin in order to bring them to faith in Christ. Gillespie distinguished between the work of the Holy Spirit who was a 'comforting Spirit' and 'the Devil' who made sinners 'despair' and acts 'as a terrifying Spirit.' The Spirit convicted slowly and 'does not show' a person the extensiveness of his sin 'all at once' so that the person would be discouraged. His concern was to encourage people who were doubting the willingness of God to forgive their sins. As a concerned pastor, Gillespie pointed out that the evil one was always willing to reveal our sin but 'conceals the remedy of sin by the mercy of God and the blood of Christ.' Gillespie expressed concern that discernment should be exercised in recognising the variety of ways in which God's Spirit worked in different people, bringing some to undergo conversion 'in a still way' without insisting that they experience 'mighty power' in their emotions, so long as 'gracious effects appear.'

Following his work of awakening people to a conviction of their sin, the Spirit acted as a 'Spirit of illumination of wisdom and revelation,' helping to bring people to a 'knowledge of the Lord Jesus.' The Spirit focused the sinner's faith on the 'sufficiency of Christ' for salvation, 'renew[ed] the will' and enabled the sinner to exercise faith in Christ. Sinners could 'resist the Holy Ghost, reject and oppose his gracious tenders of a work of saving illumination in the knowledge of Christ.'

121 Aberdeen Sermons, pp 298-306.
122 Ibid., p 311. He speaks of the work of Satan who 'over accuses' and 'drives to despair' Ibid., p 310.
123 New College Sermons. Vol. 5, f 44v.
125 Aberdeen Sermons. p 327.
126 New College Sermons, Vol. 5, f 24v.
However, when God worked in the heart of one of his elect, that person experienced the 'almighty power of all-conquering grace.' 127

The emphasis which Gillespie gave to the Spirit in the work of regeneration reflected his commitment to classical Calvinism, with its insistence that faith was a 'gift of God' and not conditional 'on anything done by the person'. For Gillespie, as well as Calvin, faith was not to be understood as a condition of salvation, but as an evidence of the grace of God which would be found in all those whom the Spirit had regenerated. 128 Faith was the 'instrument or means that receives justification and the righteousness of Christ' and was not to be confused with a human work of merit, 129 because the sinner was 'without strength to believe until Almighty Power gives it'. 130 Faith came through the work of the Spirit of God who illumined human minds and hearts by the means of the 'quickening word.' 131 When faith was once produced in the human heart, the Spirit would 'maintain faith in the elect,' 132 ensuring that they were not merely 'temporary believers and hypocrites' 133 whose 'faith' disappeared when times of trial and trouble came. 134

The controversy surrounding the Marrow of Modern Divinity in Scotland emphasises the notion that repentance followed after faith in the ordo salutis. It is

127 New College Sermons. Vol. 5, f 205 and f 25r.
128 New College Sermons. Vol. 6, f 56v.
129 New College Sermons. Vol. 6, f 52r.
132 New College Sermons. Vol. 5, f 63r.
133 Ibid., f 61v.
only after 'God's favour [was] apprehended, and remission of sins believed' that 'true gospel mourning' would occur and 'right evangelical repenting' would take place. 135 The Spirit sought to 'draw our Evangelical Repentance' 136 to be manifested in 'godly sorrow'. 137 In this way, the assurance of salvation rested, not in a man's repentance and reformation of life, but in the promises of God's love in a crucified Saviour. 138

Gillespie agreed with the supporters of the Marrow that two aspects of assurance needed to be clearly distinguished. He spoke of the 'knowledge of faith and a knowledge of experience.' 139 The first of these is a direct act of faith in the promises of God which offer forgiveness of sins. Gillespie delighted to expound the good news that faith in Christ enabled a sinner to receive 'free remission of all his sins, original sin, imputed and inherent, and all his actual violations of the Holy Law in thought, word or action.' 140 He believed that the 'knowledge of experience', sometimes called the 'assurance of sense', was based on a reflection on the work of God in the 'gracious effects' which God's power 'produces in believers in being rendered more holy.' 141 Prior to the Marrow controversy, James Fraser of Brea, one of the Covenanters 142 spoke of two sorts of assurance, 'the Assurance of Faith, and


136 New College Sermons. Vol. 6, f 4r. See also New College Sermons, Vol. 7, where the Spirit is said to be the 'Spirit of conviction and conversion' who comes to 'act evangelical repentance' pp 24-25.

137 New College Sermons, Vol. 7, p 57.

138 The Marrow had clearly indicated that it was the message of the cross which brought assurance to sinners who needed to be 'verily persuaded in your heart that Jesus Christ is yours, and that you shall have life and salvation by him; that whatsoever Christ did for the redemption of mankind, he did it for you...and if he will take him, and accept of his righteousness, he shall have him.' p 268.

139 New College Sermons, Vol. 5, f 42r.

140 Dunfermline Sermons for 1747, f 5r.

141 Ibid.

142 See article by D. C. Lachman on 'James Fraser of Brea' in Dictionary of Scottish Church History, pp 334-335.
the Assurance of Evidence,' the former 'of the very nature of Faith itself' whereas the latter is 'the fruit of Faith' which looks 'to the fruits thereof...whereby we know and persuade ourselves, that we shall be saved.' 143 Gillespie remained convinced that assurance was of the essence of faith. 144 For Gillespie, this was one of the principal activities of the Spirit of adoption. As a pastor Gillespie was concerned to resolve the troubled consciences of many believers which hindered them from enjoying and experiencing peace with God. 145 Unfortunately, like many of his contemporaries, the emphasis which Gillespie placed on holiness of life being a 'ground' of 'hope and salvation' inevitably meant that assurance of salvation remained an elusive dream for many of his congregation 146 as their awareness of God's love fluctuated according to their personal circumstances. The introspective consciences of many believers looked inwards to their own spiritual pilgrimage, rather than outwards to Christ, the true 'mirror of election'.

143 James Fraser, A Treatise concerning Justifying Faith (Edinburgh, 1722), pp 52-60.

144 Controversy over the issue of assurance of Salvation continues in the work of R. T. Kendall who argues that whereas Calvin believed that assurance of salvation is of the essence of faith, later 'Calvinists' held that assurance is a 'reflex' act which is subsequent to faith and based upon the evidence of a life of holiness. See R. T. Kendall, Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649 (Oxford, 1988); A. N. S. Lane, 'Calvin's Doctrine of Assurance', Vox Evangelica 9 (1979), pp 32-54. R. W. A. Letham rejects the dichotomy between these two aspects of assurance in R. W. A. Letham, Saving Faith and Assurance in Reformed Theology (Ph. D., University of Aberdeen, 1979).

145 Dunfermline Sermons for 1746, f 4r.

146 Gillespie says that 'Believers are effectually called that they may be holy. You are to know the grounds that God calleth you to have the hope and assurance you are to have and do enjoy'. New College Sermons, Vol. 5, f 1r. Yet this apparent note of confidence is overturned by statements such as 'one cannot rejoice in the Lord when offending the heavenly Father.' New College Sermons, Vol. 1, p 51.
5. The Holy Spirit

The renewal of interest in the popular piety of eighteenth century Scotland indicates the importance of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The orthodox statements of the Westminster Confession of Faith concerning the work of the Holy Spirit became an existential encounter in the Cambuslang revival, an experience which heightened Gillespie's awareness of the vital nature of the ministry of the Spirit. His pastoral and theological engagement with issues of faith and experience, which arose out of the revival, led him to develop an authentic spirituality, based on the revealed word of God, lived out in the context of the church and wider community.

Gillespie agreed with contemporary Reformed thought on issues relating to the deity and personality of the Holy Spirit. He believed that, as God, the Spirit 'is the object of Divine worship, no less than the Father and Son.' The Spirit is referred to as Christ's 'vice-regent on earth' who works 'in the Church to apply the fruits of the Father's love' by bringing sinners to Christ and enabling them to live the Christian life. The first work of the Spirit is that of conviction of sin. In this connection, Gillespie speaks of the Spirit as the Spirit of Bondage who produces an awareness of the extent of human sin and unbelief which leads sinners to despair of saving themselves from their sin, so that men and women feel 'fear in the soul at

149 New College Sermons, Vol. 6, f 5r. See earlier discussion under Heading 4 'Ordo Salutis' on the work of the Spirit in convicting of sin and granting them the gift of faith.
150 Aberdeen Sermons, p 219.
151 Ibid., p 236.
152 'without the Spirit, the world do not, did not, understand the extent of sin...without the Spirit, the world did not understand the sin of unbelief' Ibid., pp 231-232.
consideration of their sad state.' 153 Although the human conscience, called the 'light of nature' 154 creates some awareness of sin, the Spirit is needed to 'convince' people of their fallen condition. 155 This preparatory ministry of conviction is continued as the Spirit 'prepares His way in the heart for bestowing the Grace of saving faith in Christ.' 156 Following the experience of conversion, the Spirit acts as the Spirit of Adoption, who brings a direct witness to the believer's 'spirit' that he 'is a child of God....saying to the person, son, daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.' 157 Although he uses terminology associated with Enlightenment thinking, it is clear that Gillespie is convinced that the 'light of nature' will never bring a person into a personal experience of God's grace without the direct action of the Holy Spirit in conversion.

Gillespie spoke of the Spirit's coming on the day of Pentecost as being the means by which God assured 'the certainty of the propagation of the Gospel and the enlargement of the Kingdom of Christ to all nations in the appointed season.' 158 He distinguished between the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit which were evident on the day of Pentecost, which he believed were only given temporarily and other more 'common and ordinary' gifts which were intended to remain as a permanent evidence of the Spirit's work. 159 The 'extraordinary gifts...vanished away' when the purpose for

153 Ibid., p 281.
154 Ibid., p 229. Gillespie says that the 'convictions of nature and light are uncertain, of a short continuance...sudden fits and qualms upon some observation about outward judgement' Ibid., p 301.
155 Ibid., p 230.
156 Ibid., p 237.
157 Dunfermline Sermons for 1746, f 5v.
158 Dunfermline Sermons for 1747-1750, p 92.
159 Ibid., pp 98-99.
which they were given had been 'accomplished.' He understood three gifts to be extraordinary and temporary. They were first, the gift of prophecy, which he interpreted as 'the ability to predict future events;' second, the gift of 'discerning the Spirit' which enabled the Apostles to 'dive into men's hearts and thus to perceive and certainly to determine from what principle, good or bad, they be;' and third, the gift of speaking in tongues which he viewed as the ability to speak in human languages so that the good news of the gospel might be proclaimed to the entire world.

This link between the work of the Spirit and the extension of the Kingdom of God dominated Gillespie's preaching during 'Days of Prayer for the Outpouring of the Spirit' in revival. Gillespie never implied that outwith periods of revival, the Holy Spirit was inactive. He made it clear that the Spirit did 'not utterly withdraw his presence, [and] power of blessing' from the 'ordinances' of the church. However, he lamented the loss of earlier days of the revival when God's power was evident in many people being converted and in the life of the church being renewed. He spoke of 'such seasons that are now passing over us, when the Spirit of Christ is lamentably withdrawn, so dismally departed.' Gillespie appears to reflect the optimism which characterised much eighteenth century Enlightenment opinion.

160 Ibid.
161 Ibid., p 100.
162 Ibid.
163 Ibid., p 101.
164 Dunfermline Sermons for 1758, f 5r.
165 New College Sermons, Vol. 5, f 18r.
6. Church

Although Thomas Gillespie was forced to leave the Church of Scotland, he remained committed to the principles of Presbyterianism throughout his ministry in Dunfermline. Following the decision of the 1753 General Assembly to continue his deposition, he established a kirk session in his congregation. In 1761, the three congregations of Dunfermline, Jedburgh and Colinsburgh formed the Presbytery of Relief. The early growth of the movement in the first few decades led to the formation of an 'eastern' and a 'western' Presbytery, which met as the Relief Synod. 166

Gillespie did not adopt the sectarian approach of other Secession groups within Scotland in questioning the piety of groups outwith the Relief Church, but continued to believe in the unity of the 'universal Church of Christ throughout the world...all who hold the Head Christ, and agree in the essentials of Christianity, 167 though they defer in lesser matters, walking conscientiously according to their light.168 The Church consisted of 'all who make a credible profession of the name of Christ....all true believers' including 'infants and children who are born of the Spirit.'169 Although he acknowledged that 'divisions in the Church are ordered and disposed by the Lord for the [ultimate] good of the Church' 170 he believed that any manifestation of division and schism was an evidence of God's judgement. 171 He looked forward to the day when all divisions within the church would be healed and 'they shall be again

166 Following Gillespie's death, a third Presbytery, of Dysart, was established in 1776.

167 This apparent ecumenical spirit did not extend to the Roman Catholic Church which is described as the 'mother of harlots and abominations.' Aberdeen Sermons, p 31.

168 Dunfermline Sermons for 1758, f 33v.

169 Aberdeen Sermons, p 66. Gillespie is speaking of those who are baptised because 'as they have not exercise of reason' they 'are incapable of actual faith.' Ibid.

170 He refers to the incident involving Paul and Barnabas as an example. Aberdeen Sermons, pp 40, 42.

171 'the Lord's people are divided in His anger' New College Sermons, Vol. 3, Inside cover.
united. Though there is now strife and envy among them and the bitter fruits of their contentions and every evil work....he who had divided them up in anger will gather them into one in mercy.' 172 The practical outworking of such reunion was communion with Christ because 'if they live near to Christ, they will be one with their Brethren.' It is only when Christians 'depart from the Lord' that they are separated 'from one another.' 173 Gillespie stressed the importance of the Church in the life of the believer and encouraged a strict observance of 'all Christ's institutions, publicly in Church' as well as 'privately in Christian fellowship.' 174 Gillespie would eventually, following various disruptions within the Relief Church, express his hope that the Dunfermline congregation would approach the Established Church to be accepted as a 'Chapel of Ease congregation.' 175

The Lord's Supper stood out in Gillespie's thinking as the chief means of grace which God provided to the believer so that his faith, love and hope might deepen. In 1746, he preached a preparatory sermon prior to the celebration of communion and spoke of 'so near a prospect of that blessed Ordinance where he [the believer] may receive a rich supply of grace to help in every time of need'. 176 During the communion season in 1747 he encouraged his congregation to believe that God gave this ordinance 'for his honour and the conversion of sinners' as well 'the edification of His Body mystical in faith, holiness and comfort.' 177

172 Ibid.

173 New College Sermons for 1747, f 2r. This particular sermon was preached on 11 January 1747 when he makes the comment that disunity is a 'melancholy touchstone to us at present.' Ibid., f 2v. The reference may well be to the divisions which then becoming evident in the Secession Church.

174 Dunfermline Sermons for 1746, f 155r.

175 See Chapter 7.

176 Dunfermline Sermons for 1746, f 99r.

177 Dunfermline Sermons for 1747, f 42r. He speaks of how the Lord's Supper is 'a very effective means of promoting sanctification, raising the mind above a present world.' Ibid., 40r.
The interpretation which Gillespie gave to the meaning of the Lord's Supper indicates a complete rejection of both the Roman Catholic position regarding transubstantiation and the Lutheran view of consubstantiation. The doctrine of Transubstantiation developed in the medieval church. After the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, the presence of Christ in the Eucharist was explained in terms of Aristotelian philosophy, teaching that when the Priest consecrated the bread and the wine, a miracle occurs: the substance of the elements is suddenly changed (transubstantiated) into the body and blood of Christ, while the accidents of the elements remained the same. When the priest held the bread in his hands and said Hoc est corpus meum he was really holding in his hands the body of Christ, although it still looked and tasted like bread. This view of the Lord's Supper became a familiar aspect of the devotional life of people and at the moment of consecration, bells would be rung in the church to bring the congregation to look with wonder upon the elevated host; often the host would be carried through the streets surrounding the church in solemn procession, the people bowing before it in adoration. 178

At the Reformation, both Luther and Zwingli 179 realised that the mass needed to be reformed - where they differed was on which aspects needed to be changed. They agreed that it was essential that the mass became a congregational event and not merely a spectator experience. They urged communicating in both kinds and the use of the vernacular language, rather than Latin. Word and Sacrament were to be reunited, as the sermon was often omitted or given in Latin. Both Luther and Zwingli believed the sacraments to be but 'visible words' of God. Finally they rejected any idea of the Eucharist as a sacrifice offered to God which purported to repeat the

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unique, unrepeatable sacrifice of Christ at the cross of Calvary. They also rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation. Gillespie believed that transubstantiation was 'monstrous' and could never be a correct understanding of biblical truth because 'the whole Body of Christ is in heaven. It is in no part of it anywhere else, much less can it be supposed to be wherever the Priest pleases.'\textsuperscript{180} Gillespie also disagreed with the way in which the Roman Catholic church withheld the cup from the laity.\textsuperscript{181}

Luther's preferred word for the Lord's Supper was 'testament' which referred to the idea of the Eucharist as the gift of Christ to the Church. He emphasised the phrase 'this is' in terms of the words of institution whereas Zwingli would focus on 'this do'. While Luther admitted that the Lord's Supper is a symbol, he held tenaciously to the word 'is' - it was a symbol but it contained what it symbolised. Luther believed that which the bread signified, namely the body of Christ was present 'in, with and under' the sign itself. At the heart of his view was a Christological perspective that Luther held to, namely that he believed in the omnipresence of Christ's humanity - that Christ's body could be in heaven and in the elements at one and the same time. He believed that when Christ ascended, he did not cease to be present with believers, bodily as well as spiritually. For Luther, the Eucharist was the place where Christ was palpably present, not because of the so-called miracle of transubstantiation but because God's Word had promised the body and blood of Christ under the elements of bread and wine.

Luther held a considerable measure of medieval reverence towards the consecrated elements. On one occasion when celebrating communion, he dropped some consecrated wine onto the floor. He immediately fell on his knees and licked up

\textsuperscript{180} Dunfermline Sermons for 1747-1750, p 173.

\textsuperscript{181} New College Sermons, Vol. 4, f 15r.
the wine to avoid stepping on it. He also ordinarily knelt to receive communion. Gillespie spoke of Luther's view as 'absurd' and said that 'the tenet of Consubstantiation...in asserting the Elements in the Lord's Supper' to be 'partly the real Body and Blood of Christ and in Part, true Bread and Wine...supposes the Human Body of Christ possessed of Divine Prerogatives, Ubiquity etc.' 182

Zwingli preferred the title of 'memorial' for the Lord's Supper, which meant that he viewed it as a service of commemoration, by which the Church proclaimed its allegiance to Christ. He thought that Luther's views smacked of transubstantiation. He believed that the word 'is' should be understood as 'signifies' my body, finding support in other sayings of Jesus such as 'I am the vine' etc. Zwingli concluded that the sign and the thing signified, the body and blood of Christ, were separated by a distance - the width between heaven and earth. Zwingli had no difficulty in affirming that Christ was present in the supper according to his divinity. However he could not be present bodily, except by contemplation and memory, as the risen, glorified body of Christ remained in heaven, seated at God's right hand. This precluded its corporeal (bodily) presence on the communion table. In all this Zwingli was seeking to defend the true humanity of Christ.

On the question of the presence of Christ in the bread and wine, John Calvin183 tried to steer a middle course between Zwingli, whom he felt had too little regard for outward signs, and Luther, who extolled them too much. Calvin believed that Christ was locally present at the right hand of the Father in heaven but he agreed with Luther that the supper is not an empty symbol but a means of 'true participation' in Christ. The Supper was so important to Calvin that he attempted to institute a weekly


celebration in Geneva because he believed the Supper was a spiritual nourishment for the life of the church.

The Scottish Reformers had abolished the mass as idolatrous, and the Scots Confession had affirmed the view of Calvin, that Christ was present in communion by the Holy Spirit. Gillespie adhered to this general understanding of the Lord's Supper, although he spoke of the Lord's Supper as an act of obedience, a memorial and communion. At the twentieth celebration of communion after his deposition, in October 1762, Gillespie urged the congregation to 'yield obedience to the covenant of the Lord Jesus by keeping up remembrance of His death by sitting down at His table and receiving the symbols of His broken body and shed blood as He appointed.'

He also understood that the 'Lord's Table' was a 'Memorial of His death...and pledge of communion 'twixt Him and His people and blessed communication to their souls.'

Gillespie called upon his listeners to focus their attention on Christ. He knew, from personal experience, that the Lord's Supper was an opportunity to 'celebrate the supper...with high and honourable conceptions' of Christ. It was an event where the Christian could anticipate eternity where believers would 'constantly enjoy Christ's presence and see Him' for in heaven they 'will not be deprived of His sensible, ravishing presence a single moment.'

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184 New College Sermons, Vol. 6, Inside cover.
185 Dunfermline Sermons for 1746, f 16v.
186 Dunfermline Sermons for 1747, f 98r-99v.
187 Ibid., f 51r - 52v.
This high understanding of the Lord's Supper led Gillespie to stress the importance of approaching the Table with reverence and fear. He followed the practice which had developed in Scotland of 'fencing the tables'; that is, he gave a warning to those who might communicate unworthily. Believers could eat in an unworthy manner due to a lack of 'active preparation' or because they came with the wrong motivation, some communicating with purpose of qualifying for a civil or military office, 'a most horrid prostitution, an awful abuse' of communion. Gillespie encouraged a serious consideration of the use of the Fast Day, in order to prepare to receive the elements:

1. To practise solemn self-examination, trial of your state and frame.
2. To confess your sins.
3. To judge and condemn yourselves before the Lord.
4. To apply to the blood of sprinkling for pardon.
5. To the solemn exercise of repentance.
6. To renewed approbation of the Method of Grace...in Christ.
7. To solemn prayer for the Lord's Presence.
8. To solemn thankfulness to the Lord for the opportunity of eating and drinking in his presence.
9. To have enlarged expectations from the Lord.

Despite these warnings, Gillespie remained convinced throughout his ministry that the Lord's Supper was open to 'all His disciples, whether they apprehend

188 New College Sermons, Vol. 4, f11v.

189 Ibid. Gillespie is drawing on his knowledge of England as the Test and Corporation Acts which applied mainly south of the border. One historian points out although 'in theory it [the Test Act] discriminated against members of the Church of Scotland by making it impossible for them to hold an official post or military commission in England without first receiving the sacrament according to the rites of the Church of England, although in fact it seems rarely to have been enforced.' I. D. L. Clark, 'From Protest to Reaction' p 216.

190 Dunfermline Sermons for 1747, f59v - 60v.
themselves prepared or not...all for whom the Body was broken and Blood was shed are bound to come.' 191 Gillespie believed that all who were part of the 'Universal Visible Church who make credible profession of Faith and Obedience in him and to him...may be admitted to partake of the seals of the covenant.' 192 This enabled Gillespie to hold liberal views with regard to those whom he would admit to the Lord's Table, whether or not they were members of the Church of Scotland during his Carnock ministry or members of the Relief Presbytery during the latter days of his Dunfermline ministry.

This open attitude did not hinder Gillespie from exercising discipline. He opposed any attitude which indicated a 'laxness in administration of discipline...a suffering of persons immoral and scandalous to live in full communion with the Church, and to partake of the privileges of the Lord's children.' 193 Gillespie knew that ministers were susceptible to the temptation of overlooking immoral behaviour and he constantly warned his congregation against the evil of neglecting the instructions of Scripture and the rules of the Church.

The Scots Confession of 1560 had defined 'ecclesiastical discipline uprightly ministered as God's word prescribeth' as an essential mark of the Church. Whereas the Scots Confession had given the civil magistrate an important role in the exercise of discipline, the First Book of Discipline of 1561 emphasised the role of ministers and elders. The actual procedures adopted in cases of discipline were set out in the 'Form and Order of Excommunication and of Public Repentance' of 1563. The Form made a distinction between offences that 'fall not under the civil sword and yet are

192 Dunfermline Sermons for 1747, f 106v.
193 Gillespie, Treatise on Temptation p 136.
slanderous and offensive in the Church." There are clear indications that, in first fifty years of the Scottish Reformation, discipline was applied in situations relating to sexuality and the breach of the Sabbath, although other problems such as religious dissent, domestic disputes, dancing and witchcraft were not overlooked. 194 By the eighteenth century, cases of discipline dominated the meetings of kirk session and Presbyteries, the most common issue being ante-nuptial fornication. 195

Gillespie also attached importance to the sacrament of baptism and instructed parents to make a 'solemn surrender of their children to God. 196 He believed that in baptism, the 'outward baptism of water' needed to be 'accompanied with reception and enjoyment of what is signified by that baptism...when the person who was baptised according to Christ's appointment is led by it and the application of grace purchased by the Lord Jesus to apply to the Lord.' 197 Gillespie knew that infants 'have not the exercise of reason' and are 'incapable of actual faith' but he did consider them to be members of the visible Church, and he supported the practice of infant baptism. 198

From the time of his induction into the ministry of the Church of Scotland, Gillespie questioned aspects of the relationship between Church and state, especially the role of the civil magistrate in the affairs of the Church. Along with the rest of Presbyterian Scotland, Gillespie rejected any idea of the monarch being the 'head of

196 Gillespie, Treatise on Temptation, p 82.
197 Dunfermline Sermons for 1758, f 104r.
198 Aberdeen Sermons, p 66.
the church.' 199 As we have seen, he also opposed the issue of patronage where patrons often presented ministers who had 'a fine style, handsome address...a genteel turn...a pliable temper, is entertaining in conversation, but wants what is essential to a gospel-minister.' 200 Gillespie believed that the Church 'hath its charter of liberty as a spiritual corporation, a free society, voluntarily associated to observe Christian Institutions with all its privileges from God alone and not from any man or set of men.' 201 Gillespie concluded that the only way to be free from the strictures of patronage was not to debate the issue within the Church of Scotland, but to form congregations which would support their own ministry. He continued to advocate this view until the time of his death, when he believed that the Chapel of Ease scheme might allow Relief congregations to return to the Church of Scotland while maintaining their right to call their own minister. 202

7. Eschatology

Gillespie defended the classical creeds of the church concerning the second advent of Christ, a doctrine which he considered to be fundamental to the Christian faith. He spoke of how Christ would 'visibly come in the clouds and every eye that ever existed shall clearly see him....when he comes to judge the quick and the dead.' 203 True Christians were 'believers who...rejoice in the prospect of Christ's second coming to take them to be with him.' 204 Gillespie assumed that at death, there was a separation of the soul from the body, the latter being buried to wait for the day of

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199 Aberdeen Sermons, pp 78, 113-114. The Scottish Reformation specifically rejected this notion and thus differed from the situation within England.

200 Gillespie, Treatise on Temptation, p 145.

201 Aberdeen Sermons, p 80.

202 See later section in Chapter 7 of the thesis.


204 New College Sermons, Vol. 5, f 16v.
resurrection, while the soul went to be with Christ in heaven. Christ's coming would signal the resurrection of Christians, when Christ would 'raise their bodies, conformed to his glorious body' and following the 'general resurrection admit their whole persons into heaven.'

Gillespie took a very literal view on the resurrection of the body, insisting that 'the same body that died' would be raised again, even though its various parts might be 'removed to all the four quarters of the earth' or be 'devoured by beasts or fishes' thus changing into the 'substance of the bodies of creatures, food of persons.' 'Infinite power' he asserted, 'can and will preserve the dust whatever changes it undergoes.' Even if a number of bodies were buried in the same grave and decomposed together so that the dust of various bodies was mixed 'the Lord can and will separate the whole effectual parts of bodies of all persons from all other bodies and things at the general resurrection.'

Gillespie anticipated a day when, near the time of the second coming, the Church of Christ would experience a final outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This event he described as the 'latter day glory' and he linked it to the future conversion of Israel, a view which was adopted by earlier Reformers such as Martin Bucer and Theodore Beza. This postmillennial perspective on prophecy appeared in the Geneva Bible which taught that the conversion of Israel would be the occasion for further

205 Dunfermline Sermons for 1747, f 55r-55v. In a strange comment Gillespie affirms that 'The Lord will bring the souls of all believers from heaven to the place where are their bodies, in how short space of time we cannot determine...not one single soul will mistake, but under Divine Direction will exactly find its own body and take possession of it.' New College Sermons, Vol. 5, f 32v.

206 New College Sermons, Vol. 5, f 31v. 'Should some fingers be buried in the East Indies or a leg in America, the trunk of the body in Britain, it will be equally easy for the Lord...to bring the parts of the body together.' Ibid., f 32r.

207 Ibid., f 32r.


209 The Geneva Bible was produced by Protestant exiles in 1560 and was adopted by Reformers in Scotland.
spiritual blessing among Gentiles. Gillespie echoed this hope when he referred to Paul's teaching in Romans 11:12 which indicated that the conversion of Israel would result in 'riches' for the rest of the world. Once again, his millennial optimism reflects the Enlightenment idea of progress which was a widespread concern in the eighteenth century.

On a more sombre note, Gillespie took the note of final judgement with utter seriousness. He thought that judgement could be described as God's 'strange work' and not an activity God entered into 'with his whole heart' because he had 'no delight in it for itself.' Nevertheless, he believed that after 'all the elect are gathered in...the last judgement will commence.' The day of final judgement would be the moment when God's people were publicly declared to be 'justified before all men, angels and Devils,' and they will then 'sit on thrones in the general Judgement, judging the world.' Only the believer who comes before God 'under the cover of His [Christ's] blood and Righteousness' would escape the general condemnation of the day of final judgement.

210 This was also the view of the Westminster Divines in the Larger Catechism which said that the fulfilment of the Lord's Prayer 'your kingdom come' would mean that 'the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, the gospel propagated throughout the world, the Jews called in, the fullness of the Gentiles brought in.' Question 191. Other Scottish Theologians who held this view included Samuel Rutherford and James Dickson and Thomas Boston. See Iain Murray, The Puritan Hope (Edinburgh, 1971) David Bebbington speaks of how 'The postmillennial theory was evidently widespread.' Evangelicalism in Modern Britain, pp 62-63.

211 New College Sermons, Vol. 5, f 4v.

212 Ibid., f 40r.


214 New College Sermons, Vol. 4, f 8r.

215 New College Sermons, Vol. 5, f 2v.

216 New College Sermons, Vol. 4, f 6r.
Gillespie rejected any notion of Universalism or Annihilationism. He believed that the wrath of God would be experienced in hell throughout all eternity. Gillespie suspected that among the damned 'annihilation would be prayed for, but never be obtained.' In support for this view he showed that the word 'eternal' which is used in the original Greek to describe 'everlasting fire' is the 'same word used to express the eternal life of the Righteous.' In 1771 he asserted that from 'the prison of hell' there would be 'no escaping...once the sentence is executed.' He believed that the eternal nature of God's judgement was due to the fact that sinners would not only be punished for those sins which they had committed on earth, but also for the 'new guilt [which] will ever be contracted through eternity.' The fact that other more humane views were entertained by an increasing number of Christians in eighteenth century Scotland only indicated to Gillespie that 'religion is fast perishing from among us.'

8. Pastoral Theology

John Erskine considered that Thomas Gillespie excelled in applying the teaching of Scripture to the practical issues of Christian living. He had a particular concern for people who were in 'spiritual distress' and attempted to encourage those who were 'deep sunk in sorrow and on the edge of despair.' Erskine refers to one

217 Ibid., f 6v. Universalism is the belief that all human beings will finally be saved.

218 New College Sermons, Vol. 1, p 48. Annihilationism holds that the reprobate will simply cease to exist after the final judgement.

219 Ibid.

220 New College Sermons, Vol. 4, f 6v.

221 Aberdeen Sermons, p 17.

222 Ibid.

223 Ibid., pp 18-19.

224 John Erskine in 'Preface' to An Essay, p viii.
special feature of his preaching at communion 'especially at a distance from his charge' when he 'often entered far into certain soul-exercises, seldom minutely handled from the pulpit; but which he had considered with peculiar care...for building up...hearers in knowledge, faith, holiness, and comfort.' 225

The varieties of affliction which affected individual members of his congregation formed a subject which Gillespie returned to over and over again during his ministry. He emphasised the fact that affliction was a condition which believers could not expect to be exempted from 'prior to the end of time' and any other view was 'contrary to Scripture and Daily Experience.' 226 Affliction affected different people in different ways. Some were disturbed in their minds, a situation would could be exacerbated by 'some external accident which shocked and unhinged the spirit...a disordered imagination...a treacherous memory' as well as other 'disorders of the mind'. 227 Gillespie sympathised with those who suffered in this area and concluded that 'it is vastly more easy to bear the infirmities of the body than them of the mind.' 228 He was also aware that bodily afflictions could be attributed to a variety of causes such as '[the body] overheating' as well as 'immoderate eating...excessive drinking...unwholesome food...noxious vapours...the disposition of the air...acute diseases...weakness of the stomach, bad digestion or indigestion' and suggested that in some situation the remedy which Scripture spoke about had nothing to do with spirituality but the encouragement of Paul to Timothy that he 'drink a little wine for

225 Ibid., pp vii-viii Gillespie appears to have been noted for this emphasis during such communion seasons, not because he omitted to speaks on these subjects in his own congregation, but because his stress was unusual. John Walsh points out that 'In every Protestant country...there are religiously minded folk who yearn for a vital, experimental religion, for the assurance of sins personally forgiven, and of salvation presently granted.' 'Origins of the Revival' pp 141-2.


227 Ibid., p 6.

228 Ibid., p 50.
his stomach's sake and frequent infirmities.' 229 However, he was concerned with doubts and fears, which troubled many believers, often arising from 'imaginary grounds' 230 or from troubled consciences which dwelt on 'doubts and scruples without any foundation' and meant that a person would be 'utterly dejected' and 'pierced by a sense of guilt lying on the conscience.' 231 The ultimate danger which Gillespie feared was that God's people would become so engrossed in their doubts and fears that they would lose 'all relish of divine things' 232 and manifest attitudes of 'fretting, murmuring, repining, quarrelling at the Sovereign procedure of heaven.' 233 As well as directing his hearers 'to Christ' he encouraged Christians not to be condemnatory but rather to show 'tenderness' towards those who were 'wounded in spirit' in case their unhelpful attitude only added to the person's affliction. 234 Gillespie displayed an acute awareness that human spirituality was affected, not only by the more overtly spiritual aspect of our 'souls', but also by changing temperaments and outward circumstances. He spoke of how different people would either be sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic or melancholic in temperament and would react differently to testings and temptations. 235 Gillespie suspected that those with a sanguine disposition would be more liable to 'throw off the authority of the Lord, and disregard it', 236

229 Ibid., pp 7-8.

230 Ibid., p 12.

231 Ibid., pp 19, 23.

232 Ibid., p 33.

233 Ibid., pp 54-55.

234 Ibid., p 56.

235 This description of four types of personality is attributed to Galen (130-200), 'based on the notion of four humours in the body which were thought, by their effects, to produce a typical temperament. Thus the melancholic, choleric, sanguine and phlegmatic types were described.' G Davies, the Christian psychiatrist, says that 'if we know someone's temperament we can predict the way he or she will react in a given situation.' Article on 'Temperament' in New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology Edited by David Atkinson and David Field, (Leicester, 1995), pp 835-836.

236 Treatise on Temptation, p 31.
whereas the choleric would be prone to show 'displeasure' with other people and would be easily irritated. 237 A person with a phlegmatic constitution would be inclined to 'dilatoriness, a deferring the most important and urgent matters till a more proper season, probably never to take place.' 238 Finally those who were melancholic would be overwhelmed with various fears and tempted to 'racking despair.' 239 The fact that his father-in-law had not only been an elder in the Church of Scotland in Edinburgh, but also a medical physician, may have made Gillespie more sensitive to the role of physical and mental factors on the Christian life.

One other area of pastoral care which concerned Gillespie involved the combined issues of sin, temptation and sanctification. Gillespie presupposed that the corrupt nature which humanity inherited from Adam was not completely restored when a sinner was converted to Christ. Indeed, he spoke of how 'the most lamentable effects' could be observed in the lives of believers in 'ruined peace...hindered fruitfulness.' 240 Gillespie did not think that sin could hold the Christian in any absolute way, although there could be a 'prevalence of some lust' which had such control over a person that it could 'prevail...in a sort of habitual manner.' 241 However, the believer can only sin against his conscience and 'not with his whole heart' as he did when he was irregenerate. 242 The power of sin was 'absolute in unconverted persons' but could be found 'in various degrees in Believers.' 243 The

237 Ibid., pp 32-33.
238 Ibid., p 34.
239 Ibid., p 35.
240 New College Sermons, Vol. 6, f 20r.
241 New College Sermons, Vol. 1, p 39. He appears to differ from John Owen in saying that 'Scripture demonstrates and experience confirms that believers may fall into this dismal situation.' Ibid., p 41.
242 Ibid., p 56.
remains of a sinful nature meant that the Christian was open to the temptations of Satan whom Gillespie accepted as a powerful and personal opponent of the believer.

Gillespie spoke of Satan as a 'creature of God...made before any part of the visible creation', 244 who, along with other 'created angels', sinned against God, although Gillespie is unsure 'how sin came into them without so much as a tempter.'245 John Erskine felt that Gillespie ascribed 'too much to Satan' and was wrong to imagine that there was such a thing as 'appearances of evil spirits' which could 'influence the body.' 246 Yet Gillespie took it for granted that 'good' angels would come to the help of God's people by 'taking the form of humanity,' as would the devil who sometimes 'takes the shape of man', 247 even putting on 'an appearance different from that of the men of the country where he finds it for his infernal interest thus to appear.' 248 Although Gillespie never used the term 'witchcraft,' this seems to be what he is referring to. Gillespie sensed that there was an 'immense number' of fallen angels 'employed through the Earth in their stated work of tempting mankind' and that Scripture gave warrant to believe that as many as a 'legion' (which Gillespie numbered at six thousand and twenty seven) 'could be spared to possess one simple man.' 249 The final function of 'fallen angels' would be that 'in hell, confined by the will of this great Sovereign' they would 'torment damned souls.' 250 Once again Gillespie reveals

244 New College Sermons. Vol. 8, p 71. He says that 'though it is utterly impossible that sin should ever receive the throne in the heart of a believer so as to live again as before and have absolute dominion over him...yet it may obtain a dismal ascendance.' Ibid., pp 89-90.

245 Ibid., p 72.

246 John Erskine, 'Preface' to Treatise on Temptation, pp x-xi.

247 New College Sermons. Vol. 8, p 72.

248 Ibid.


250 New College Sermons. Vol. 4, f 1r.
that he is aware of Enlightenment concerns regarding health and medicine, and their influence on the spiritual state, while looking backward towards older Puritan views on real devils and witchcraft.

Gillespie followed the Reformed understanding that emphasised justification as the starting point of a sinner's renewed relationship with God and that viewed sanctification as the gradual process of becoming more righteous and holy. Gillespie rejected any notion that the message of God's grace and 'free forgiveness looses the obligation to holiness.' He saw an 'inseparable connection 'twixt Justification and Sanctification. Whenever one is pardoned and accepted with the Lord through the Righteousness of the Lord Jesus sprinkled on his conscience, there certainly shall be a disposition to live to the Lord's honour.'

The work of sanctification was described as being 'gradually carried on' in the believer's life in this world and 'finished at death' when the believer would be 'entirely conformed to the glorified body of the Lord Jesus.' Gillespie used the illustration of Christ who was 'nailed to the cross' and who 'gradually died,' going on to discuss how 'the old man of sin in the believer is nailed to that cross' and is 'gradually weakened' until it loses 'its strength and vigour till in the End it shall at the death of the body breath its last.' Sanctification was thus a 'growth by degrees'

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251 Dunfermline Sermons for 1747, f 9v.


253 New College Sermons, Vol. 1, p 14

254 New College Sermons, Vol. 5, f 5v.

255 New College Sermons, Vol. 1, p 60. 'They shall with a glorious constancy advance towards Perfection.' Ibid., p 86.

256 New College Sermons, Vol. 6, f 47v.
which was mediated to the believer through the means of grace, i.e. 'by his word, ordinances' 257 so that 'all sin is to be mortified' and 'no lust spared.' 258 Gillespie perceived that the work of sanctification involved, not only the ministry of the Holy Spirit, but also the active participation of the Christian. The Holy Spirit actually 'enables and causes Believers to mortify indwelling sin' by empowering them to hate sin and resist the influence of temptations. 259 However, the child of God must hate sin for themselves and 'engage in still more vigorous efforts for its destruction.' 260 This combination of faith, and active opposition to sin and seeking to live a godly life united the sovereign grace of God and the responsibility of human free will.

The Reformed Church in eighteenth century Scotland stressed the importance of an outward reverence and respect for the Sabbath. This was seen, not only in the number of cases of Sabbath breaking which were brought before kirk sessions and Presbyteries, but also in the numerous occasions in which Sabbath observance was enjoined within sermons. Gillespie spoke of particular sins connected with a breach of the Sabbath, such as 'idleness' and associating with 'bad company.' 261 Breaking the Sabbath was often the first step towards 'more grossly profaning the Lord's day' such as 'disobedience to parents' which may lead to 'many other evils, particularly those for which they suffer death.' 262

257 Dunfermline Sermons for 1747, f 101r.
258 New College Sermons, Vol. 1, p 63.
259 New College Sermons, Vol. 1, p 74.
260 Ibid., p 60.
261 Treatise on Temptation, p 83.
262 Ibid., pp 83, 88. See also John Willison, A Treatise concerning the Sanctification of the Lord's Day (Edinburgh, 1722).
One final means of grace which Gillespie encouraged in the lives of his people was prayer. He regretted the way in which 'the Gospel has so little success' due to the Church 'neglecting to pray for their ministers.' He advocated a close connection between ministers who preached 'from the heart' and a congregation who prayed. 263 The message of the gospel had more effect in 'Satan being cast out of the hearts of sinners' when God's people prayed because God ordained that 'their prayers for that mercy were heard.' 264 The attitude which believers demonstrated in prayer was as important as the actual activity of prayer itself. Thus the believer came before God:

with 'knees bowed in prayer...expressive of a sinner's desire to be humbled before the Lord...standing before the Lord, expressive of reverential impressions one has of him...the hands lifted up to signify holy earnestness and importunity in one's address to the Lord...a lying prostrate on the Earth when awfully threatened or under tremendous spiritual judgements or awful outward calamities.' 265

Prayer could occur in private as well as in public and families were summoned to 'practise...Family worship' on a regular basis. 266 Puritan piety stressed the importance of family devotions, 267 and viewed the family as 'a little church, with the father as priest.' 268 Family worship was revived in eighteenth century Evangelicalism and consisted of morning and evening scripture reading, prayer, and psalm singing. 269

266 Ibid., p 169.
269 John T. McNeill says that 'twice daily families were enjoined to observe periods of prayer' See A History of the Cure of Souls, (London, 1952), p 252. Lovelace makes the comment that within
Gillespie followed this pattern and encouraged 'all Christian families, twice a day...to meet before the Throne of Grace and pray for one another...for the whole Church of Christ and every individual member of it.' The climax of a praying community will come 'every Lord's Day, when...the whole Church...are solemnly praying...and their prayers are of the greatest weight and efficacy for the good of the Church.' 270 One special area of prayer that Gillespie mentioned in a sermon preached on Isaiah 57 v 18 in January 1764, is that of physical healing. Referring to the Scriptural reference in James 5, he encouraged the 'Elders of the church...to pray over' those who were sick and anoint them with oil. He believed that this was an 'ordinance of heaven for healing of bodily diseases' as well as of 'soul maladies' and although he described it as 'an especial mean' to be used with caution, he nevertheless believed that such prayers would be answered by God. 271

9. Social Issues

Although issues relating to personal and corporate spirituality dominated Gillespie's theology, he did not neglect wider social issues. The Scottish historian of Christianity, W. F. Storrar, points out that 'corporate social responsibility continued after the Reformation....care of the poor by the church and community was seen as a Christian duty requiring both relief work and an end to unjust social and economic practices.' 272 Furthermore, the Enlightenment produced a concern for social reform, 273 which may have influenced his thinking.

Moravian piety 'Francke...made the institution of family worship part of his reformation in the community at Halle.' Cotton Mather, p 128.

270 Aberdeen Sermons, p 145.


272 W. F. Storrar, 'Social Concern,' In Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology Edited by Nigel M. de S. Cameron, p 784.

273 Leaders within the Scottish Enlightenment 'built a case against slavery' and 'strongly opposed both the institution of slavery and the lucrative African slave-trade.' Camic, Experience and Enlightenment, pp 67, 87-88.
Living in a society where the relief of the poor was the responsibility of the Church, Gillespie warned those who were rich not to 'shut their bowels against the poor and indigent' and to refrain from lending 'their money upon usury, or to demand more than legal interest...to increase their wealth at his expense.' 274 People of substance who employed servants were instructed to make sure that their servants were given opportunity to observe 'the Lord's day.' Masters were not to give their servants 'unwholesome food' or not enough food 'to support nature'. 275 They were never to 'withhold...wages' or 'beat servants, especially apprentices... sometimes in a cruel manner.' 276 Gillespie revealed his concern for family harmony when he warned husbands to avoid treating 'the spouse harshly...instead of considering her as his equal and acting towards her as a part of himself.' 277

Gillespie never changed his view that the civil magistrate should be detached from the affairs of the Church. However he believed that the Church had a prophetic voice which called magistrates to act justly and never to 'countenance bribery' 278 or 'abuse the power they are vested with; to partiality in the administration of justice...and to respect friends.' 279 He expressed particular concern over the issue of patronage and he warned Parliament not to ' invade the prerogative of the Lord Jesus, by claiming a power in matters religious, with which he has not entrusted them...in opposition to the authority of Christ, who alone is Lord of the conscience.' 280

274 Treatise on Temptation, pp 63-64.
275 Ibid., p 106.
276 Ibid., pp 206, 208.
277 Ibid., pp 91-92.
278 Ibid., pp 114, 116.
279 Ibid., p 118.
However, he showed his loyalty to the state by exhorting the general populace not to 'undervalue or condemn the office of magistracy,' which he described as an 'ordinance of heaven.' He advised his readers to 'be subject to the authority and lawful commands of magistrates in all civil matters.' 281 As might be expected Gillespie proclaimed that it was the civic duty of each citizen to 'pay reasonable taxes and tribute, lawfully imposed, for the support of the government, and the preservation of the commonwealth.' 282

He applied the principles of God's word to men and women of all classes. For instance, he challenged physicians to 'depend on the Lord for his blessing upon their endeavours' and to avoid 'unlawful, dangerous experiments upon men's bodies, especially those of the poor, and persons who have few or no friends, to try the force of diseases and the power of medicines, which experiments do or may prove destructive of life.' 283 He was aware of the temptations which doctors face in showing 'partiality to the great and the rich, and to bestow vastly more care and pains upon them than inferior mean persons and the poorer sort.' 284

Gillespie did not conceive of any dichotomy between orthodoxy and orthopraxy. He maintained a close link between correct belief and proper behaviour. The teachings of Scripture, which he generally interpreted in line with Reformed theology, were applied in a detailed and disciplined way to the every day life of God's people. Gillespie was not a creative theologian but he sought to be contemporary in

281 Ibid.
282 Ibid., p 122.
283 Ibid., p 185.
284 Ibid., p 186.
his application of truth to the needs of his people, and as such, the value of his ministry was incalculable to those who heard him speak and read his writings.

It is certain that Gillespie was certainly aware of the influence of what would later be termed Enlightenment thought within eighteenth century Scotland. There appears to be some tension, however, in Gillespie's thought between an engagement with Enlightenment priorities such as universalism, progress, optimism and social harmony and a looking backward towards a more conservative Calvinism. The evidence of this chapter indicates that although he did not always react negatively to the ethos of the Enlightenment, he could not agree with any viewpoint which challenged the doctrines of original sin and the sovereignty of God. Gillespie's interaction with Enlightenment thought appears to have influenced the manner in which he expressed himself, for example in his use of terminology associated with Enlightenment thinking, and in the way in which he reflected the optimism which characterised the ethos of the Enlightenment. It is doubtful, however, if Bebbington's assertion that 'Evangelicalism was allied to the Enlightenment' can be justified in the case of Gillespie.

285 Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain, p 19.
Chapter 7: The Consolidation of the Relief Church: 1761 - 1774

The final years of Gillespie's life witnessed the growth and consolidation of the Presbytery of Relief. From the three congregations which existed in 1761, the Presbytery grew to nineteen congregations by the time of his death in January 1774. By that time however, controversy divided the various congregations into two Presbyteries in Edinburgh and Glasgow, not on a geographical basis, but because of different outlooks on contentious issues.

The Relief Church grew within the wider context of the religious life of Scotland where both branches of the Secession Church experienced 'remarkable progress' in Scotland and were beginning to send ministers to congregations in Ireland and North America. In 1761, the Reformed Presbyterian Church had 'few ministers, and their congregations were small and widely scattered.' The first Baptist Church was founded in 1750 in Keiss, in north-east Scotland, and Scotch Baptist congregations began to grow from 1765 in Lowland towns. The influence of John Wesley and Methodism declined in the 1760s when John Erskine wrote a work entitled Mr. Wesley's Principles Detected, in which he opposed Wesley's Arminianism, especially his doctrine of Christian perfection. The Relief Church grew within the wider context of Presbyterian and Independent dissent in Scotland. The Secession Synods continued to exclude all other Christian bodies, including each other, from

1 Struthers, History of the Relief Church, p 169. Struthers describes the Secession Churches in 1761 as being 'two large and powerful bodies, with missionaries in America and Ireland, and were gradually spreading themselves into England. They were taking deep root, and filling the land.' Ibid., p 171.

2 Ibid., p 171. They appeared to have three active congregations in 1761, although members of various praying societies were identified with the Church. See Couper, Reformed Presbyterian in Scotland, pp 9-15.

3 See article by D. B. Murray on 'Baptists' in Dictionary of Scottish Church History, p 60.

4 John Erskine, Mr. Wesley's Principles Detected, (Edinburgh, 1765).
Christian fellowship and other Independent congregations were small. Scotland was ready for a Christian Church which was openly evangelical in its preaching, ecumenical in its attitude towards other Christians and free in the choice it gave to congregations to choose their own ministers.

As the Relief Church grew, various congregations looked to Thomas Gillespie for inspiration and pastoral advice. However it would be wrong to imagine that the Relief Church became a Gillespean Church. He initiated a movement which he would be unable to control, and, in the end, proved to be bigger than himself. The principle of liberty of conscience, which he defended at the time of his deposition, continued to influence many members of Relief congregations, but various local circumstances determined the character of local congregations which joined the Relief Church. This explains why, in large sections of this chapter, Gillespie is not the central figure which we might have expected him to be.

The main influence of the Relief Church lay in the central and southern lowlands of Scotland where both Presbyterianism and Evangelicalism were strong among 'both urban tradesmen and the rural peasantry.' The social structure of the Relief congregations differed according to the particular locality but consisted, in the majority of cases, of the urban middle and higher classes of a burgeoning manufacturing and commercial community as well as miners, weavers, wrights and tenant farmers in rural areas of the country. As the Scottish population grew and became more financially secure, many of those who felt alienated from the life of the national Church formed their own congregations based on values of financial self-reliance and religious liberty. In 1766, John MacLaurin, who later became Lord

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Dreghorn, 6 spoke of '120,000 of the people of this country' who had 'left the established church' and indicated that this included 'vast numbers even of our more moderate people.' MacLaurin had consistently opposed the influence of the Moderates within the Church of Scotland. As early as 1757 he published a satire against John Home, a member of the Moderate literati and author of the play Douglas, in which 'he suggested that Home should be deposed [from the ministry of the Church of Scotland] since he had been among those who had instigated the deposition of Thomas Gillespie in 1752.' 7 In 1766, he warned the Church that 'the Presbytery of Relief...will grow stronger every day' 8 because of the continued grievance of patronage. By 1773 the Relief Presbytery had 'fourteen settled congregations, and five vacancies...served by fourteen ministers.' 9

MacLaurin believed that the only issue which divided the Relief Presbytery from the Church of Scotland was that of patronage, 10 and that on every occasion when 'the right of patronage is improperly exercised, it is certain that more of the people of this country will take refuge with that presbytery, which threatens to be the

7 Sher, Church and University, pp 81-82. John MacLaurin, The Deposition, or Fatal Miscarriage: A Tragedy, (Edinburgh, 1757).
8 John MacLaurin, Considerations on the Right of Patronage, (Edinburgh, 1766), pp 9-11. One anonymous writer expressed his own fear that the 'humour of building schismatical meeting-houses' would 'spread, as it threatens to do.' A Short History of the Late General Assembly of the Church of Scotland shewing the Rise and Progress of the Schism Overtures, (Glasgow, 1766), p 34.
9 Considerations on Patronages addressed to the Gentlemen of Scotland. Likewise A State of the Secession in Scotland in the year 1773, (Glasgow, 1774), p26
10 Considerations on the Right of Patronage, p 9. MacLaurin agreed that when a patron built a church the motivation was undoubtedly pious. However the problem with patronage was that of succeeding generations within the family who inherited the right to present a minister to the congregation who may be 'destitute of the piety of the original founder' and be motivated by 'the provision of a friend or dependant.' Ibid., p 6. This point was also made by Andrew Crosbie in 1769, who spoke of 'Private friendships, political and personal connections, pecuniary considerations, and many other motives, tend to sway the generality of patrons'. Thoughts concerning Patronage and Presentations (Edinburgh, 1841) p 13.
most formidable enemy the established church ever saw.'

For this reason, various attempts were made between 1761 and 1766 to repeal, or at least to reform, the use of the patronage act.

**The Schism Overture**

In May 1765, an overture was presented to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland which was motivated by concern in the Church over 'the progress of the schism in this church' which 'seems to be on the growing hand....and is likely to take root, in the greatest and most populous towns.' The overture represented a challenge to the dominance of William Robertson and other members of the Moderate party within the Church of Scotland. The supporters of the overture hoped to initiate 'an enquiry into the causes of secession...[which] would be likely to produce a re-examination of Moderate policies...such as church patronage and polite, moral preaching.' Two motions came before the Assembly on 31 May 1765. The first motion called for the transmission of the overture to consideration of the Presbyteries, where the Popular party were in the majority. The second motion, which Robertson persuaded the assembly to adopt, called for the appointment of a committee of

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11 Considerations on the Rights of Patronage, Ibid., pp 9-10.

12 The Relief church in Edinburgh opened a meeting house in January 1766 and a church was opened in Glasgow in August 1766.

13 See Sher, Church and University, pp 130ff. I. D. L. Clark says that although Schism debate 'has usually been regarded as a straight forward clash between the Moderate and Popular Parties' it appears that 'on closer examination it proves to have been a struggle for leadership within the Moderate ranks as well' although opponents of the Moderate control of the Assembly clearly used the overture for their own agenda. See Clark Moderatism and the Moderate Party, p 83. See the account in Morren, Annals, Vol. 2, pp 305-308, 311, 326-347.

14 Sher, Church and University, Ibid., p 131. Sher believes that the 'schism overture was to serve as the pretext for a grand assault on the Moderates by a coalition of opponents driven by a variety of motives, including personal jealousy and revenge, political rivalry, and ideological and religious differences.' Ibid.
twenty-three ministers and sixteen elders, to consider the overture and report to the next General Assembly. 15

The committee deliberated on 19 November and agreed to an overture which would recommend that the General Assembly of 1766 instruct Presbyteries throughout Scotland to investigate the size of the Secession movement and consider to what extent 'the abuse of the right of patronage' formed 'one of the chief occasions of the progress of Seccession.' The committee's overture also called on the Assembly 'to consider what methods may be employed to remedy so great an evil.' 16

As the Assembly of 1766 drew near a number of pamphlets appeared on the Schism Overture. One suggested that 'there are many things beside the grievance of patronage which contribute to the progress of the Secession' - the principal one being 'the particular strain and tenor of preaching which prevails in many parts of Scotland' and which was termed 'unevangelical.' 17 Although the Moderates in the Church 'remained...recognisably Calvinists' 18 and 'believed themselves to be the loyal

15 It is interesting to note that on the same day the three ministers in the presbytery of Dunfermline, David Hunter, Alexander Daling and John Spence, who 'for twelve years have lain under a suspension from sitting in a judicative capacity in presbyteries, synods or general assemblies' because of their dissent from the Inverkeithing settlement were restored 'to their former judicative capacity.' Scots Magazine, XXVII, (1765), p 278.

16 Scots Magazine, XXVII (1765), pp 613-4. The writer of A Short History of the...Schism Overture believed that 'several things...are certainly in the power of the church...by which the grievance of patronage may be rendered much lighter than it hath been for many years past' p 37. In 1769 Andrew Crosbie estimated that 'The rights of patronage [within the Church of Scotland] stand thus: - In the hands of the crown, 334; in the hands of the nobility, 309; in the hands of landed gentlemen, 233; in the hands of boroughs, 45 (of which more than one-half belong to Edinburgh and Glasgow); in the hands of boroughs of barony, 2; and in the hands of heritors and elders, in consequence of the act 1690, and the reservation in that of 10th Anne, 3.' Thoughts concerning Patronage, p 15.

17 Methods Proposed to the General Assembly for Healing the Divisions and preventing of Schisms in the Church in two Letters containing some Observances on the Overture about schism in the last general Assembly by a Well Wisher of the Church of Scotland, (Glasgow, 1766) pp 3, 5-6. The two letters were printed in the Scots Magazine XXVII (1765), p 620 and XXVIII (1766) pp 72-75.

18 Clark, Modematism and the Moderate Party, p194.
exponents of the Standards of the Church' 19 many of their Popular party opponents believed that they 'tempered and re-appraised' Calvinistic doctrine, 20 and several writers accused them of advocating 'natural religion' and 'virtuous practice' while undermining 'those great peculiarities of the gospel, on which the virtuous practice must rest as on its proper basis.' 21 The anonymous author of Animadversions on the Overture of the Late General Assembly concerning Schism, called for an investigation into the 'state of the ministry in Scotland' 22 so that the Assembly would suspend those who 'exalt the liberty and freedom of man's natural powers to acts spiritually good' as well as those 'who are immoral in their lives' and who give themselves to 'excess in eating and drinking...who attend upon horse-races...who delight more in the company of the profane, than in the saints.' 23 The emphasis which the Moderates placed on good learning and secular culture led their opponents to believe that ministers were neglecting to 'preach...the doctrines of the gospel in a plain and scriptural style.' 24 Several people used the Schism Overture as an opportunity to attack Robertson and the Moderates and to make it clear that they believed that 'several of them...seem, at least, to have departed from some of the ancient and orthodox tenets of this church.' 25 They maintained that if all ministers returned 'to the doctrines, the sentiments, and language, which have always been popular and highly esteemed in the church,' the effects of schism would be minimised because it was 'the matter, the method and style

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19 Ibid., p 246.
20 Ibid., p 241.
21 Scots Magazine XXVIII, (1766), pp 72-74.
22 Animadversions on the Overture of the Late General Assembly concerning Schism, (Edinburgh, 1766), p 15.
23 Ibid., pp 16-18.
24 A Short History of the...Schism Overture, p 38.
25 Ibid. Clark has argued that the 'Moderate conscience boggled at the substitutionary theory of the atonement.' 'From Protest to Reaction' p 209.
of preaching' which was 'a more general cause of schism, or secession, than even the exercise of the patronage act.'

When the overture came before the General Assembly in 1766 the debate lasted for one full day. William Robertson asserted that the Schism Overture had emerged out of envy and resentment against his own personal prestige and policies. He also attacked Patrick Cuming, whom Robertson claimed was the prime mover in the overture, as a person who now opposed a policy which he had previously promoted. In this way he indicated the inconsistency of the Popular party aligning itself with the interests of the faction led by Patrick Cuming, the previous leader of the Moderate party. Finally, as well as defending the system of patronage which he believed had improved the quality of ministers within the Church of Scotland, he also argued that the Secession movement could be viewed as a positive, and perfectly natural, occurrence. Robertson accepted that differences of opinion have to be permitted in a liberal society. Eventually a motion to reject the overture to pursue any investigation into the connections between patronage and the Secession movement succeeded by 99 votes to 85, not the 'great majority' which Alexander Carlyle wrote about in his autobiography, but enough to ensure the continued dominance of

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26 Short History of the Schism Overture, pp 38-39. MacLaurin contrasted the preaching styles of George Whitefield who influenced 'thousands, and ten thousands daily to hear him...not by declaiming on moral subjects.' Considerations on the Rights of Patronage, p 29. John Snodgrass spoke of how 'A famine of the word of life, or of the great truths of the gospel, is the universal complaint of serious Christians, in almost every corner of the land.' An Effectual Method for Recovering our Religious Liberties, (Glasgow, 1770), p 40.

27 Scots Magazine XXVIII. (July 1766) pp 337-341. James Oswald, Moderator of the 1765 Assembly and a supporter of Cuming, believed that 'strictness of piety' as well as 'a freedom of thought and gentleness of manners' ought to characterise ministers. He also advocated a stricter scrutiny in 'licensing young men to preach the gospel' which would mean that those who were presented to vacant charges would be better qualified. Letters Concerning the Present State of the Church of Scotland, (Edinburgh, 1767), pp 28, 43, 48.

Moderate views within the Church. In this continued setting of turmoil over patronage and also over the nature of preaching within the Church, the Presbytery of Relief grew as local congregations looked to them to provide spiritual guidance.

The growth of the Relief Church took place, not only within the larger context of events within the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, but also because of local factors within individual parishes. In order to understand the growth of the Relief Church we must study it as a series of local events. Congregations looked to the Relief Presbytery for different reasons. Our examination of the congregations which joined the Relief Church from 1761 to 1774, the date of Gillespie's death, indicates that there was no single overriding cause and to simply look at patronage, as many scholars have done, can be an oversimplification of a complex movement. The fact that many of these emerging congregations might have joined the Secession Church, but did not, was also influenced by local considerations.

Blairlogie

In 1758 the parish of Logie, situated three miles north-east of Stirling, became vacant on the death of its minister, Rev. Patrick Duchall. Both the Earl of Dunmore and John Erskine of Carnock claimed the right of presentation, although in this case both men wanted James Frame, a probationer from Alloa, to be the new minister. The

29 The issue of patronage did not disappear from the General Assembly but further attempts to repeal or reform the use of the Patronage Act in 1768-1769 and 1782-1784 were unsuccessful. In 1769 the author of Patronage Demolished, (Edinburgh, 1769) spoke of the necessity of a minister being orthodox in his doctrine and indicated that he saw a connection between the unpopularity of many ministers who were presented to churches and 'profane learning.' p 23. Other opponents of patronage such as Andrew Crosbie agreed that 'Universal learning and elegant accomplishment are unquestionably desirable in every clergyman...but...they are neither the only nor the principal objects that ought to be kept in view in the settlement of a minister.' Thoughts concerning Patronage, p 14. John Snodgrass encouraged presbyteries 'to get proper elders duly elected as your representatives in presbyteries and synods' and to be more careful in their selection of commissioners who were sent to the General Assembly. An Effectual Method, pp 18, 21. I.D.L. Clark speaks of how the Popular party 'in 1768 obtained a small majority in the Assembly' and 'succeeded in delaying two disputed settlements and to the embarrassment of the Moderates set up a commission to investigate ways of procuring relief from the law of patronage.' Moderatism and the Moderate Party, p 154.
kirk session protested against this presentation and when Frame learned of the opposition to him in the congregation, he withdrew his acceptance of the presentation. In February 1759 the congregation asked the Presbytery to moderate a call to the Rev. William Cruden, minister of Logiepert in the Presbytery of Brechin. 30 The Presbytery delayed making any decision and at the next meeting of Presbytery Captain Robert Haldane of Plean, appeared on behalf of John Erskine, to support the congregation's choice of Cruden. The Earl of Dunmore, however, presented the name of another probationer, James Wright. When the case came before the Synod of Perth and Stirling, it decided that the Presbytery of Stirling had the authority to settle the issue in favour of Cruden. 31 Dunmore then appealed to the General Assembly and in 1760 the decision of the Synod was reversed and James Wright was settled in Logie in 1761. 32

The congregation did not take any further action in the ecclesiastical courts of the Church of Scotland but instead withdrew from the parish church, erected their own church building, and called their first minister with the help and support of the Presbytery of Relief. The people of the Stirling area had witnessed the birth of the Secession Church although when Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine attempted to hold a meeting in the parish of Logie in April 1740 'the people of the neighbourhood went up against them...and breaking their tents to pieces, dismissed them.' 33

30 The petitioners believed that the right of presentation had 'devolved on the Presbytery...by the lapse of more than nine months from the death of Mr Duchall.' See Morren, Annals, Vol. 2, p 171. Cruden had been minister of Logiepert since 12 September 1753 and later became the first minister of the Relief Church in Albion Street, Glasgow. See Hew Scott, Fasti, Vol. V. p 404.

31 The Synod were thus agreeing with the petitioners that 'the power of settling the parish was fallen into the hands of the Presbytery, jure devoluto.' Morren, Annals, Vol. 2, p 172.

32 The Assembly decided that 'if the patron present one legally qualified, who duly accepts the presentation within the six months, he saves his privilege; and if the person presented shall be refused by the Church judicatures, he has the residue of the six months that remained at the time of his first presentation to present another.' The Assembly only reversed the Synod's decision by 59 votes to 48. See Morren Annals, Vol. 2, p173.

33 Caledonian Mercury of 30 April 1740.
flourishing congregations of both Burgher and Anti-Burgher persuasion existed in Stirling, Dunblane and Alloa. Nevertheless, the Blairlogie Seceders decided to form themselves into a Relief congregation, rather than join either the Burgers or Antiburghers. On 16 June 1762, Gillespie, Boston and Colier, met at Blairlogie to ordain John Warden as the minister of a new Relief congregation. 34 In doing so, the Presbytery of Relief had once again inducted a minister who had previously associated with an English Presbyterian congregation in Cuderston. 35

Auchtermuchty

The events leading up to the formation of the Relief congregation in Auchtermuchty followed the disputed settlement of Thomas Mutter, minister of Leswalt, 36 into the Auchtermuchty parish church. The Presbytery of Cupar and the Synod of Fife had both refused to sustain Mutter's presentation which the patron, Moncrieff of Readie had made in May 1761. The Assembly of 1762, however, overturned this decision 37 and Mutter was duly ordained on 28 September 1762. 38 A large proportion of the congregation then left the parish church and received some

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34 One elder, John Christie of Sheriffmuirlands, remained in the Logie church while the other eight elders, along with two further elders from outside the parish, formed the new kirk session of the Relief church. Their names were Thomas Anderson, John Kidston, James Galloway, John Galloway, Robert Galloway, James Marshall, John Telford, Peter Burn, John Henderson and James Clason. See R. F. Anderson, 150 Years in Blairlogie : The Story of the Blairlogie Church, (Stirling, 1912) p 15 and R. M. Ferguson, Logie: A Parish History. (Paisley, 1905), Vol. 1, p 268.

35 Little is known about Warden. One interesting and amusing incident is recorded in the minutes of the Session for 8 March 1767 when James Smith was refused baptism for his child because he did not attend Warden's ministry. He indicated that his absence from worship was not due to any disagreement over doctrine but because he 'was very displeased that he (Warden) prayed for the King.' Anderson, 150 Years, p 22.

36 Mutter was the son of the minister of Tranent. He was educated at Edinburgh University, ordained to the charge at Leswalt in 1737, translated to Auchtermuchty in 1762 and moved to Dumfries in 1765. See Fasti, Vol. 2, p 266.

37 It was carried 'by a great majority.' See Morren, Annals, Vol. 2, p 259.

38 Fasti, Vol. 5, p 127.
pastoral care from Thomas Gillespie, who preached and baptised at Auchtermuchty on 17 November 1762. The following year Gillespie preached at two communion seasons in Auchtermuchty, the first on Sunday 26 June 1763 and then at the Fast Day on 10 August 1763, when he began his sermon by saying 'Tomorrow one is to be admitted as your pastor.' The congregation built a church with 500 sittings and called Thomas Scott from the Presbyterian church in Hexham, in the North of England, where he began his ministry in November 1756. Scott had previously been invited to become the minister of the Relief congregation in Colinsburgh in 1761 but had declined 'on account of his inability for such a great charge.' His brother, James Scott, became minister of the Relief church in Jedburgh in 1783. A Secession congregation associated with the Burgher Synod had been formed nearby in April 1748 but once again a new congregation had applied to the Presbytery of Relief for support, and by 1793, the Relief church had 284 members, the Burgher congregation 189, and the Antiburghers 93.

**Duns**

Between 1752 and 1792 the population of Duns doubled in size and by 1792 it contained an Antiburgher, a Burgher and a Relief church in addition to a Church of Scotland congregation. Ralph Erskine preached in Duns in October 1739 and an Associate church was built in 1742, the congregation taking the Antiburgher side in 1747. At the beginning of 1762, the Burgher Synod agreed to provide various

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40 He was ordained by the Northumberland Class on 24 November 1756.

41 James had been a probationer of the Church of Scotland for some years before he was ordained over the Presbyterian congregation of Brampton, Northumberland in 1774. He originated from Wilton, near Hawick. It may be assumed that his brother also was a Probationer. See Small, *History of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, p 261.

42 The Statistical Account gives the population in 1792 at 3,324 in the parish; 2,324 in the town and 1,000 in the surrounding countryside. See *Statistical Account*, Vol. III, pp 132-3.
preachers who would supply sermons for a congregation which met in Chirnside, some six miles away. MacKelvie, the historian of the United Presbyterian Church, believed that this congregation moved into Duns in 1764.  

When in August 1748, the patron, John Hay of Belton, presented Adam Dickson to the vacant parish church at Duns, the congregation objected and asked the Presbytery to moderate a call to James Lindsay of Dumbarney. Eventually the case reached the House of Lords, which decided against the congregation, and on 21 September 1750, the General Assembly instructed the Presbytery to ordain Dickson. Only the presence of the military prevented serious disruption of the ordination service by angry parishioners. Several people subsequently joined the Antiburgher congregation. Others, however, continued to attend the parish church. When the Presbytery of Relief was formed in 1761, the unhappy parishioners expressed interest in creating a Relief church in Duns. The strength of the Secession movement in the area led Thomas Boston of Jedburgh to write to those unhappy parishioners to inform them of the liberal terms of communion in the Relief Church, as contrasted with the rigidity of the Secession church.

The new congregation first made an approach to James Murray, an Independent minister at Newcastle, and then approached Michael Boston of Alnwick. Eventually, in 1767, Thomas Monteith, minister of Chapel Street church

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43 Small says that MacKelvie maintains that the date was 1763 but see MacKelvie, *Annals and Statistics*, p 388.


in Berwick, accepted a call to become the first minister, 48 and the induction took place on 9 July 1767 when James Baine, Thomas Scott and John Warden officiated. 49

Duns remained a centre of conservative Presbyterianism and in 1769, one of the elders in the new Relief church questioned the visit of their minister to assist James Murray in his Independent congregation at Newcastle at a communion season. When the Synod investigated the issue, however, they decided that Monteith 'had done nothing wrong.' 50 It appears that Monteith continued to face conservative Presbyterian opposition within the congregation and in December 1770 he left Duns to succeed Michael Boston in Alnwick. 51

Bellshill

The formation of the Relief church in Bellshill resulted from the disputed settlement of Rev. James Baillie into the parish living of Bothwell on 2 September 1763. Baillie had been the minister of Shotts since 7 November 1754 and when he had discovered that there was a strong opposition to his presentation, he agreed with the decision of the Presbytery of Hamilton 'to delay for a month, that something might happen that would contribute to peace.' 52 The Presbytery continued to hesitate in settling Baillie in his new charge until the General Assembly ordered it to proceed. 53

48 Monteith had been a licentiate of the Church of Scotland and opened a private academy in Berwick. A church was built for him in 1756 which was connected to the Church of Scotland. See Small, History of the United Presbyterian Church. Ibid. On 17 March 1767, the Presbytery of Relief had received a 'petition from Duns craving a moderation of a call.' Minutes of the Relief Presbytery 1767-1768, CH3/272/1, p 3.

49 Minutes of the Relief Presbytery, p 7.

50 Small, History of the United Presbyterian Church, p 401.

51 Ibid. We will look at the communion controversy within the Relief Synod later in this chapter. Monteith was invited back to Scotland by the Irvine Relief church in 1775 but he continued in Alnwick until he died in May 1786.

52 'Minutes of Hamilton Presbytery in the Case of the Rev. James Baillie' in John Wilson, Narrative of the Origin and Progress of the Relief Church, Bellshill, (Glasgow, 1847), p 15.

53 Only eight names were attached to the call. Baillie moved to Hamilton in 1766 and was appointed to a Divinity Chair in Glasgow University in 1775.
On the day of his induction, the Presbytery received the unusual request from members of the congregation that they might be given certificates to allow them to attend communion seasons in neighbouring parishes, with the promise that although they would attend the ordinary ministry of Mr Baillie, they would not receive communion from their new minister, until they formed an opinion on his ministry. It is hardly surprising that the Presbytery refused their petition and as a result they withdrew completely from the parish church.

In 1747, a Secession church began in the Presbytery of Hamilton in Cambusnethan and members travelled from a various parishes, including Bellshill. After some discussion, the dissatisfied members from Bothwell turned to the Presbytery of Relief for help, and Thomas Gillespie visited Bellshill on 9 December 1762 to preach and baptise. People came to hear Gillespie preach in Bellshill from the surrounding areas of Blantyre, Hamilton, Cambuslang, Strathaven, Cambusnethan, Dalzell, Shotts and Old Monkland. The congregation appointed fourteen of its number to begin preparations for the building of a church. They included seven tenant farmers, two weavers, two shoemakers, a mason and a merchant. Following the

54 Small, History of the United Presbyterian Church, Vol. 2, pp 211-212.
55 Gillespie returned to Bellshill in April 1763. See W. R. Thomson, The First Relief Church in the West, p 8. The Baptismal records of the church indicate that 6 baptisms took place in 1763, 6 in 1764, 54 in 1765, 52 in 1766, 36 in 1767, 54 in 1768, 41 in 1769, 35 in 1770, 46 in 1771 and 33 in 1772. Baptisms at Bellshill Relief Church, CH3/1037/9.
56 Wilson, Narrative, p 19. Struthers comments that 'prior to the erection of the Bellshill Relief church, a portion of the inhabitants of Old Monkland had separated themselves from the Rev. Mr. Park, whose case afterwards came before the General Assembly, which retained him in his congregation, though he confessed his wife had a child to him before their lawful and regular marriage. They had applied to the Relief Presbytery and received countenance, but on the erection of the Bellshill church, the Monkland people joined themselves to it.' History of the Relief Church, p 193.
57 The final name of Thomas Reston does not indicate his occupation. Wilson, p 21. The men came from Cleland, Woodhall, Carfin, Orbiston, Bothwell, Uddingston, Calder Bridge, Dalzell, Hamilton and Old Monkland.
completion of the church in August 1763, fifty male members signed the original bond on 17 October 1763 when they 'fully resolved to form ourselves into a body or society for having the worship of God celebrated to us by a minister of our own choosing.' Within two weeks, Alexander Simson was ordained as their first minister on 27 October 1763.  

Simson originally came from Paisley. After studying at Glasgow University, he was licensed to preach by the Presbytery of Paisley in July 1762. Prior to his induction as minister of the Relief church at Bellshill, Simson wrote to the Presbytery in Paisley in August 1763 to request an 'extract of his license, and certificates of his moral character.' The Presbytery refused his request and instead presented him with a libel, accusing him of 'schismatical and disorderly courses, in having, on the 27 October 1763, received ordination from Mr Thomas Gillespie, late minister of Carnock, now under sentence of deposition and others, assuming the name of Ministers of the Presbytery of Relief...and in having since administered the sacrament of baptism in the high church of Paisley, and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the College church of Glasgow.' Simson resisted the libel in the Church of Scotland courts, arguing that 'neither he, nor the Presbytery of Relief, taught any separating principles' and that he was only 'affording a temporary relief to a part of the parish of Bothwell' and that he was 'doing a service to the establishment.' 

58 The original church was built to seat between six and seven hundred but it was soon extended to accommodate 812.

59 Thomson First Relief Church, p 8.

60 Wilson, Narrative, p 23.

61 Scots Magazine, XXVI (May 1764), p 289.

62 Ibid. The minister of the High Church in Paisley was James Baine who joined the Relief Church in 1766 and the minister of the College Church in Glasgow was John Gillies one of the leaders of the Evangelical Awakening.

63 Ibid.
of the General Assembly in June 1764 eventually decided that he was 'incapable of receiving a presentation or call, as a licentiate of this church, to any parishes within the same.' On this particular occasion, the Assembly did not forbid ministers of the established Church to allow Simson to preach in their churches, although criticism was directed against James Baine of Paisley for allowing Simson to conduct baptisms in the High Church in Paisley.

**College Street, Edinburgh**

In August 1762, when John Hyndman, minister of Lady Yester's church in Edinburgh died, the Moderates within the Edinburgh presbytery believed that they had an opportunity to end the dominance which the Popular party exercised over the General Sessions of Edinburgh churches.

Following the Reformation, Edinburgh, along with other Scottish towns such as Glasgow and Paisley, had General Kirk Sessions which consisted of ministers, elders and deacons from the different churches of the area. There were nine parishes in Edinburgh, seven of which had two ministers and two which had one minister. Each parish appointed six elders and six deacons to sit on the General

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64 Ibid., p 290.

65 See Thomas Walker, *Observations on the Letters published by Rev. Mr James Baine* (Glasgow, 1767), p 31. Morren, *Annals*, p 292. Simson remained in Bellshill until June 1771 when he resigned to go to Duns. The issue which brought this about, relating to Alexander Pirie and the disputed settlement at Blairlogie will be discussed later in the chapter. Following ten years at Duns, he demitted his charge to go to Crispen Street in London. At this point the Relief Synod 'suspended him from preaching in their connection until he gave satisfaction.' Wilson, *Narrative*, p 29. In July 1786, following Thomas Monteith's death, he succeeded him at Alnwick and then moved to the Relief congregation in Pittenweem and after confessing that he had been in the wrong was inducted by the Presbytery of Dysart. He died in Pittenweem in 1793.

66 Edinburgh was Scotland's capital and a town of some 60,000 inhabitants at the start of George III's reign in 1760. It was the cultural and intellectual centre of Scotland.

Session which met to discuss issues relating to both church and community. Supporters of the Popular party dominated the General Session. The General Session consisted of 'wrights and weavers, tailors and tanners, barbers and brewers, saddlers and smiths, bakers and bonnet-makers that constituted the backbone of early modern European town life.' The Town Council, containing merchants and tradesmen, was the legal patron of all the churches in the town. It had become customary for the General Sessions to participate in the selection of new ministers in Edinburgh by proposing a 'leet' of three candidates to a joint meeting of the ministers, elders and members of the Town Council. William Robertson, and other Moderate ministers in Edinburgh, were members of the Session but expressed their concern that the General Session would exclude 'any sober moderate clergyman' from an Edinburgh church. The Edinburgh minister, John Jardine wrote to Gilbert Elliot, the Crown patronage manager, in March 1762 to remind him that 'the Election of Ministers in this Town, is on a popular Footing.' Within two days of Hyndman's death, Robertson indicated his desire to see John Drysdale, minister of Kirkliston, become minister of Lady Yester's.

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69 This custom had been formalised in an agreement between the General Sessions and the Council in 1720. See Sher, 'Moderates', p 181.

70 Although deacons were involved in choosing the short 'leet' of candidates they were not able to participate in the final vote. The final decision rested with the fifteen ministers, fifty-four elders and thirty-three members of the Town Council.


72 In a letter from Robertson to Gilbert Elliot on 29 March 1764 in National Library of Scotland, Minto Papers, EFP 9. Elliot became judge in 1742, entered Parliament in 1753, was associated with the beginnings of the Moderate party in May 1751, and in 1766 became third Baronet of Minto. See Dictionary of National Biography, VI, pp 671-2; R. Sher, Church and University, pp 50-51.

73 Letter to Elliot is dated 20 March 1762 in National Library Scotland, Minto Papers, EFP 15.

74 Drysdale was married to Robertson's first cousin Mary Adam. In a letter to Elliot, dated 12 August 1762, he expressed his concern that 'the Clergy should be moderate and able men....I am
Sessions intended to suggest the name of John Gibson of St. Ninians, a relative of one
the merchants in the city, who was a member of the Town Council. Robertson
expressed his concern that although he was 'a Candidate with very powerful
connections' he had 'no merit' and had the support of 'all the Wild party.' 75 By
September 1762, the supporters of Drysdale decided that they would secure
Drysdale's appointment by ignoring the customary rights of the General Sessions in
appointments to the Edinburgh churches and encouraging the Town Council to make
the decision by themselves. On 1 December 1762, George Drummond, the Lord
Provost, persuaded the Town Council to repeal an act of 1750 that required a delay of
three weeks before a motion to call a minister could be processed. Although those
who opposed the motion objected that the process was 'unjust and incompetent' 76
because due warning of the motion had not been given, 'this meeting was more
numerous than any had been for some weeks before, only four were absent' and when
the vote was taken 'of twenty-nine members present, twenty-three voted to process
Mr Drysdale, five voted against it, and one was non liquet.' 77

It took a further twenty months before the Council's controversial action led
to Drysdale being settled in Lady Yester's church. Opponents of the scheme used
every possible method to rescind the decision or to delay its implementation. 78 On
appeal, the Court of Session, the supreme civil court in Scotland, upheld the decision
of the Town Council 79 and eventually the House of Lords 80 as well as the General

confident that you may rely on the character I give of Drysdale.' National Library of Scotland, Minto
Papers, EFP 9.

75 Letter to Elliot dated 26 August 1762 in National Library of Scotland, Minto Papers, EFP 9.
77 Scots Magazine. XXVI, (May, 1764) pp 239-240.
78 There are three volumes of tracts associated with the case lodged in the Edinburgh Room of the
Edinburgh Public Library entitled 'Edinburgh Patronage Case'.
Assembly of 1764 ordered the Presbytery of Edinburgh to proceed with Drysdale's settlement which was conducted at Lady Yester's on 14 August 1764.  

Edinburgh at the time contained two Secession churches, an Antiburgher congregation where Adam Gib had ministered since 1741 and a Burgher church which had begun in 1747. Following Drysdale's settlement, Thomas Gillespie received a letter from William Dickson, a dyer in the Grassmarket, who represented a group who were determined to leave Lady Yester's church and asked for Gillespie's advice. In replying to Dickson, Gillespie warned him against the rigidity of the Secession congregations, and encouraged the unhappy parishioners of Lady Yester's to associate with the Presbytery of Relief. On 15 January 1765, a group held a meeting in Edinburgh when the first subscriptions were made towards 'having a minister settled among them upon the plan well known by that of the Presbytery of Relief.' In all, ninety-two subscribers contributed towards the cost of building a church, and Robert Gillespie, brother to Thomas, took a lead in contributing to the new church.

80 The appeal was affirmed by the House of Lords on 13 March, 1764. See Morren, Ibid., p 281.
81 As well as Sher's Drysdale Bustle article see 'A Dispute in setting a vacancy in Edinburgh' in Scots Magazine XXVI (May 1764), pp 239-248 which makes the final point that 'The ministers of Edinburgh were equally divided on the question; Drs Wishart, Cuming, Wallace, Jardine, Kay, Blair, and Robertson, being for the settlement; and Drs and Mess. Webster, Glen, Walker, Dick, Macqueen, Lundie, and Erskine, against it.' Ibid., p 248.
83 John Dickson, Centenary Memorial: History of South College Street Church, (Edinburgh, 1866), p 7 gives the date when the papers were issued as 13 January.
84 Among the names were five members of the General Kirk Sessions of Edinburgh: Robert Russel, elder from the Tolbooth church; Alexander Hay, deacon from the New church; William Lauder, deacon from the College church; William Gray, elder and William McConnachie, deacon from Old Greyfriars. Compare the 'Roll of the General Sessions of the City of Edinburgh, from January 1762 to January 1763' in Minutes of the General Kirk Sessions of Edinburgh, (Edinburgh, 1763) with the 'List of Contributors to the Kirk of Relief' in South College Relief Church Minutes, CH3/433/1, pp A-D. Thirteen of the subscribers were women and included Lady Francis Gardiner, Neatherbow and Lady Jean Nimmo. Other prominent people included Doctor Walter Gibson, Leith; William Hogg, Banker and Baillie Charles Sherriff.
and became one of the five managers of the church. 85 They indicated that 'without intending a separation from any faithful minister or serious Christian' 86 they would form a Relief congregation 'not as separatists from the Protestant Churches or the worthy Ministers and members of the established Church in our land with whom we can freely hold communion, being of one mind with us in the Faith, Worship and Institutes of Jesus Christ but we have taken this step to vindicate our Christian and most natural right to choose the Pastor who is to labour amongst us in holy things in opposition to the abuse of the power of Patronage.' 87 Eventually, after some initial opposition they purchased the bowling green near Potterow Port and the new building was opened on 12 January 1766.

The congregation decided that 'the Calling of Ministers to the said Meeting house shall for the first time be by the major part of all the said Contributors, and afterwards by the majority of the Communicants who shall ordinarily attend the Ministry therein.' 88 In October 1765, Robert Gillespie approached James Baine, 89 'one of the Ministers of Paisley, one well known for his Ministerial Abilities and particularly eminent for his constant struggle for Christian and ministerial liberty.' 90 Other members of the congregation indicated an interest in William Cruden of Logiepert 91 but eventually Baine received a unanimous call from the congregation.

85 The College Street congregation consisted of 5 managers/trustees, two advisers and 12 elders on 24 December 1765. South College Relief Church Minutes, f17r.

86 Ibid., f2r.

87 Ibid., f 12v.

88 Ibid., f 2r-2v. Dickson says that 'all those being entitled to a vote who had contributed to the amount of twenty shillings towards the erection of the church.' Centenary Memorial, p 7.

89 His name is sometimes given as 'Bayne' in South College Relief Church Minutes, f10r.

90 Ibid.

91 The congregation of Logie had indicated an interest in Cruden. See Morren, Annals. Vol. 2, p 171. Cruden would later become the minister of the Relief church in Glasgow in 1767.
When the congregation issued a call on 21 October 'the roll of the whole members, as well Women as Men, called out and the men by themselves and a number of women by proxies did and hereby do unanimously elect and choose the said Mr James Bayne to be their Minister.' 92 On 24 December 1765, Baine accepted the call and in February 1766, he was inducted as the minister of the new Relief congregation by Thomas Gillespie. 93

Baine was ordained to the ministry of Killearn parish church in 1732 and translated to the charge of first minister of the High Kirk in Paisley in 1756. 94 By the 1760s, Baine had become disenchanted with the Established Church. As early as 1752 he had 'zealously pleaded for Thomas Gillespie of Carnock in the Assembly', 95 and it came as no surprise to many people when he indicated his distaste of 'persecution in every form...and Mr Gillespie's deposition was of that kind.' 96 However it may be that other personal differences led Baine to leave the Church of Scotland when he received the invitation from the Relief church in Edinburgh. When

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92 The spelling varies between Baine and Bayne in records of the time. South College Relief Church Minutes, fl1r. This may well be one of the first instances of women being involved in the election of a minister in Scotland. See L. O. Mac Donald's article on 'Women in Presbyterian Churches' in Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Society, pp 885-6 where she refers to the Secession Church's decision in 1736 not to allow women to choose office-bearers within the church because that 'privilege was reserved for male heads of families'. Apparently from 1747 the 'Burghers allowed the female vote, while the Antiburghers did not.'

93 Dickson states that the date of Baine's induction was 13 February 1766. See Centenary Memorial, p 9. MacKelvie agrees with this date. Annals and Statistics, p 192. However Small, quoting from the Edinburgh Courant, maintains that the date was 16 February 1766. History of the United Presbyterian Church, p 434.

94 Baine had been involved in the awakening at Kilsyth. While he still in Killearn, he wrote to James Robe on 18 April 1751, indicating his sorrow 'that during the late revival, the subjects of religious concern in this place were but few; there being scarcely eight persons upon whom it was visible' although he went on to vindicate the work of revival against those [Seceders] who 'have no access to see this grace of God, or...who disbelieve it.' James Robe, Narratives of the Extraordinary Work of the Spirit of God, p 288.

95 Fasti, Vol. 3, p 171.

he had come to Paisley, a General Kirk Session administered the affairs of the High Kirk as well as those of the Lairgh Kirk Parish where John Witherspoon was the minister. Baine asked the Presbytery of Paisley to allow him to have a separate kirk session but they refused, an issue which Baine's opponent, Thomas Walker of Dundonald believed had more to do with Baine's own sense of position and prestige.98 Baine also distanced himself, not only from the Presbytery of Paisley but also from his colleague John Witherspoon, over the election of a clerk to the General Kirk Session in Paisley. Soon after the controversy surrounding Baine's request for a separate kirk session, magistrates of the town of Paisley claimed the right to nominate the new clerk. Baine disagreed with John Witherspoon, who took the side of the magistrates, and eventually the General Assembly and the Court of Session decided in favour of what Baine believed to be 'Erastian principles' which split the General Session and led twelve elders to resign their office.100 When Baine resigned his charge in Paisley he claimed that the major reason was that he was now 'advanced in life' and the 'high church' was 'commonly so crowded' and was 'unequally to my strength.'101 However, his new church in Edinburgh could seat up to 1,200 people and he continued to minister within the Relief Presbytery, taking an active part in its affairs, until his death in January 1790 at the age of eighty two.

97 The issue was settled in the General Assembly of 1758 where 'A sentence of the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, authorising the erecting of a second and separate session in the town of Paisley, reversed' Morren, Annals. Vol. 2, p 167.

98 Walker, Observations on the Letters published by the Rev. Mr James Baine. p 3 where he says 'There was a session, you must own. But it was not my own session, i.e. where I presided, the particular session of my congregation; it was that of the town, where others interfered.'

99 Memoirs. p 23

100 Ibid., p 7. In a later sermon, Baine expressed his concern that 'Magistracy' should be content with 'the secular interest alone' and although the 'civil government protects religion...it is not within its sphere to enact articles of faith, to appoint ordinances of worship.' Quoted in Dickson, Centenary Memorial. p 11.

101 Ibid.
Although Baine left the Church of Scotland with feelings of resentment, he retained his commitment to Presbyterianism. His letter of resignation clearly stated that 'this change of my condition, and charge I have accepted, makes no change in my creed or Christian belief; none in my principles of Christian and ministerial communion; nay, none in my cordial regard to the constitution and interests of the Church of Scotland....at the same time, I abhor...that abuse of Church power of late, which to me appears...destructive of the ends of our office as ministers of Christ.' Baine denied that the 'Presbytery of Relief have any separating principles' because they 'dare not decline communion with any who have the knowledge, the visible uncorrupted profession of real Christianity.'

Glasgow

In the 1760s the city of Glasgow, under half the size of Edinburgh, was a 'town of considerable vitality and growth' and by the turn of the century would be slightly larger than Edinburgh. The Popular party had exceptional influence in Glasgow. The results of the evangelical awakening and the preaching of George

102 Ibid., p 8.

103 Ibid., p 12. Reference has already been made to the way in which Baine invited James Simson to preach in Paisley. See Walker, Observations on the Letters published by the Rev. Mr James Baine, p 31. John Dickson speaks of how Baine 'after his admission to the chapel in College Street...conducted his new congregation to the neighbouring church of Old Greyfriars, in order to partake of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.' Dickson, Centenary Memorial, p 10. Baine's resignation came before the Assembly in 1766, three days before the Debate on the Schism Overture.


105 According to Landsman, Glasgow was 'most evangelical' and 'predominantly Popular at all levels.' Ibid. Sher speaks of 'Glasgow and the West' as constituting 'Scotland's centre of Presbyterian piety.' Richard B. Sher, 'Commerce, religion and the enlightenment in eighteenth-century Glasgow' in Glasgow Vol. 1 : Beginnings to 1830, ed. T. M. Devine and Gordon Jackson (Manchester, 1995), p 317.
Whitefield continued to affect the piety of the city. By the 1790s, the Statistical Account spoke of a city which possessed eight established churches, three Chapels of Ease, two Burgher and one Antiburgher congregations, two Relief churches and at least six other Protestant congregations of Independents, Glassites, Methodists and Baptists. 106

In 1756 the congregation of the Wynd Church erected a new building which was renamed as St Andrew's. By 1761, to accommodate the growth of population on the west side of the city, the Presbytery restored the old Wynd Church, which became the West Parish Church. Since 1721, when vacancies occurred within the Church of Scotland, the Town Council, the legal patron, had consistently followed a 'model' for appointing a new minister. The kirk session of the vacant congregation normally suggested a candidate to the General Sessions, which in turn brought a final recommendation to a joint meeting of the General Sessions and the Town Council. In September 1754, when John MacLaurin, minister of the Ramshorn Church died, the kirk session suggested John Erskine, minister of Culross. The Town Council indicated that they would not follow the normal method of presentation. Eventually, following Erskine's refusal to accept a call to the city, both parties agreed to call Robert Findlay, an evangelical from Paisley, acceptable to both sides. 107 In 1762 however, the Town Council, encouraged by Moderates within the Church of Scotland, decided to flex its muscles and, abandoning previous practice, presented George Bannatyne, a Moderate minister from Craigie, in the Presbytery of Ayr, 108 an action which led to 'a pamphlet war that lasted nearly two years.' 109 In 1763, the

108 He is described as being 'a man of much wit, humour, and good sense' in Fasti, Ibid., p 443.
Synod of Glasgow and Ayr confirmed that magistrates of the city were the exclusive patrons of vacant churches, and the General Assembly ordered Bannatyne's induction to take place in October 1764.

The historian, Ned Landsman has suggested that the Town Council was attempting 'to provide a foothold for Moderates in a city that was predominantly Popular at all levels.' Opposition to the Council's proposal came, not only from the General Sessions, but also from concerned citizens such as David Dale, a textile merchant who later became a successful businessman and philanthropist, and father-in-law of the socialist, Robert Owen. Although the plans to oppose Bannatyne's induction did not succeed in 1764, the combination of Glasgow's strong evangelical community of businessmen and clergy, led to a change of leadership within the Town Council. At the time of the next vacancy in 1773, Thomas Randall, a well-known evangelical clergyman, received a call to the East Parish church.

The initial response of Bannatyne's settlement was the resignation of the entire kirk session in the Wynd church and in May 1766 the General Assembly 'appointed the Presbytery of Glasgow to authorise Mr Bannatyne, with his brethren the ministers of the city of Glasgow...to agree upon a nomination of proper persons to be members of session for the new erected church of Glasgow, called The Wynd Church.' The majority of people who left the Wynd church formed the first Relief.

110 Ibid., p 215.
111 Landsman suggests that it was at this time that Dale led a withdrawal from the Wynd Church during the dispute over the Model and established a new meeting house of their own called the 'Chapel of the Scotch Presbyterian Society' Ibid., p 223. However it appears that Dale initially joined the Relief congregation but then withdrew as a result of a disagreement with William Cruden. See Harry Escott, A History of Scottish Congregationalism. (Glasgow, 1960), p 26. W. F. Storrar, 'David Dale' in Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology, p 232.
112 Andrew Cochrane, who, as Lord Provost began this controversy was succeeded by evangelicals like Archibald Ingram and Arthur Connell, business partners.
113 Morren made the mistake of referring to the minister as Ballantyne, See Annals, Vol. 2, p 360.
Church in Glasgow, 114 and in August 1766 a new church building opened in Cannon Street with 1,800 seats.115

Initially the congregation approached Thomas Boston in Jedburgh, but he declined the invitation because he was not in good health. Thomas Gillespie then encouraged them to call Thomas Monteith from Berwick. Some members of the congregation, on the other hand, made a fresh approach to Thomas Boston, suggesting that his son Michael could be appointed as an assistant minister and successor. Thomas Boston agreed to this proposal and came to Glasgow to preach, but the congregation then voted against issuing a call to him. 116 Thomas Gillespie and James Baine both believed that Boston had made a mistake in indicating his willingness to come to Glasgow and when a minority within the congregation asked the Presbytery to 'moderate' in a call to Boston in January 1767, James Baine declined to come to Glasgow to give his support to Boston. This led to a misunderstanding between Boston and Baine which may not have been healed when Boston died in February 1767. It appeared to many opponents of the Relief Church that the Glasgow congregation would be irreparably divided. However by June 1767 they called and inducted William Cruden from Logiepert as their first minister. 117

114 A meeting took place in 1765 to determine whether they should apply to the Relief Presbytery to try to become a Chapel of Ease. Only 'seven or eight' voted for the latter alternative. Their initial approach to the Presbytery was delayed but 'a fresh application through Mr. Gillespie was made in June, when it was formally received.' See Struthers, History of the Relief Church, p 221.

115 James Baine preached at the opening. See Struthers, History of the Relief Church, p 221.

116 The meeting on 28 October 1766 was 112 to 89.

117 In 1774, Cruden left the Relief Church over the issue of open communion. He went to London to become minister of Crown Court Church, and advised his congregation to return to the Church of Scotland. The majority of the congregation accepted his advice and a Chapel of Ease was built in Albion Street in 1774. See Fasti, Vol. 3, p 427 Other members of the Relief congregation built another church in Dovehill which opened in 1776. See J. Logan Aikman, Historical Notices of the United Presbyterian Congregations in Glasgow, (Glasgow, 1875), p 24. We will examine the communion dispute later in this chapter.
Campbeltown

In 1766, Campbeltown had two Church of Scotland congregations which served the Gaelic and English speaking communities. The English speaking congregation dated from the 1640s when workers from the Lowlands came to Campbeltown to work for the Duke of Argyll. Eventually 'a minister was appointed to preach to them in an old thatched house in Campbeltown, which house was kept in repair at the congregation's expense and the stipend also was paid by them.' When their first minister died 'they were allowed to choose a Minister for themselves.' In 1696, however, the congregation applied to receive money to pay the minister's stipend. They received money from funds which had previously been paid to the Bishop of Argyll. In 1706, the congregation received additional money from the Synod of Argyll to help them rebuild their church. When their minister, James Boes, died in 1749 the congregation discovered that they had lost the right to nominate his successor and the Duke of Argyll, presented John McAlpine 'without in the least consulting the congregation,' who opposed McAlpine's settlement. As a result of their resistance, several members of the congregation were 'turned out of their farms.' In 1762, when another vacancy occurred in the parish living, the

118 Minutes of the Relief Church in Campbeltown, CH3/1421/1, p1. Struthers suggests that when Argyll identified himself with the Covenanters in the Glasgow Assembly of 1638, many Covenanters from Ayrshire joined him. History of the Relief Church, p 210.

119 Minutes, Ibid., p 2.

120 Ibid.

121 Boes took a keen interest in the awakening of 1742 and contributed to the 'Glasgow Weekly History'. Weekly History, paper 51. He opposed the rigid attitude of the Seceders towards the revival and supported the work of men like James Robe. See Struthers, History of the Relief Church, p 212.

122 Struthers, History of the Relief Church, Ibid., p 213. Although there does not appear to have been any secession from the church at this time, McAlpine did not endear himself to the congregation in 1754 when he supported as Act passed by the Synod of Argyll which prevented sermons being preached on the Saturday before and the Monday following any communion season. See Morren, Annals, Vol. 2, pp 29-80, 108-111, 256-257. Over the next three years, only seventeen members of the congregation received communion in the parish church at Campbeltown. Because he was opposed in this measure by the kirk session he managed to get the lowland and the highland
congregation, in two petitions which did not receive a response, asked the Duke of Argyll not to 'thrust a man upon them contrary to their inclination.' The presentation of George Robertson received the approval of the General Assembly, after appeal, and after his settlement, the congregation 'in one body left their seats and walked out of the Establishment.'

At the beginning of 1766, the Campbeltown congregation subscribed £1,451.18s towards the purchase of a building. They appointed thirteen Managers to oversee the building and each subscriber promised to rent a certain number of pews on a yearly basis to pay the Minister's stipend and expenses towards a Precentor and a Beadle. The list of subscribers indicates a wide distribution of social orders and occupations within the congregation:

congregations combined into a collegiate charge which meant he was able to use elders from the highland congregation to assist him at communion seasons. Eventually, McAlpine agreed to provide a sermon on the Saturday before the communion Sunday and the congregation attended the celebration once again. McAlpine was then disciplined by the Synod, an action which was overturned in the Assembly of 1762. However McAlpine died while he was attending the Assembly.

123 Struthers, History of the Relief Church, p 215.
124 Robertson came to Campbeltown as an assistant to the schoolmaster. After he was licensed to preach, he was appointed as the assistant to Mr Stewart, the minister of the highland congregation, and married his daughter. A full account of the dispute can be found in Struthers History of the Relief Church, pp 215-216 and James Boyd, Memorial Volume of the Centenary Services of the United Presbyterian Church, Campbeltown. (Campbeltown, 1868).
125 Struthers, History of the Relief Church, p 216.
126 The congregation faced opposition in purchasing a site to build a meeting house, as well being hindered from obtaining stones, sand and timber. Eventually a building which seated 1500 worshippers was completed.
127 In the initial subscription 1,067 seats were rented. Provision was made for pew to accommodate the Minister's family, the Managers and 'one for travelling strangers in the event of our receiving assistance from other parts for the Building of the House.' Minutes, op cit., p 29.
Merchants

33 This number included three previous Baillies of the town and William Findlay who had served as Provost.

Surgeon 1
Schoolmaster 3
Town Officer 1
Writer 1
Change keeper 1
Tailor 1
Maltster 14
Smith 5
Copersmith 2
Cooper 18
Wheelwright 4
Wright 4
Mason 1
Tenant Farmers 56
Gardener 1
Shipmaster 23
Sailor 11
Boatsman 1
Sail maker 1
Ship Carpenter 1
Carrier 5
Shoemaker 5
Baker 1
Clothier 1
The list contained the names of only three women, one of them being the wife of the late Provost.  

The congregation in Campbeltown initially approached the Antiburgher Presbytery in Glasgow on 27 February 1766 but eventually entered the Relief Church on 17 March 1767 and on 16 July, James Baine, William Cruden and Thomas Scott travelled to Campbeltown to induct James Pinkerton, a licentiate of the Church of Scotland, as their first minister. Pinkerton ordained ten elders in 1768 and a further five in 1771.  

Dalkeith

In January 1737, a Praying Society in the village of Easthouses, near to Dalkeith, indicated their support for the Secession movement and in 1741, two elders and thirty other members from the parish church in Dalkeith, acceded to the Associate Presbytery. In 1747 most of the congregation adhered to the Burghers, although a small minority joined the Antiburgher Presbytery, and they built a separate church in 1749. MacKelvie suggests that the Relief congregation originated as a result of an unpopular settlement in Dalkeith and Cockpen.  

128 In the First Statistical Account the Relief Church at Campbeltown was numbered at 2,000. Vol. VIII, p 50.

129 James Ryburn, Tenant; Robert McNair, Tenant; Robert Dunlop, Tenant; Robert Campbell, Tenant; Archibald Galbraith, tenant; Provost Findlay, Merchant; Baillie Fleming, Merchant; Baillie Watson, Merchant; William Ferguson, Smith and James Lamb, Weaver were ordained in 1768. William McMurchy, Tenant; Robert Fulton, tenant; John Porter, Tenant; Francis Wright, Wright and John Langwell a Wheelwright were ordained in 1771. See Boyd, Memorial Volume, p 63 and Minutes, 29-37.

130 MacKelvie, Annals and Statistics, p 215. In his History of the United Presbyterian Church, Small says that although ‘there was a minister ordained to Dalkeith parish in June 1765...it is doubtful whether this led in any way to the origin of the Relief congregation.’ p 560.
people met, sometime in 1768, to build a church and the Relief Presbytery sent Thomas Bell, minister of Jedburgh, to induct Robert Hutchison, a probationer of the Church of Scotland, as their first minister in 1770.

**Anderson Church, Glasgow**

The village of Anderson had its origins in 1725, when James Anderson, who owned the estate of Stobcross near Glasgow, decided to set aside part of his land for cottages. In 1735, Anderson sold his estate to John Orr of Barrowfield, who built cottages and made provision for the introduction of hand loom weaving in the area. By 1794 Anderson had a population of 3,900 and supported industries such as weaving, bleaching, dyeing and printing, as well as pottery which began in 1751, and a brewery in 1762.

James Monteith, a wealthy weaver and an elder in the Antiburgher congregation in Glasgow, expressed his concern, along with two other elders and a deacon, at the continuing schism within the Secession movement, between the Burgher and Antiburgher Synods. In 1766, John Bryce, a well known printer of Secession literature, printed an anonymous pamphlet entitled *Unity and Peace*.

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131 [Memorial of the Centenary Services held by the West United Presbyterian Congregation, Dalkeith, (Edinburgh, 1869), p 12.](#)

132 Small refers to a manuscript sermon of Bell which was preached on this occasion and was dated 25 May 1770. *History of the United Presbyterian Church*, p 560.

133 Anderson eventually became a burgh with its own officials and then was incorporated into the city of Glasgow in 1846. See Robert J. Drummond, 'Gavin Struthers, the Historian of the Relief Church' in *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, VII, (1941), p 236. See J. Aikman, *Centenary Services*, p 3. Gavin Struthers makes the comment that 'A manufacturer with a weaving shop of six or eight looms was very common.' G. Struthers, *An Address to the Anderson Relief Congregation*, (Glasgow, 1840), p 4.

134 MacKelvie and Small gave two different accounts of the reasons why Monteith was disciplined by the Antiburgher congregation. It seems plausible that both accounts are valid and together brought about the beginning of the Relief congregation in Anderson. See *Annals and Statistics*, p 298 and *History of the United Presbyterian Church*, pp 36-37.
Recommended. The document disagreed with the sentences of excommunication which sincere Christians, like Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine, had received from the Antiburghers in 1747. It pleaded for a re-union of the two branches of the Secession. It also argued that church members should not be disciplined if they occasionally attended another church. Monteith admitted being associated with the Unity and Peace pamphlet and also confessed that one Sunday morning, during a heavy shower of rain, he sheltered in the Tron church and remained there during the service. 135 After a lengthy process, on 22 November 1768, Monteith was 'laid aside from the eldership.' 136 This process of Church discipline led to the establishment of another Relief congregation in the vicinity of Glasgow.

Monteith received support from John Ewing, an elder in the Albion Street Relief Church, as well as the minister of the congregation, William Cruden. 137 The author of the Letter to the Reverend Mr Cruden concerning the Relief Meeting at Anderson, criticised Cruden for encouraging a further Relief congregation when the issue of patronage was absent. 138 He argued that 'it is the professed and fundamental principle of our society [Relief Church], only to give relief to oppressed parishes, who have ministers thrust in upon them against their inclination. And herein we differ from all other sects, that we cannot propagate ourselves...without acting contrary to our

135 In doing this he was following the advice suggested in the pamphlet Unity and Peace. Small suggests that this incident is not plausible although it is found in MacKelvie's Annals and Statistics and Robert Drummond says that although 'Small...has done his best to discredit this tradition, the evidence for its truth is, I fear too strong for him.' Gavin Struthers' article, pp 236-7. Aikman speaks of how 'The deed of Session found its way into the columns of the newspapers, and called forth sharp writing on both sides.' Centenary Services, p 4.

136 Small, History of the United Presbyterian Church, p 36.

137 Evidence for Cruden's support for the new congregation comes from A Letter to the Reverend Mr Cruden concerning the Relief Meeting at Anderson, (Glasgow, 1770) where the writer accused Cruden of 'the hand which you have in promoting the Relief Meeting at Anderson.' p 3.

138 The Letter appears to have been written by someone who was either within the Relief movement or was sympathetic towards its aims. Ibid.
original design. 139 The pamphlet suggested that the Anderson congregation should apply to the Established Church to become a 'Chapel of Ease,' 140 which could appoint its own minister to 'dispense both word and sacraments in communion with' the Church of Scotland. 141 The author says that 'there are now a considerable number of Chapels of Ease in this country, where the people have the sole privilege of electing' 142 although the 'first to be given an official constitution by the General Assembly was that of Dunfermline in 1779' and in 1798, the General Assembly 'passed an Act which permitted chapels to be erected only with the prior consent of that court, thus removing the initiative from Presbyteries.' 143 The minister of a Chapel of Ease did not have the same status as a parish minister, although he sat on the same kirk session 'as an elder.' 144 He believed that such an action would be consistent with 'the generous principles which we profess.' 145

Monteith used his own wealth to build a new church, which opened on 18 November 1769 when Cruden preached. The following day, Joseph Neil, formerly minister of an Independent congregation at Keighley in Yorkshire was inducted as

139 Ibid., p 4.
140 Ibid., p 3.
141 Ibid. He spoke warmly of 'A Chapel of Ease' as being 'nothing but a place of worship, built at the expense, and for the convenience of the people; even the minister who officiates in it, is no more than an ordained assistant to the minister of the parish, and has no charge but what is allotted by him, or the presbytery of the bounds; and when a vacancy happens, if the people chose to withdraw, the whole scheme is necessarily at an end; for it depends entirely upon their will and pleasure.' Ibid., pp 8-9.
142 Ibid., p 9. Struthers says that 'this was then a new scheme' in Scotland. See G. Struthers, An Address, p 5.
143 G. F. C. Jenkins, 'Chapels of Ease' in Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology, p 162.
144 Letter, p 11.
145 Ibid.
their first minister, and Alexander Simson from Bellshill, preached the sermon. The first kirk session consisted of the minister, together with James Monteith and John Ewing. On 1 January 1771, seven further elders were ordained and in 1773, four more elders were added. Struthers maintained that Neil 'was strictly Calvinistic in his theological opinions...but...he was no bigot' and defended the open communion policy of the Relief Church. 148

Kilsyth

On 25 June 1767, after a lengthy and violent process, the Presbytery of Glasgow ordained Thomas Clark at Eaglesham. The only parish minister from the Presbytery who attended the settlement was John Telfer of Kilsyth. The Relief Church had 'four or five vacancies' at this time. Letter, p 5. The church was built to seat 1,140 people. Aikman, Centenary Services, p 10; MacKelvie, Annals and Statistics, p 298; Small, History of the United Presbyterian Church, p 36. Neil had been ordained at Keighley in 1756. Aikman suggests he was connected to Doddridge in his earlier days. Centenary Services. Ibid.

146 The elders were 'all...nominated by the congregation.' Struthers, An Address, p 9. These were Robert Miller, Robert McIndoe, David McInquham, George Park, James Somerville, John Stobo and James Strang. The elders ordained in 1773 were James Gibb, James Kench, Alexander Lindsay and William Gillespie. Gillespie was another wealthy businessman who became involved in politics, supporting the early days of the French Revolution as well as attacking the slave trade. He built the village of Woodside and maintained a school and a mission church. He later became involved in funding a mission to send Gaelic preachers to the Highlands. He died in 1807. See The Regality Club, Third Series, (Glasgow 1899), p 8. John Stobo built the first house in Anderson. See Aikman, Centenary Services, p 51.

147 Struthers, An Address, pp 10-11. Neil preached a sermon on this subject in which he argued that if men such as the great Dr. Owen, Goodwin...and the late Dr. Watts, Doddridge...should offer to join with us in the ordinances of the gospel, if we should reject them because their views of church government are not the same with ours...we might rightly expect a reprimand from our final judge.' Ibid., pp 13-14.

148 Small and MacKelvie both agree with this date although Fasti gives the date as 25 June 1767. Fasti, Vol. 3, p 387.

149 'The settlement had been delayed by a furious mob preventing the entrance of the Presbytery to the church and threatening death to the ministers and presentee they should proceed. A reference of the case was made by the Presbytery to the General Assembly, 6 May 1766, which fixed the day of settlement and censured the Presbytery for its delay.' Fasti, Ibid.

150 As well as Telfer, other members of the Presbytery present included the Principal of Glasgow University, another theological professor and one elder. Small, History of the United Presbyterian Church, pp 684-5.
participation of their minister in the induction service, offended the congregation in Kilsyth and on 2 March 1768 they approached the Relief Presbytery to supply a sermon for Kilsyth and its neighbourhood. The congregation began to build their own church in 1768 and it opened with accommodation for 559 people. In 1772, the Presbytery ordained James Grahame as the first minister. Grahame came from Colinsburgh but by February 1775 the church could no longer afford to pay his stipend and he resigned his charge in May 1775. In the 1790s, the First Statistical Account indicated that 270 people within the parish attended a Secession church in the area and 207 attended the Relief church.

Cupar

MacKelvie believed that the Relief congregation 'originated in the unpopularity of the person ordained' as the minister of the parish', although the most recent settlement took place in 1758. Whatever the initial cause of dissatisfaction, they approached the Relief Presbytery for help and in 1769 a

152 Small, History of the United Presbyterian Church. Ibid., p 685.

153 Small cites the Evening Courant of 22 October 1768 which speaks of 'some masons employed in building a church of Relief' in Kilsyth where an accident occurred. History of the United Presbyterian Church, p 685.

154 MacKelvie suggests that he intended to go to America but 'was prevented from carrying this intention into execution by the stringent laws anent emigrants, enacted on the occasion of the American Independence.' Annals and Statistics, p 281. He preached in Relief congregations and acted for a time as chaplain of Edinburgh Castle, eventually becoming a teacher in Bo'ness, 'but got into trouble, and was banished.' See Small, History of the United Presbyterian Church, p 685.

155 There was no Secession church in Kilsyth itself although there were Burgher and Antiburgher congregations in Falkirk, Dennyloanhead, and Cumbernauld. There were also 9 Reformed Presbyterians, 1 Glassite and some 2,000 who were attached to the Established Church. Statistical Account, Vol. IX, p 456.

156 MacKelvie, Annals and Statistics, p 134

157 MacKelvie is incorrect in speaking of the supply coming from the 'Relief Presbytery of Dysart about 1770' because the Presbytery of Relief did not split into two until 1772 and the Presbytery of Dysart was formed in 1776. See Annals and Statistics, Ibid., p 134.
building opened for worship. There was a Burgher congregation at neighbouring Rathillet and an Antiburgher congregation at nearby Ceres, but the congregation joined the Relief Church. They chose Laurence Bonnar from Auchtermuchty to be their first minister. Bonnar had attended the Burgher Divinity Hall and had been called as a witness against Alexander Pirie when the latter was tried for heresy. Bonnar did not proceed with trials for licence in the Burgher Presbytery and by 1772 the Relief Presbytery ordained him at Cupar.

**Falkirk**

On 26 October 1767, the meeting of the Relief Presbytery in Dunfermline received a petition from 'the Relief Society at Falkirk (as they call themselves). Robert Burns, merchant in Falkirk, and John Muirhead, tenant from Murmills, presented it on behalf of the congregation. The town of Falkirk had one parish

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158 Initially 21 members subscribed £5 each towards the expense. See Small, *History of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 1, p 180. *Statistical Account*, Vol. X, p 208. In 1793 the population of the town of Cupar was 3,315 and the comment was made that 'The number of members in the parish, belonging to this congregation [Relief], cannot easily be ascertained, as they are in a state of constant fluctuation.

159 Rathillet was five miles north-east of Cupar. The Burgher congregation was formed in 1761.

160 Ceres was 3 miles south-east of Cupar. It had an Antiburgher congregation formed in 1740

161 In 1793 the minister of the Church of Scotland in Cupar spoke of how 'the sectaries in Cupar live on good terms with their neighbours, the members of the Established Church....that gloominess of aspect, that bitterness of spirit, and that fierceness of zeal, which in former times marked and disgraced the different sects, are, at the present day, happily unknown.' *Statistical Account*, p 208.

162 See later notes relating to Pirie and Blair Logie.

163 Small mentions that the first communion token which bear his name are dated 1772. *History of the United Presbyterian Church*, p 181. Bonnar later resigned his charge in 1782 and he began to attend the Strathmiglo parish church in Fife. The *Scots Magazine* in 1824 reported that '25 January 1824. Died at his house, Gateside, Laurence Bonnar of Ballingray, Fifeshire.'

164 *Minutes of the Relief Presbytery* 1767-1768, CH3/272/1, p 13.

165 *Falkirk Relief Minutes of Session*, CH3/459/1, f 2r.
church, as well as one Burgher and one Antiburgher congregation. The timing of the petition suggests that the 'the Relief Society at Falkirk' did not originate because of any one local issue relating to patronage. The Schism debate of 1766, the controversy surrounding the 'Drysdaile Bustle' and the Glasgow Wynd church, contributed to a general feeling of dissatisfaction with the enforcement of patronage. When the Falkirk society presented their petition they spoke of the 'Antichristian Yoke of Patronage' which 'is now become so universal and intolerable in this Land; our civil Judges, Magistrates, and Councils of Burghs, taking upon them...that grievous Yoke; and these Measures approved of by our Church-judicatories; and a redress of Grievances of this Nature always refused by them.'

A church building, capable of seating one thousand people, was opened in 1768 in Falkirk 'for the public Good, and for those of lower, as well as those of better circumstances.' In order to encourage attendance from all social orders, the pew rentals were set at different levels. The original subscribers decided that they would elect the first minister, although their procedure was unusual. They divided 'themselves into four equal Leets; and each Leet shall, in fourteen Days after that, agree upon, and nominate a worthy Candidate; and fourteen days after that, all the Subscribers shall convene, when the four Candidates being presented, the Subscribers shall proceed to an orderly voting, and elect one of the four to be Minister: And Application shall be made to the Presbytery of Relief to settle him with all convenient

166 In the 1790s, the First Statistical Account gives the population of the parish of Falkirk as 8,020 with 3,892 of these living in the town itself. Vol. IX, p 291.

167 Proposals for building a Meeting, or Church of Relief, by Subscription, in the Town of Falkirk, inserted in Falkirk Relief Minutes.

168 Ibid.

169 'The best for Two hundred and fifty Seats, is to be Two Shillings and Sixpence each...Two hundred and fifty at Two Shillings each...Two hundred and fifty at One Shilling and Sixpence each...Two hundred and fifty at One Shilling each.' Ibid.
Speed.' 170 In the event, it took two years before Michael Boston, son of Thomas Boston from Jedburgh, became the first Relief minister of Falkirk in November 1770. Boston had been licensed to preach the gospel in Scotland in 1763 but had moved to an Independent congregation in Alnwick in October 1765. 171 In January 1771 a list of sixty-five original members of the congregation indicates that many of them had moved from different areas in Scotland, a few of which possessed Relief congregations. 172 The congregation consisted of thirty-three men and thirty-two women. Initially the kirk session comprised the minister and two elders, John Taylor and William Anderson, who had previously served as elders of the established Church in the Falkirk and Polmont parishes. By March 1771, the congregation nominated seven names from various districts to serve as elders. 173 Further members joined the church from Linlithgow, Alnwick, Glamorgan, Caron, St Ninians, Polmont, Torphichen, and Bathgate. 174

Largo

Largo is some three miles to the west of Colinsburgh. Several people from Largo formed part of the original congregation of the Colinsburgh Relief church which was established in 1761. 175 In 1768, Robert Ferrier, minister of Largo parish

170 Ibid.

171 Centenary Memorial of the United Presbyterian Church, Falkirk, (Falkirk, 1869), p 42. The comment is made that 'His ministry was so successful, his congregation grew so large, that his chapel was taken down and rebuilt on a larger scale in 1768.' Ibid.

172 Thomas Muirhead, along with eleven others, had moved from Glasgow, at least one of whom, Katherine Hill was a member of Albion Street Relief church, Falkirk Relief Minutes, pp 1-5. Other areas represented were Linlithgow, Perth, Old Deer, Crieff, Bathgate, Boness and Larbert as well as the nearer locality of Falkirk, Polmont, Denny and St Ninians.

173 David Rule, John Sinclair and Robert Grossart from Falkirk; William Anderson Jnr. from Bothikeener, James Kirkwood from Denny; Alexander Smith from Airth and Thomas Muirhead from Murmills.

174 Falkirk Relief Minutes, p 7.

175 Minutes of the Colinsburgh Relief Church, CH3/60/1, pp 8-16.
church, and James Smith, minister of nearby Newburn parish church, resigned their charges and became joint pastors of a newly formed Independent congregation in the village of Balchrystie. Influenced by the writings of John Glas, they rejected the Presbyterian form of Church government, and advocated a plurality of pastors, weekly communion, and a congregational policy of Church government and discipline. They opposed the exercise of patronage which deprived 'the much greater number of church members of a right equally belonging to them.' When the patron of the Largo parish presented David Burn, minister of Moonzie, to the Largo vacancy, many members of the Largo congregation responded by leaving the Church of Scotland, not in order to join Ferrier and Smith in their Independent congregation, but rather to form another Relief congregation.


177 See article by D. B. Murray on 'John Glas' in Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology, p 364.

178 McGavin says that they believed that 'every single congregation...is independent of any other congregation...complete in themselves.' Historical Sketches, p ii.

179 The Case of James Smith. Ibid., pp 17-18. They also rejected the arguments of some members of the Popular party who were proposing that 'the majority of heads of families' should elect a pastor. They saw this as 'no other than attempting to establish a patronage somewhat extended.' Ibid. Following the split in the Relief congregation in Glasgow, when David Dale left to form an Independent congregation in Grey Friars Wynd, a 'union was formed betwixt the church at Balchrystie and them.' Ferrier moved to Glasgow to become a colleague to David Dale and James Simpson, a weaver in Largo became Smith's colleague. McGavin, Historical Sketches, p vi. In 1770, Ferrier disagreed with Dale over whether the Lord's Prayer should be said each Lord's Day, whether a vocal 'amen' should be given by the brethren and whether the congregation should stand to sing as well as to pray. Ibid. Ferrier joined the Glassite church in Glasgow for a short time. See Murray, 'John Glas'.


181 Although they did not join with their former minister, the issue of patronage which he protested against would have undoubtedly influenced their actions.
The issues of the Relief Church and the ministry of Thomas Gillespie were once again discussed at the General Assembly in May 1770, and the discussions on this occasion may well have influenced the decision of people from Largo and elsewhere who were considering leaving the Established Church.

As early as 1766, the Synod of Glasgow and Ayr attempted to bring an overture before the Assembly to have the sentence of deposition imposed on Gillespie in 1752, removed. They argued that the Assembly had not deposed Thomas Boston Jnr. and James Baine, although they had been 'intercommuned,' that is, they could not participate in any Church of Scotland service. 182 In 1765 the sentences imposed on David Hunter, Alexander Daling and John Spence, who 'for twelve years have lain under a suspension from sitting in a judicative capacity in presbyteries, synods or general assemblies' because of their dissent from the Inverkeithing settlement were restored 'to their former judicative capacity.' 183 In 1739 a similar overture, presented by the Synod of Angus and Mearns on behalf of John Glas, had removed a sentence of deposition 'and restored him to the character of a minister of the gospel of Christ.' 184 In 1769, because the Assembly delayed any consideration of the overture, a further request asked that 'Mr Gillespie might be put upon the same footing with other ministers who are now joined in communion with him, and call themselves the Presbytery of Relief. They are suffered by the Assembly's decision, to retain the character of ministers of the gospel of Christ, but are rendered incapable of enjoying any benefice in the establishment.' 185 The Assembly continued to delay taking a

182 Struthers, History of the Relief Church, p 228. They were not in a position of receiving a call to a vacant congregation in the Church of Scotland and other ministers were forbidden to allow them to preach or dispense the sacraments in their parish.

183 Scots Magazine, XXVII. (1765), p 278.

184 Morren, Annals, Vol. 1, p 10. Glas was not fully restored because he did not renounce his Independent principles. This latter qualification would not be relevant in Gillespie's case.

185 Thomas Walker, An Alarm to the Church of Scotland, (Edinburgh, 1770), p 55.
decision. 186 Eventually, when the overtures came before the 1770 Assembly, 'an overwhelming majority voted that he should still be considered a deposed minister.' 187 This 'overwhelming majority' must have contained many members of the Popular party who did not feel able to vote to restore him to the ministry, even if they were unhappy about the events surrounding the Inverkeithing decision in 1752. Gillespie's behaviour in not asking to be restored, in establishing the Relief Church and encouraging other congregations to join the Relief Synod, made it difficult for members of the Popular party to indicate their support for his actions.

The question still remains as to why the people of Largo did not join the nearby Relief congregation in Colinsburgh? Thomas Colier, Relief minister of Colinsburgh, died in July 1769 and in March 1770 a controversy developed over the election of James Cowan to be the next minister. 188 Cowan rejected the Relief principle of free communion and this, along with the fact that the church building in Colinsburgh 'was often inconveniently crowded,' 189 may explain why the congregation at Largo approached the Relief Presbytery for permission to establish a new Relief church on 27 February 1771. 190 The congregation called Robert Paterson from Cupar as their first minister and the induction service took place on 18 March.

186 The voting to delay was 65 to 61. Scots Magazine, XXXI (May 1769), p 278

187 Struthers, History of the Relief Church, p 228.

188 Later in this chapter we will investigate this and other controversies within the Relief Church. Various pamphlets appeared which related to the case. See James Baine, The Case of the Rev. Thomas Gillespie.; Walker, An Alarm to the Church of Scotland.; John Erskine published Gillespie's Essay on the Continuance of Immediate Revelations of Facts and Future Events in the Christian Church in 1771 and in his preface spoke highly of Gillespie's character and of having 'an opportunity of publicly testifying my esteem and regard for a faithful minister of Christ, and meek and humble suffer for conscience's sake.' This was at a time when Erskine was the colleague of William Robertson in Edinburgh.


190 Ibid., p 382.
1772. In 1773, the kirk session asked the 'congregation to look out from among themselves fit persons for being Elders for the government of the Congregation.' 191

Irvine

The formation of the Relief congregation in Irvine dates back to the disputed settlement of Charles Bannatyne in the parish church in 1751. Many people in the congregation had opposed his translation from the island of Arran and their attitude against him hardened when he voted for the deposition of Thomas Gillespie at the General Assembly of 1752. The parish church in Irvine had boasted a long line of ministers who belonged to the covenanting tradition and who supported revival movements. 192 A number of people left the congregation, after 1752, dividing into three separate groups. 193 One group travelled to Kilmarnock where James Oliphant, minister of the Chapel of Ease, preached. Oliphant had attended the Associate Burgher Divinity Hall but moved to the University of Glasgow to complete his theological education in 1756, and belonged to the evangelical wing of the Church of Scotland. 194 A second group travelled to Kilwinning to attend the ministry of

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191 Six elders were ordained as a result of this election. See Largo Relief Church Minutes 1772-1857, CH3/844/1, p 3. One early incident of Church discipline which indicates the concern of the young congregation to maintain a good reputation concerned Jean Roger and Jean Simson who 'appeared and acknowledged their fault in some unguarded words spoken by them in a fit of passion and promised to be on their guard.' Ibid., p 5.

192 David Dickson (1618-1640) was involved in the 'Stewarton Sickness' revival movement; Alexander Nisbet (1650-1669) and George Hutchison (1669-1674) wrote several commentaries on biblical books and William McKnight (1709-1750) preached during the revival at Cambuslang in August 1742. See Fasti. Vol. 3, pp 98-100.

193 The nearest Secession congregation was situated at Kilmaurs where David Smyton was minister. When he was inducted in 1740, he agreed to preach 'four Sabbaths in the year at Fenwick...four at Wallacetown...six at Dalry...two at Kilwinning and the remainder at Kilmaurs.' See MacKelvie, Annals and Statistics, p 401. There is no evidence that any of those who left the church in Irvine travelled to Kilmaurs which was only 6 miles north east of the town.

194 Oliphant joined the Church of Scotland and was licensed by the Presbytery of Kintyre in 1760 and following a short ministry at the Chapel of Ease in the Gorbals, he was presented by the Town Council of Kilmarnock, at the request of the inhabitants of the town, to become minister of the Chapel of Ease in the town. See Fasti. Vol. 3, p 342.
Alexander Ferguson 195 and his assistant, James McKnight. 196 The largest group continued to meet for worship in Irvine and formed a society for prayer. Eventually the group met in the home of a 'gentleman whose wife had been connected with Albion Relief congregation, Glasgow' and she made the suggestion that they should approach the Presbytery of Relief in Glasgow for 'supply of sermon.' 197 The congregation subsequently built a place of worship with 700 seats and in 1777 James Jack from Dunblane was ordained as the first minister of the new Relief church in Irvine. 198

Kilmarnock 199

When the probationer James Addie received a presentation from the patron, Archibald Campbell, opposition from members of the congregation and Presbytery delayed his ordination until 24 July 1771. 200 The General Assembly of 1770 sustained the presentation to Addie by 99 votes to 22, and instructed the Presbytery

195 Ferguson had been minister of Kilwinning since 1721 and opposed the Seceders in a series of pamphlets. See Fasti, Vol. 3, p 117.

196 James McKnight was the son of William McKnight, the previous minister of Irvine. He was educated at the Universities of Glasgow and Leyden, preached at the Chapel of Ease in the Gorbals, assisted Ferguson at Kilwinning and became minister of Jedburgh in 1769, Lady Yesters in 1772 and the Old Kirk at Edinburgh in 1778. He was moderator of the General Assembly in 1769. See Fasti, Vol. 1, p 72.

197 Their petition came before the Relief Presbytery of Glasgow on 18 August 1773 and James Pinkerton of Campbeltown preached in the open air on the following Sabbath. See MacKelvie, Annals and Statistics, p 410. John Kirkwood, in The United Presbyterians in Ayrshire, (Ardrossan, 1900) says that the group 'was composed of the leading inhabitants of the town and others distinguished for their piety.' p 70.

198 The congregation approached Thomas Monteith of Alnwick, who has previously been the minister of the Relief church in Duns but after some delay he declined the offer. See Small, History of the United Presbyterian Church, Vol. 2, p 298.

199 Kilmarnock parish was distinct from Kilmarnock. It was situated very near to Loch Lomond, 4 miles south of Drymen and 8 miles north east of Dumbarton. The population declined from a figure of 1,193 in 1755 to 820 in 1792 due to a movement of population from the parish to Bonhill and Balfron. See MacKelvie, Annals and Statistics, p 572 and Statistical Account, Vol. IX, p 47.

of Dumbarton to take Addie on his trials and, if found orthodox in doctrine and upright in morals, to ordain him minister of Kilmaronock. The Presbytery, however, then expressed concern over the trial discourse on James I v 27 which Addie presented to the Presbytery. Archibald Smith, minister of Strathblane, accused Addie of explaining away the doctrine of atonement and of teaching doctrines contrary to the Confession of Faith. In May 1771, the Presbytery agreed to bring the objections made by Smith to the General Assembly. On 1 June 1771, however, the General Assembly swept aside the complaints against Addie and instructed the Presbytery of Dumbarton to proceed with the ordination. In response to the Assembly's action, a large number of people withdrew from the parish church, built a meeting house with 450 seats, and joined the Relief Church in 1772. They first attempted to call Robert Paterson from Largo, but he declined their invitation. In March 1777, the Presbytery ordained John King, a licentiate of the Dalkeith Presbytery of the Church of Scotland. The Relief Presbytery in Glasgow authorised King to constitute a kirk session initially consisting of five elders who had previously been ordained in the Kilmaronock parish kirk session.

Dysart

201 Scots Magazine, XXXII (May, 1770), pp 277-279.

202 A. Smith, The Objections of the Presbytery of Dumbarton against Mr Addie's discourse on James i.27. explained and defended; with an authentic copy of that discourse, and a view of the scripture-doctrine of expiatory sacrifices, in opposition to the doctrine of Mr Addie's discourse, and of a long speech delivered at the meeting of the Synod at Irvine, October 1770, so far as it was intelligible. (Glasgow, 1771).

203 Duncan MacFarlane, ministry of Drymen, objected that 'the majority by which this question was carried is said to have been composed chiefly of elders. It was opposed by several of the ministers.' Scots Magazine, Vol. XXXII, p 278.

204 King had been a parish teacher at Lasswade and in April 1775 his license to preach the gospel was revoked by the Presbytery of Dalkeith because he had joined the Relief Church.

205 Small, History of the United Presbyterian Church, Vol. 1, p 218.
The Dysart congregation originated as a reaction against the Moderate views of Robert Colville, minister of the second charge in Dysart. A number of parishioners left the church and built a place of worship with 650 seats in 1772, and received help from the Relief Presbytery in Edinburgh. They chose William Campbell, a licentiate of the Church of Scotland, as their first minister and his ordination took place in 1774.

**St. Ninians**

The controversy surrounding the settlement of David Thomson in the parish of St. Ninians appeared before the General Assembly on eight successive occasions between 1767 and 1774. The patron, Stuart of Allanbank, presented David Thomson, minister of Gargunnock, to the vacant living of St. Ninians in April 1766. The 'whole body' of the parish, some 'seven thousand souls' opposed Thomson's settlement. Initially the Presbytery of Stirling and the Synod of Perth and Stirling refused to translate Thomson to St. Ninians and used a variety of different ploys to thwart the plans of those who supported the move. Although the General Assembly sustained the presentation, the Presbytery did not proceed with the translation because

206 Colville published various poems during his ministry including one in 1771 entitled *The Caroline Heroine, or the Invasion and Fall of Sueno, the Dane*, (Edinburgh, 1771). He was later libelled and was suspended from ministry in 1784.

207 Campbell had been a parish schoolmaster in Leuchars and was the son-in-law to Thomas Boston of Jedburgh. See Small, *History of the United Presbyterian Church*, Vol. 2, p 385.

208 In a speech to the General Assembly in 1771, Spence of Orwell, one of the ministers suspended from sitting in Church courts following the Inverkeithing settlement said that 'this is one of the strong instances of the rigorous exercise of the law of patronage.' Cited in *The London Magazine*, (April 1772), p 186. Sher and Murdoch point out that it 'was particularly bitter because many of the local land-owners or 'heritors' were Episcopalian and the patron himself unusually obnoxious.' See R. B. Sher and A. Murdoch 'Patronage and Party in the Church of Scotland, 1750-1800' p 199.

209 Speech by Thomson of Dunfermline cited in *The London Magazine* (April, 1772), p 185. In 1769 the opposition to the settlement included 'above fifty heritors, twenty-two elders, and seven thousand examinable persons, who have refused to concur with the presentation.' Reasons of Dissent from a sentence of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland of May 22 1769, in *Scots Magazine* XXXI, (May, 1769), p 236.
'none of the heritors who appeared, either in person, or by proxy, to vote at the moderation, had any legal or constitutional right to vote' 210 The Synod of Perth, however, then sustained an appeal from the patron that 'eleven heritors had a right to vote, and ought to have been admitted to sign the call and appointed the presbytery to meet on the 3 December 1767.' 211 When the presbytery met as instructed, they refused to allow any of the proxy votes because they came from heritors who were not in communion with the Church of Scotland. 212 The Synod of Perth and the General Assembly of 1768 agreed with this decision. Five more heritors appeared before the Presbytery in November 1768 to sign the call but the Presbytery decided that 'the sentence of the last Assembly was final.' 213 The patron and heritors appealed the decision to the General Assembly in 1769 and on this occasion the Assembly reversed the decision of the Presbytery by 105 votes to 78. 214 Once again the Presbytery and Synod 'unanimously found there was no call to Mr Thomson,' 215 but the Assembly of 1770 reversed this decision by 90 votes to 74. 216 In August 1770,

210 Meeting of 5 August 1767 where the Presbytery also discovered that 'not one single member of the session, which consists of twenty-two, signified their concurrence by voting for the presentee' Scots Magazine, XXXI, (May, 1769), p 276.

211 Ibid.

212 This was based on the Act of Assembly in 1748. See Acts of the General Assembly, pp 697-698. The Presbytery also pointed out that the call 'was signed by so small a number of heritors, and those possessed of so small a property in that extensive parish, and all of them excepting three not residing in the parish.' Scots Magazine, XXXI, (May, 1769), p 276.

213 Ibid.

214 20 ministers and 8 elders registered their dissent.

215 Scots Magazine, XXXII, (May, 1770), p 285. At the meeting of the Presbytery various proxies were produced as well as 'a petition for forty heads of families in favour of Mr Thomson' However the Presbytery continued to based its decision on the Act of 1748 which they believed could not be reversed by any succeeding Assembly. It was on this basis that they argued they were not being disobedient to the Assembly's decision. The numbers at this stage opposing Thomson included 64 heritors (one of them an elder), 16 other elders and above 700 heads of families. Ibid., p 285.

216 12 ministers and 9 elders registered their dissent. The dissent was based on the 1748 Acts regarding the legality of heritors who had the right to vote, as well as the earlier decision of the Assembly in 1768. They stated that 'of all the thirty-six heritors who by their letters of proxy offered to sign the call...only five or six were of the communion of the church of Scotland...and not one...
the Presbytery received a petition from '63 heritors, 18 elders, and 650 heads of families' who opposed the settlement. On 20 September, the Presbytery referred to an Act of 1694 which allowed them to refuse 'to concur in any design of transporting a minister from one congregation to another, unless...the greater good of the church, be manifestly evident.' 217

The debate of the General Assembly in 1771 aroused great interest and various speeches appeared in the London Magazine of April 1772, indicating that the Popular party and the Moderates continued to oppose each other on the issue of patronage. The Moderates argued that 'if we please the people here, we shall raise an universal flame in Scotland.' 218 James Lorrimer of Yarrow, believed that 'were patronage to be abolished, we should undoubtedly, be in a much worse situation than while it obtains' because 'learning among our clergy would fall to nothing' if a settlement could not be obtained following a good education. 219 William Robertson tried to shift the argument from the legitimacy of the patronage system, which he continued to believe was valid, to make the point that 'patrons have no power to nominate improper persons' because 'the Church alone can give a license to preach...and ordain....Patrons then can only chose certain individuals out of a number of men, all of whom are sufficient for the work of the ministry.' 220 Following the vote, Henry Erskine presented The Case of the Respondents, the People of St. Ninians, in which he argued that 'something more is required in a minister than an unblemished character, learning and abilities to discharge his office....he must receive elder, or one head of a family in that numerous parish, would sign the call.' Scots Magazine, XXXII, (May, 1770), p 302.

217 Scots Magazine XXXIII, (May, 1771), p 274. The Synod affirmed the decision of the presbytery.
219 Ibid., p 237.
220 Ibid., p 238.
the regard, esteem and confidence of the parish' who must 'not only approve of his doctrines, but his method of communicating them' for 'they must be pleased and won by his manner and address.'

The controversy which surrounded the debate led to a dispute over the vote itself. After the Assembly clerk announced the vote, Daniel McQueen from Edinburgh and John Freebairn of Dumbarton contested the vote, and 'protested against the intimation of the sentence, as it seemed to him very doubtful, whether that was indeed the decision of the Assembly.'

In 1772, the year when John Erskine served as Moderator of the General Assembly, the Assembly considered the case once again and decided that 'it will be expedient to order the settlement of Mr Thomson, the presentee, on or before the 20 November next.' The Presbytery delayed the process on this occasion by stating that the report of a committee to the Assembly in 1772, linked the order to induct

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221 Ibid., p 241.

222 Freebairn was one of the leaders of the Popular party. Fasti makes the comment that 'He possessed great native humour, and had a happy talent of turning the laugh against his opponents by keen sarcasm, which in the General Assembly he applied against the vigorous exercise of church patronage. Alexander Carlyle says of him that he was 'brisk and foul-mouthed, that he stuck at nothing, and was endowed with a rude popular eloquence.' Vol. 3, op cit., p 342.

223 The majority was that of 2. The initial protest was supported by 28 ministers and 22 elders. When the sentence was pronounced to reverse the decision of the Presbytery 48 ministers and 35 elders entered their dissent and a further 17 ministers and 3 elders voted to support the decision of the Presbytery. In total 66 ministers and 38 elders opposed the decision of the Assembly. Those who supported the Assembly included only 48 ministers. See Reasons of Dissent from the Decision of the late General Assembly in the case of St. Ninians, (Edinburgh, 1771), pp 1-7.

224 MacQueen avoided accusing the Assembly clerk of dishonesty 'for although the fidelity of the clerk of court is altogether irreproachable, yet several members at a distance from his chair, gave their votes in so low a voice, that he could not well hear and mark these votes distinctly; and as a scrutiny had been therefore earnestly urged by a great number of the members of Assembly, but had been peremptorily refused, for these reasons he thought it proper to enter this protestation.' Reasons of Dissent from the Decision of the late General Assembly in the case of St. Ninians, p 2.

Thomson with a promise from the patron that he would provide 'a sufficient and perpetual fund for an ordained assistant in the parish, agreeable to the people' 226 and because 'the laudable view of the assembly and their committee have not been followed out...they judge it inexpedient...to proceed to the admission of Mr Thomson.' 227 The Assembly disagreed with the arguments put forward by the Presbytery and voted by 133 votes to 69 that they should 'admit Mr Thomson, as minister of St Ninian's, the last Tuesday of June next...and appoint all the ministers of the presbytery of Stirling to attend that day...and they shall report their obedience to the Assembly.' 228

When the Presbytery met on 29 June 1773, Robert Findlay, minister of Dollar conducted the service, but offended many Moderates in the church by asking Thomson to 'give up this presentation' to which Thomson replied, 'proceed to obey the orders of your superiors.' 229 In May 1774, the Assembly rebuked Thomas Randall of Stirling and John Duncan of Alva because they did not attend the induction.230 The Assembly also proceeded to debate what action, if any, should be

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226 Scots Magazine XXXV, (1773), p 270.
227 Ibid.
228 Ibid., p 271. A dissent was entered by Thomas Walker from Dundonald because of 'the great inexpediency of this settlement' which would have the effect of 'distressing or embittering the spirits of so many thousands of the dutiful sons of this church, and of the loyal subjects of his present majesty - especially in such a parish as this of St Ninian's, so remarkable for their affection both to the one and the other in the worst of times.' Scots Magazine, XXXV, (May, 1773), p 247. The protest was signed by 14 ministers and 9 elders.
229 Scots Magazine, XXXV, (July, 1773), p 360. Findlay dispensed with the normal service of a sermon and did not ask any questions of Thomson but merely declared that 'I, as Moderator of the Presbytery of Stirling, admit you, Mr. David Thomson, to be Minister of the parish of St. Ninians, in the true sense and spirit of the same sentence of the General assembly.' He did not offer any prayers of intercession for the new minister. Findlay's conduct came under scrutiny in the November meeting of the Assembly Commission in 1773 when the patron raised a compliant against him 'for his manner of proceeding at the admission of Mr Thomson.' Scots Magazine XXXV, (November, 1773), pp 614-615.
230 The vote to rebuke them was 106 to 65. During the debate 17 ministers and 6 elders dissented against the action being taken. Scots Magazine, XXXVI, (May, 1774), pp 269-271.
taken against Findlay. Some members of the Assembly wanted him to be 'suspended from acting in his judicative capacity' although eventually the Assembly asked the Moderator simply to issue a 'sharp rebuke.' 231

The settlement at St Ninians led to 'the great body of its adherents' leaving the church and they joined with 'a few others from neighbouring parishes' and formed the Relief congregation. 232 The first meeting of the new church took place on 14 July 1773, when Michael Boston travelled from Falkirk and conducted a service in a field where the congregation continued to worship for the next few months. Only one elder remained in the parish church while 21 others formed the first kirk session of the new Relief congregation which called Patrick Hutchison as their first minister. 233

The Relief church in St Ninians was the last congregation to join the Relief Church before Thomas Gillespie died in 1774. Although Gillespie was involved in the foundation of several congregations, preaching, writing letters, giving pastoral advice, individual congregations joined the Relief Church for various reasons. Opposition to patronage continued to be a major reason why dissatisfied members left the Church of Scotland. However, as we have noticed, local circumstances led many congregation to avoid the rigidity of the Secession Churches and adhere to the Relief Church. This enabled them to enjoy the liberal nature of their constitution, as well as their open attitude towards other evangelicals.

231 The vote to rebuke was 100 - 94. Scots Magazine, XXXVII, (May, 1775) pp 282-283.


233 Hutchison had been brought up in the Secession church at Dunblane but joined the Relief Church while he was studying for the ministry with the Antiiburgher Synod, just before he became licensed to preach. MacKelvie, Annals and Statistics, p 644. He began his ministry in St Ninians on 19 November 1774. He had been acting as an assistant to James Baine in Edinburgh
Controversy

The early development of the Relief Church was threatened, not only by opposition from without but also by internal conflict. From 1769 until the time of his death, Thomas Gillespie witnessed successive controversies within the Relief Church which led to disruption and division. On at least one occasion he threatened to leave the Relief Presbytery and by the time of his death in 1774, several of his closest friends and relatives believed that he wanted his congregation to return to the Church of Scotland. In order to understand the eventual nature of the Church which existed at the time of his death and the factors which led to Gillespie's sense of disillusionment, it is necessary to look at these controversies in some detail.

Alexander Pirie and Blairlogie

In 1769 the Presbytery of Relief refused to grant the congregation of Blairlogie a moderation 'at large' which would allow them to call Alexander Pirie as their next minister. Brought up in the Antiburgher congregation of Abernethy, Pirie was appointed by the Antiburgher Synod to work alongside his minister, Alexander Moncrieff, in lecturing students in philosophy. 234 In 1763 the Antiburgher Synod investigated the charge that Pirie had encouraged his students to read 'several erroneous books...particularly one, entitled, Essays on Morality and Natural Religion by Henry Home, Lord Kames. 235 When Kames published his Essays in 1751, his

234 Pirie was himself a probationer. In 1762 he was appointed to come before the Synod to be licensed and sent to North America. He successfully avoided this in April 1763. Scots Magazine, XXV, (October, 1763), p 525. See also Dictionary of National Biography. Vol. XV, pp 1212-1213; J. R. McIntosh 'Alexander Pirie' in Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology, pp 660-661.

235 It may well have been the influence of Pirie on his students that led Laurence Wotherspoon to write an essay for the Royal Magazine entitled 'Reflections on the advantages of a liberal and polite education' (October, 1762) and Andrew Marshall to write and essay on 'On the Tendency of Ambition'. (June 1762) The Synod believed that Pirie 'had seen Mr Wotherspoon's essay before it was sent to the magazine.' Scots Magazine, XXV, (1763), p 525. The students were disciplined by the Antiburgher Synod for being influenced by 'the tone of refined Modernism.' Small, History of the United Presbyterian Church, Vol. 1, pp 514-515.
original intention 'was to refute [David] Hume's scepticism.' 236 but various writers accused him of refuting Calvinistic doctrine. 237 Kames claimed that 'my doctrine of necessity coincided precisely with that which is taught by Calvin' and cited passages from Theodore Beza, John Knox and Calvin himself. 238 In January 1757 the Presbytery of Edinburgh dismissed the case against Kames, although it spoke about some 'unguarded expressions' in the Essays, which Kames later 'disavowed and disclaimed.' 239 Pirie, proud to defend himself at the time, later denied that he had 'recommended' the book 'to my students' 240 but the Synod 'deprived him of his license, and laid him under the letter of excommunication' 241 although the motion only carried by one vote. 242 Pirie continued to live in Abernethy and approached the Burgher Presbytery of Perth to be licensed to preach and after a thorough examination 'to test his orthodoxy' he was 'received into Church fellowship, and recognised as a licentiate.' 243 His popularity in Abernethy led a 'considerable body of people' to form a Burgher congregation which called Pirie to be their first pastor in July 1765. The

236 Sher, Church and University, p 65, footnote 65.

237 Article in Scots Magazine, XIV, (1752), pp 399-402; George Anderson, Estimate of the Profit and Loss of Religion. (Edinburgh, 1753) and an article by John Witherspoon in the Scots Magazine XV, (April, 1753), pp 165-170. Kames had also been present as an honorary elder in the General Assemblies of 1753 and 1754, a fact which disturbed John Bonar of Cockpen who contrasted this action of the Assembly with that of deposing Thomas Gillespie. See Sher, Church, p 67.


240 A. Pirie, Three Letters to the Author of a Pamphlet. (Edinburgh, 1776), p 3.


following year, Pirie published a pamphlet which argued against the idea of the National Covenants. At the same time, he was charged with having denied the true humanity of Christ in his sermons at Abernethy. This led to his suspension from the ministry in June 1767, although he insisted that 'there is nothing to show that, on the subject of the Incarnation, he taught anything inconsistent with the standards of the Church.'

It appears that Pirie suffered, because, being 'one of the most talented and accomplished theological writers Scotland ever produced,' he raised suspicions concerning his orthodoxy, and these in turn influenced members of the Presbytery of Relief when Blairlogie attempted to call Pirie as their minister.

John Warden, minister of Blairlogie, died on 29 December 1768, and in June 1769 representatives of the congregation appeared before a meeting of the Presbytery of Relief to ask for a 'moderation at large.' In 1769, the Presbytery 'had very few licentiates of their own' and they normally allowed a congregation the liberty of calling a minister from another denomination, either in Scotland or in England. On this occasion, Thomas Gillespie, along with his fellow Relief ministers, William

244 Small, History of the United Presbyterian Church. Vol. 2, p 587. In his Three Letters, Pirie denied all the charges levelled against him, calling on 'the testimony of my late hearers at Abernethy to the soundness of the sermon libelled; and I ever before, and have ever since, preached and believed that the body of our Lord was made of the seed of David after the flesh, in the Womb of the Virgin Mary, and of her substance, being conceived there by the power of the Holy Ghost, and born without sin.' p 4.

245 Struthers, History of the Relief Church, p 234.

246 Pirie may have believed that his openness in theological learning would have found more freedom in the Relief church. An Enlightenment figure, he was described as a 'cultured man, and one of exceptionally liberal religious views for his time.' Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. XV, p 1213.

247 This term referred to the congregation's request to suggest the name of any suitably qualified minister. Pirie had first been brought to the attention of Blairlogie by Alexander Scott, minister of Auchtermuchty. See Small, History of the United Presbyterian Church. Vol. 2, p 695. Alexander Simson, Reasons of Dissent. (Edinburgh, 1770), p 3. Petitions came before the Presbytery in June and September 1769 and also in February 1770.

248 Struthers, History of the Relief Church, p 239
Cruden, Thomas Bell, and Thomas Scott, opposed any invitation being extended to Pirie. Three other ministers, Alexander Simson, James Baine and Thomas Monteith protested against the decision of the Presbytery to refuse the moderation. In August 1769, William Cruden suggested that a moderation might be granted to the congregation, provided that Pirie was identified as the one person who could not be called. In September, the Presbytery carried the motion to 'grant the moderation of a call, exclusive of Mr. Alexander Pirie, minister of the gospel at Abernethy' carried.

Thomas Gillespie, accompanied by his brother Robert, travelled to Blairlogie on 25 January 1770, where he encountered a hostile congregation who refused to accept the decision of the Presbytery. In February 1770, the Presbytery again refused to grant a moderation at large, although later that year, the Presbytery relented and Alexander Simson went to Blairlogie on 10 July 1770 to moderate in a call 'at large.' Gillespie now threatened to resign from the Presbytery if they sustained the call to Pirie and once again the Presbytery reversed its decision and opposed Pirie. The Blairlogie congregation, no doubt exasperated, ignored the indecisive Presbytery and called Pirie to Blairlogie. He began his ministry there on 19 August 1770.

249 James Pinkerton was absent from this meeting of the Presbytery.

250 Simson, Reasons, p 4.

251 Small, History of the United Presbyterian Church, Ibid., p 696. In 1773 Moubray was disciplined by the kirk session at Edinburgh 'for defamation', a sentence which the Synod agreed to. Minutes of the Relief Synod, CH3/272/1, p 32.

252 Robert Gillespie is said to have 'harangued the people...telling them 'If you knew Mr Pirie as well as I do, you would thank the Presbytery for what they have done." Small, History of the United Presbyterian Church, p 696.

253 Simson, p 11.

254 Struthers, History of the Relief Church, p 240.

255 Pirie continued in Blairlogie until 1778. In 1776 the congregation in Blairlogie wanted to rejoin the Relief Church. Their request was denied because Pirie did not indicate any desire to join the Church. He left Blairlogie to minister in an Independent congregation in Newburgh and the next day the congregation asked the Relief Presbytery of Glasgow to admit them as a congregation. See Small, History of the United Presbyterian Church, p 696.
Pirie's supporter in the Relief Presbytery, Alexander Simson, believed that the decision of the Presbytery not to sustain the call to Pirie undermined the 'radical principle which distinguishes this presbytery' because 'it is not our preaching the gospel of Christ, which distinguishes us from many, both within and without the establishment, so much as our appearing for the natural rights of Christians,' by which he meant the right of a congregation to choose its own minister. 256 Whereas Gillespie had emphasised Pirie's doctrinal lapses, Simson argued that 'the question...is not, whether we are to have Mr. Pirie or not; but whether the Presbytery of Relief has a right to limit us in our choice of a pastor.' 257 Gillespie's attitude towards Pirie appeared to parallel that of William Robertson, who had argued that 'patrons have no power to nominate improper persons....The Church alone can give a licence to preach; the Church alone can ordain.' 258 Gillespie believed that the only constraint to the free choice of any congregation was the suitability of the candidate which the Presbytery had the right to oversee. His concern indicates his desire to preserve a purity of orthodox doctrine within the Relief Church, even if this meant that a congregation could not exercise a free choice over the election of their minister.

Colinsburgh

In July 1769, shortly after the beginning of the debate surrounding Pirie, Thomas Colier, Relief Church minister at Colinsburgh since the forming of the Presbytery of Relief, died. In March 1770, the congregation sent representatives to

256 Simson, Reasons of Dissent, pp 7-8. 'we have given up our principles, and are begun to exceed others in oppression.' Ibid., p 9.

257 Ibid., p 19. Simson did recognise that the greatest objection against Pirie, which he believed to be false, was that 'Pirie is a man of erroneous principles, and a dangerous man in society.' Ibid., p 29.

hear James Cowan preach. 259 Cowan came from Stow in the Borders. His father had been a secession elder in the Antiburgher congregation in Lauder and his brother studied in the Antiburgher Hall. 260 James Cowan studied at Edinburgh University and the Newcastle Presbytery of Protestant Dissenters licensed him to preach at the beginning of 1770. 261 When the Colinsburgh congregation indicated their desire to call Cowan, Gillespie travelled to Colinsburgh to preach on 22 April and on 3 May, Thomas Scott, from Auchtermuchty, moderated in a call. 262 At this point James Baine, who had possession of the Presbytery minutes, refused to give the extract from the minutes expressing the call to Cowan, even though he received requests from the Colinsburgh congregation and many of his own congregation. Scott proceeded to conduct a moderation and the congregation indicated their desire to call James Cowan as their next minister. 263 When William Ramsay and Robert Fleming, two elders from the Colinsburgh kirk session, attended the next meeting of Presbytery on 9 May 1770, the Presbytery agreed that the call had been issued correctly, but they refused to deliver a documentary version of the 'call' to Cowan for his acceptance. This meeting occurred at the very time when tempers were at their highest in the Pirie affair and it appears that men like James Baine were seeking to express their dissatisfaction with Gillespie's support of Cowan. Cowan held stricter views regarding the 'open' communion than Gillespie, and the latter continued to oppose the induction of Pirie to Blairlogie. Baine maintained that Gillespie was not being consistent with his own

259 Small, History of the United Presbyterian Church, Vol. 2, p 377. As it is unlikely that Cowan would be preaching in the Established Church in Newburn, it may be that he was preaching in Balchrystie where James Smith and Robert Ferrier had established an Independent congregation.

260 His brother Robert Cowan moved to the Presbytery of Relief in 1771 and eventually was ordained in Wall Knoll dissenting church near Newcastle. Small, History of the United Presbyterian Church, p 377.

261 Ibid. His early connection to the secession movement may have influenced his views regarding the terms of communion debate in 1773.

262 Robert Dick, Colinsburgh, p 59.

263 The call was subscribed by four hundred and thirty communicant members of the congregation.
opposition to patronage, when local congregations had been unable to choose their own minister. Members of the Colinsburgh congregation who had not signed the initial call to Cowan, drew up a supplementary call on 7 June and brought it to the Presbytery, who delayed the matter again and again over the coming months. In March 1771, the Presbytery finally agreed that Cowan should be inducted to Colinsburgh, and on 25 July 1771, Gillespie, Cruden and Scott ordained him at Colinsburgh. The Relief Church experienced the immediate consequence of these two controversies, when the Presbytery divided into two separate Presbyteries in 1771, of Edinburgh and Glasgow, not on a geographical, but because of differences of opinion concerning Pirie and Cowan. Ostensibly the Relief Church divided over the issue of the rights of a congregation to call who they pleased. However it seems clear that Gillespie took offence that his viewpoint was being ignored and it is significant that when the two Presbyteries met together in 1772 and 1773, Gillespie

264 James Baine and one elder voted and protested against this decision. Robert Dick commented that 'No reason can now be assigned for this opposition, but after events shewed that he [Cowan] did not harmonise with his brethren regarding their terms of communion.' History of Colinsburgh, p 51.

265 For twelve months, Cowan had been allowed to preach at Colinsburgh while the Presbytery debated the issue.

266 Small talks of these men being the 'only other ministers who took part,' but this numbers appears to have been a fairly normal quorum at a Relief ordination and induction. History of the United Presbyterian Church, Vol. 2, p 378. Cowan continued in Colinsburgh until his death in 1795. As we will notice in this chapter, Cowan disagreed with the open terms of communion which the Synod accepted in 1773. He disciplined members of his congregation who opposed his views and was eventually disciplined by the Synod in May 1775 when they agreed that Mr Cowan had 'ceased to be part of our body and [to] prohibit Ministerial communion with him.' This was carried by 'a great majority'. Minutes of the Relief Synod. CH3/272/1, pp 41-42. In 1790, Cowan and the congregation asked to be re-admitted into the Relief Church but although the Synod approved the congregation's request they would not accept Cowan. The congregation split in two, and the opponents of Cowan adhered to the Relief Church. Small, History of the United Presbyterian Church, Vol. 2, pp 379-380.

267 The Presbytery of Edinburgh consisted of the congregations at Edinburgh, Jedburgh, Falkirk, Dalkeith, Cuper, Largo, Kilsyth and Bothwell. The Presbytery of Glasgow consisted of congregations at Glasgow, Dunfermline, Colinsburgh, Anderson and Cambeltown. The two Presbyteries met together on 27 May 1772 'for conference and consultation only' and then constituted a Synod on 26 May 1773. By 1774 the two Presbyteries were in the process of being organised on a geographical basis and the Kilsyth and Falkirk began to attend the Glasgow Presbytery.
did not attend either of the meetings. The difficulties which Gillespie had encountered during his years of isolation had made him 'somewhat rigid...austere...and rather inflexible' so that 'he adhered very tenaciously to his own opinions.' He was a man with a 'quick temper' It may well be that personal differences, between Gillespie and Baine, were as significant in explaining the division, as any theological controversy.

Communion Controversy

In May 1772, representatives from both Presbyteries of Edinburgh and Glasgow met in the College Street church 'for conference and consultation only.' James Cowan raised the issue of the extent to which the Relief Church would extend 'Christian or ministerial communion' and he cited the two examples of 'those of the Episcopal and Independent persuasion and with respect to those who are unsound in the essentials of the Christian faith particularly by the publication to the World.' It seems obvious that the latter part of the motion referred to Alexander Pirie. The meeting 'unanimously agreed that their principles did not allow them to hold communion with such.' The meeting divided over the issue of allowing members of

268 Struthers says that 'Mr Gillespie...had for some time been in declining health, and was, on account of indisposition, unable to attend.' G Struthers, 'History of the Rise and Progress of the Relief Church' in Christian Journal II (March, 1834), p 130. This seems a strange comment as he appears to have continued to travel to other congregations to preach. In 1773, the Relief Synod, aware of his continued influence, when an issue relating to Colinsburgh was raised, they decided 'to acquaint Gillespie and Cruden on the issue.' Minutes of the Relief Synod, p 32.

269 Lindsay, Life of Thomas Gillespie, p 303.

270 Ibid., p 298.

271 Ibid., pp 298-299.

272 Minutes of Relief Synod, p 25.


274 Pirie's supporters did not believe that he was 'unsound in the essentials of the Christian Faith' and so did not oppose the motion.
Episcopal and Independent churches to participate in communion services, although a vote indicated that 'the meeting find it agreeable to the principles of the Presbytery of Relief, to hold communion with such.' In 1774 the Synod defended their decision which had been 'mistaken by some, and misrepresented by others' by indicating that it expressed the widely held views of the Relief Church which could be found in the 'twenty-sixth chapter of the Westminster Confession of Faith.' They stated that their judgement did not mean that the Relief Church agreed with Episcopalian or Independent views on Church government etc. because 'when they join in communion with us, we do not conform to them, but they to us.' Finally, the Synod expressed their view that the motion did 'not bind' ministers within the Synod 'to conformity' but allowed 'members...liberty to judge, in particular circumstances, what should be most for edification.' In this way men like William Cruden in Glasgow and James Cowan in Colinsburgh could retain their minority opinion within the denomination. In 1774 Cruden left the Relief Church and became minister of the Crown Court Presbyterian Church in London, and Cowan spoke in the Colinsburgh church against

275 Minutes of Relief Synod, p 26. Neil of Anderson, whose views opposed those of Cruden in Glasgow, preached a sermon in which he stated that 'it is all too evident that whatever love many in these days pretend to have to the followers of the blessed Jesus, it is not extended unto all whom they have reason to believe bear his amiable image, but confined to such who are of their own party name, and espouse all their favourite tenets.' Cited in Struthers 'Communion' pp 30-31. There were 12 ministers and 8 elders present at the first consultative gathering and the vote was '18 voted for the principles of free communion, and 2 either voted against it, or did not vote at all' Article by Anandalensis on 'Free Communion' in Christian Journal, V, (April, 1837), p 181.

276 Strangely the original minute of this meeting which related to the issue was not recorded. In 1840 the Synod reconsidered the issued and from comparing a manuscript copy of the original statement with other printed material incorporated the explanatory document into their minutes. See Minutes of the Relief Synod, CH3/272/3, pp 56-60. The decision of the Synod led to the Relief Church being attacked by members of the Burgher, Antiburgher and Cameronian Churches. See T. Bennett, minister of the Antiburgher Church in Ceres, Fife who wrote Terms of Communion agreed upon by the Scots Methodists, but generally known by the specious denomination of the Presbytery of Relief, (Edinburgh, 1775). A full list of the pamphlet's published between 1775 and 1791 is found in Struthers' History of the Relief Church, pp 571-572.

277 Ibid., p 59.

278 Ibid.

279 Ibid.
the 'monstrous classing of Presbytery, Episcopacy and Independency' and wished communion 'restricted to Presbyterians who were visible saints.' 280 Cowan disciplined an elder who disagreed with his views, by excluding him from the kirk session. A division within the Colinsburgh congregation emerged between the 'managers' 281 who 'were steadfast in their principles' 282 and the majority of the kirk session which supported Cowan. 283 A meeting of the congregation elected a new body of managers and 'those who were friendly to the Synod were not re-elected, and others were put in their place' 284 The Relief Synod asked Cowan to explain the action of the congregation in May 1775 but he did not attend and they 'declared him to be no longer one of their number.' 285

280 Dick, Colinsburgh, p 64.

281 Within Relief congregations, managers were responsible for 'temporal affairs' within the congregation but had 'no power in spiritual matters.' See article by F. Lyall on 'Managers' in Dictionary of Scottish Church History, p 542.

282 Dick, Colinsburgh, Ibid., p 66.

283 The majority of the managers asked for a Presbyterian visitation. See Minutes of Relief Synod, CH3/272/1, p 32.

284 Ibid. Thirteen elders and four original managers opposed the views of the Relief Synod.

According to Dick this meeting took place while Cowan was in Dunfermline assisting Gillespie at his communion season and when James Baine, Thomas Bell and Michael Bonar came to Colinsburgh to investigate the problems which the congregation were experiencing. The session refused to meet with the deputation from the Presbytery of Edinburgh and read a formal protest to them, and refused to acknowledge their jurisdiction over them. Dick, Colinsburgh, pp 66 - 68.

285 Minutes of the Relief Synod, CH3/272/1, pp 41-42. A second motion 'carried by a great majority' to 'recommend to private members of the relief body to have no communion with him.' The congregation remained outside the Relief Church and Cowan died in 1795. During his latter years some of those like the elder Alexander Scott who had supported him during the communion controversy 'withdrew from public ordinances, on the grounds that Mr Cowan's reputation was not blameless.' In 1790 Cowan tried to get his people to join the Church of Scotland as a Chapel of Ease but they wanted to move towards the Relief Church. The Synod in 1791 and 1793 refused to accept them, mainly due to Cowan. The congregation divided into two and a new congregation was formed called the Relief congregation of Colinsburgh. In 1797 the Court of Session decided in favour of the managers and members of church which adhered to the Relief Synod because they contained the majority of the original managers and members but they had already built their own meeting house and no longer needed the original building. Cowan received help during this time from his brother Robert Cowan from Newcastle and D Gellatly of Haddington who was deposed for immorality from the Relief Church in 1794. They tried to form the 'First Constituted Presbytery of Relief' in 1794 but 'it never came to anything.' See Dick, Colinsburgh, pp 70-74. Small, History of the United Presbyterian Church, Vol. 1, pp 521-522. In 1794 Gellatly published his History and Principles of
Thomas Gillespie, it will be recalled, had supported the ordination of James Cowan. However it is clear that the Synod's statement on communion, rather than that of Cowan, best reflected Gillespie's attitude throughout his own ministry in Dunfermline. For several years after his deposition, he 'invited several of the ministers' of the Church of Scotland 'to assist him' at his communion seasons. Throughout his ministry he always 'admitted persons to the sacrament, on producing lines from ministers of the Church of Scotland' and he did not object to 'many of his own congregation' who 'continued to join occasionally in communion with the church' and 'gave lines' to any who requested them. 286

**Dunfermline - Chapel of Ease**

In 1773, Gillespie's health began to deteriorate. Friends and family were concerned about his health, although he continued to preach 'almost to the last.' 287 He had exercised a significant pastoral and preaching ministry for thirty-three years, and the pressures and responsibilities which he had borne, were now too much for his body to bear. He was nearly sixty-six years of age. He, and his wife, had no children. This meant that the burden of caring for family and Church affairs had consumed all his physical, mental, emotional and spiritual resources. However, the message of the grace of God, which he had preached so energetically through his ministry, brought him peace of mind as he faced his approaching death. On 19 January, 1774, he died 'with undiminished serenity of mind, and...enjoyed a good hope through grace of a blessed and glorious immortality.' 288

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288 Lindsay, *Life of Thomas Gillespie*, p 299.
Gillespie was buried in the Old Abbey church of Dunfermline, the same building which he had left in 1752 when his name had been taken from the roll of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, near to the grave of Ralph Erskine. Gillespie had requested that he might be buried in the tomb of James Wardlaw, minister of Dunfermline when he was ordained at Carnock, and one of the Marrowmen who suggested to Philip Doddridge that Gillespie study at Northampton.

When the funeral took place, Robert Gillespie, Thomas Gillespie's elder brother, made the suggestion that a meeting of the original donors who had contributed towards the cost of his meeting house in Dunfermline, should discuss the future of the building. The original 'disposition' made it clear that 'after the death or removal of Mr Gillespie from occupying the said house, the same should be sold, and after paying the debts, the remainder of the price should be divided amongst the donors' although 'if the majority of the donors should be for keeping said meeting-house for a place of worship, in that case the minority should be obliged to accept of the half of their sums.' The meeting heard that Thomas Gillespie had expressed his desire, shortly before his death, that 'his church should become a chapel.' The meeting voted to apply to the Presbytery of Dunfermline 'to allow us the privilege of Ministerial and Christian communion with the established Church of Scotland' as a Chapel of Ease. The request met with stiff opposition from the Presbytery of

289 At this time, Robert Gillespie had moved from Edinburgh where he had been a founder member of the College Street church, to become the factor for the estate of John Erskine in Carnock. James Cowan preached the funeral sermon. See Struthers, History of the Relief Church, pp 293-4.

290 Case of the Donors for Purchasing and Building the Meeting-house Occupied by the late Reverend Mr Thomas Gillespie, (May, 1774). p 1.

291 Thomas Gillespie, Essay on temptation, preface by John Erskine. This view was furthered by James Cowan and Provost David Turnbull, one of the original donors who had left the Abbey church in Dunfermline to join Gillespie's congregation.

292 'fifty-six donors present, and per mandates of absent donors, votes Apply to the Church of Scotland; and four donors present, and per mandates, votes, Apply to the Presbytery of Relief; nineteen donors present, and per mandate, refused to vote, but adhered to a protest taken by one Andrew Bowie, a weaver in Dunfermline, who was no donor, and consequently had no title to protest
Dunfermline who contested the request in Presbytery, Synod and General Assembly from 1774 to 1779. James Thomson and Thomas Fernie had been ministers in Dunfermline at the time of Gillespie's deposition and expressed their concern that a Chapel of Ease would only exacerbate the divisions within the parish of Dunfermline. The opponents of the petition believed that the Chapel would only attract a congregation 'composed of the dissatisfied in every parish, in a pretended communion with the church, but in a fixed state of distinction and of separation from her,' and they rejected the petition on 4 May 1774 'by a great majority.'

The General Assembly in 1774 expressed their concern that the petition came before them 'in a crude state' and they referred the issue back to the Presbytery of Dunfermline to receive 'a more explicit application and take the same under their

or interfere at all in the matter.' Case of Donors. Ibid., p 2. The petition cited the instance of a Chapel of Ease which had been established in South Leith and the Chapel of Ease established in Glasgow following the departure of William Cruden from the Relief church in Glasgow. In the 1775 Assembly, Richard Todd, an elder from Leith, said that the situation in Leith and Dunfermline 'could by no means be brought into comparison.' Edinburgh Magazine and Review, IV (Edinburgh, 1775), p 417.

293 Speech in the 1775 Assembly by Robert Liston from Aberdour. Ibid., p 412. In 1774 the Presbytery of Dunfermline examined the petitioners with respect to various issues but the answers they received did not satisfy them:
1. Are the Petitioners willing to adhere to the Government and Discipline of the Church? Answer: They were willing
2. Is their preacher to be ordained or admitted by the Presbytery? No answer in the minutes.
3. Will the session be in subordination to the Presbytery, or will it be independent of any superior Court? Answer: That these are also implied in the petition.
4. Will the congregation be composed solely of the Parishioners of Dunfermline? Answer: The church doors will be open to all comers.
5. Are the Petitioners...willing to make good a stipend...without renting seats to people from other parishes? Answer: Before a minister be ordained a proper Provision will be made for him.
6. Is not the Kirk of Dunfermline sufficient to contain the parishioners who have not joined the Seceders? Answer: That they can give no answer to this.
7. Will the collection of the old Kirk suffer nothing by this measure? And how are the collections of the Chapel to be disposed of? Answer: That the Collections will be disposed of by the minister and elders of that Chapel.
8. Will there be no House of Relief in this Town in case a Chapel of Ease take place? Answer: That they hope there will be none. Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, CH 2/105/10, p 172. These issues were debated throughout the following five years.

294 Ibid.
consideration.' Following the 1774 Assembly, another meeting of donors took place 'in which a majority appeared against any application to the Church [of Scotland] and to them the great body of the people adhere.' This group began to build another meeting house which continued as a Relief congregation. The minority group of donors continued to press their case in the Presbytery of Dunfermline. They argued that the parish of Dunfermline contained eight thousand examinable people and that 'the Parish Church will not accommodate three thousand to hear the Gospel.' In the interim period they appointed a Mr Blyth who had been ordained by the Newcastle Class of Presbyterian Dissenters to preach to them. The Presbytery of Dunfermline accused them of acting without their consent. At a meeting in April 1775 the Presbytery refused to grant the petition.

When a renewed petition came before the General Assembly of May 1775, it claimed to represent the wishes of 162 people, of whom only 96 belonged to Dunfermline, 'the rest resid[ing] in neighbouring parishes.' The Presbytery of Dunfermline opposed the petition before the General Assembly on the grounds that

295 Minutes of the General Assembly of 1774, CH 1/1/63, p 505. The Assembly did not dismiss the case but instructed the Presbytery to 'consider with attention the whole circumstances of the case, before they proceed to a determination.' Ibid., p 506.

296 Edinburgh Magazine, p 412.

297 The new meeting house was opened in April 1778 when £149 of the total cost of £232 was already paid, indicating the size of the congregation. See A Cunningham, Dunfermline Secession and Relief Churches. (Dunfermline, 1899), p 27. The stipend for their minister in 1777 was £65 while the Chapel of Ease gave £50. Scots Magazine, XLI, (May, 1779), p 283.

298 Minutes of Dunfermline Presbytery, p 204.

299 Ibid., pp 205-6. Blyth did not stay in Dunfermline long and had to leave because the congregation could not give him an adequate stipend to provide for his family. See Scots Magazine, XXXVIII, (May, 1776), p 275.

300 Ibid., p 206. From this decision Mr Spence of Orwell dissented. George Adie voted against the motion of the Presbytery but did not dissent.

301 Ibid. This number of 96 was said to consist, not of heads of families, but of some 'twenty families' in all. Ibid., p 413.
the numbers of petitioners involved could easily be accommodated within the parish church. 

When the Assembly voted on the petition, the commissioners divided equally over the issue and the Moderator voted to 'remit this cause to the Presbytery of Dunfermline' to clarify issues relating to the 'jurisdiction of the Kirk-session, the administration of the poor's funds' and another matter which the Presbytery considered necessary to decide on the request.

The donors made a further request to the General Assembly in 1776 that they be allowed 'the choice of their Minister...and be allowed to maintain their own Poor out of their Collections or that their poor be put on the same footing of the Parish of Dunfermline...and regularly submit their accounts...to the Kirk session of Dunfermline.' They also insisted that a Chapel of Ease would mean that there would be less likelihood of discontented members of the Church of Scotland joining a dissenting group within the town. The Assembly remitted the case back to the Presbytery 'to use their best endeavours to accommodate the petitioners.'

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302 Ibid. and p 416. Other issues were mentioned, especially that the elders being under the jurisdiction of the Kirk session of Dunfermline. One of the donors, Baillie John Wilson answered 'no...by no means' although their procurator 'saw this was ruining everything; and therefore checked him; and instructed him better.' Ibid., p 414.


304 Minutes of the Dunfermline Presbytery. p 247.

305 Ibid., p 248.

306 The voting was 90 to 77. Scots Magazine. XXXVIII, (May, 1776), p 276.

307 Ibid. The Presbytery tried to undermine the character of the donors who were continuing their case. James Thomson, who had opposed Gillespie, was still the minister of the Abbey congregation. The Presbytery said that Provost Turnbull, who was suspended from eldership in the Abbey church for attending Thomas Gillespie's ministry, always went to the Seceding church when there was no sermon in the Relief church. John Tannochie, one of Gillespie's original elders in Carnock, was accused of attending the Seceding meeting in Cairneyhill, near to Carnock. Alexander Stirling was charged with attending the Seceding meeting house and John Gilmore was accused of going to Cramond to hear Charles Stuart who became a Baptist in May 1776. Presbytery Minutes. p 260. For information on Stuart see N. R. Needham 'Charles Stuart' in Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology, p 803 and N. R. Needham, Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, (Edinburgh, 1990), pp 112ff.
June 1776, the petitioners asked that while the issue continued to be discussed, 'in the meantime ministers or licentiates of the church be allowed to preach in their meeting-house.' 308 The Presbytery continued to reject the petition and the donors appealed again to the Assembly in 1777. 309 On 30 May 1777, the Assembly agreed with the decision of the Presbytery and Synod to reject the existing petition, but allowed the donors to make a fresh appeal and on 2 June instructed the Presbytery 'to receive the said petition.' 310 The decision of the Assembly in 1777 allowed several ministers of the Church of Scotland to preach in the meeting-house. 311 There were further delays but finally the 'concurrence of the magistrates and guildry' won the day 312 and the General Assembly of 1779 agreed to 'allow and authorise the petitioners to employ any licentiate or minister of the Church of Scotland to officiate occasionally in the meeting-house, until a stated minister be appointed.' 313

It is impossible to be certain how Thomas Gillespie would have felt towards the Chapel of Ease scheme within the Church of Scotland. Robert Gillespie and John

308 The decision of the Presbytery was confirmed by the Synod of Fife on 2 October 1776. Scots Magazine, XXXIX, (May, 1777), p 277.
309 Their fresh petition was dated 7 May 1777.
310 Ibid., p 278.
311 These included Robert Walker who followed Charles Stuart in Cramond in November 1776 and moved to the Canongate in 1784; James Mudie of Perth and James Innes of Yester who declined a move to the Chapel of Ease in Glasgow in 1781. See Fasti, Vol. 1, pp 12 and 400. When Thomson and Fernie objected to this move and asked the Presbytery to instigate disciplinary measures against the three ministers, the Presbytery agreed but rejected a further request that the Presbytery shut the Chapel. Scots Magazine, XL, (May, 1778) p 274.
312 By this time David Turnbull was the Provost of Dunfermline and he managed to gain the full support of the council behind the Chapel cause. Gordon Jenkins believes that 'between 1752 and 1774 at least two, if not four, of the provosts and a number of Bailies belonged to Gillespie's congregation.' Jenkins, Dunfermline Dissent, p 40. Jenkins also points out that in 1776 David Turnbull had backed the choice of Alan McConnochie, a young Advocate, as a commissioner to the General Assembly. He later became Lord Meadowbank. Ibid., p 41. Jenkins does not point out that McConnochie spoke for the petitioners in 1775. Edinburgh Magazine, IV, p 417.
313 Scots Magazine, XLI, (May, 1779), p 283.
Erskine both believed that he favoured the development of the Chapel system as a means of dissatisfied members of the Church of Scotland remaining within the Established Church and also allowing the congregation to choose their own minister. Gavin Struthers suggested that Robert Gillespie, who had become the 'land factor of Dr. Erskine', may well have co-operated 'with the wishes of the laird,' \(^{314}\) for personal reasons.

The return of the Dunfermline Relief Church to the Church of Scotland must be understood within the context of the various controversies which affected the Relief Church during the last years of Gillespie's life. When the Blairlogie congregation issued their call to Pirie, Gillespie and William Cruden, minister of the Glasgow Relief congregation disagreed with James Baine from the Edinburgh Relief congregation and opposed the request of the Blairlogie congregation to call the pastor of their choice. When the Colinsburgh congregation called James Cowan as their minister, Gillespie and Cruden supported their call, perhaps because they knew of Cowan's opposition to Pirie. This led to the strange situation in which Gillespie associated himself with men like Cruden and Cowan who expressed narrow views on the communion issue but agreed in their doubts concerning Pirie's theology. Gillespie had not altered his views regarding the open communion, but he did regard the doctrinal position of Pirie over the person of Christ to be detrimental to the spiritual life of the Church in Scotland. Small concluded that Gillespie had become disillusioned by these divisions within the Relief Church and 'wished his people to seek other fellowship after his death.' \(^{315}\) The fact that several of Gillespie's long-standing supporters such as John Tannochie and Provost Turnbull attended the

\(^{314}\) Struthers, *History of the Relief Church*, p 294. Struthers quotes John Smith, Gillespie's successor in Dunfermline who felt that 'for reasons best known to himself, he [Robert Gillespie] was now become the avowed enemy of that religious society which his deceased brother had the honour of founding.' Ibid., p 293


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Secession meeting houses in Dunfermline and Cairneyhill, both during his life and after Gillespie's death when no one preached in the Relief congregation,\footnote{Although Turnbull was willing to attend a Secession meeting house he also associated with James Cowan and in 1779 the Dunfermline Abbey Kirk Session Minutes of 7 May 1779 record that 'since their application for communion with the Church [Turnbull] had one or two of his children baptised by Mr Cowan of Colinsburgh.'} indicates that purity of doctrine occupied a prominent place in their thinking rather than only ecclesiastical affiliation. This may well indicate the emphasis in Gillespie's own ministry. While he delighted to share Christian fellowship with all 'visible saints,' he would not compromise his beliefs on what he viewed as the fundamentals of the gospel. One other fact which may indicate that Gillespie and Cruden had discussed the Chapel of Ease scheme is that when Cruden left Glasgow in the early part of 1774, a majority of the congregation applied to the Established Presbytery of Glasgow to become a Chapel of Ease. Becoming a Chapel of Ease scheme within the Church of Scotland allowed a congregation to issue a call to a minister of their own choice and also allowed the congregation some measure of independence in doctrine and discipline. Gillespie, it will be recalled, had never wanted to leave the Established Church of Scotland. He realised that his deposition took place because of the problems which he faced over the problem of patronage. At the General Assembly of 1753, his conscience did not allow him to request that he might be reponed to the ministry of the Church of Scotland. However, if a congregation could avoid problem of patronage by becoming a Chapel of Ease, the problem of staying outside the Church of Scotland had disappeared.\footnote{In 1774 Erskine stated that 'it is well known he [Thomas Gillespie] had it much at heart, that his Kirk at Dunfermline might, upon his death, if not sooner, become such a chapel. Hard as the usage was that he had received from his mother-church she remained to the last the object of his affection, not of his hatred or revenge.' T. Gillespie, Treatise on Temptation, p. vili.}
Epilogue

Following the death of Thomas Gillespie, the Relief Church continued to expand and grow. In 1800 the Relief Church had sixty congregations and 36,000 members, and by 1847 it had grown to 136 congregations. In May 1847, when it joined with the United Secession Church to form the United Presbyterian Church in Scotland, it became 'the largest single denomination in Glasgow' and 'in the country as a whole...claimed slightly under one-fifth of churchgoers.'

During the eighty-six years of its existence, the Relief Church continued, in various situations, to adhere to the principles of liberty of conscience, the spiritual independence of the Church and free communion. The Relief Church continued to respect and revere Gillespie's memory, but its members did not perceive themselves as a Gillespean Church; they were not the followers of a charismatic individual. The Presbytery of Relief was noted for its commitment to religious liberty, open communion and non-sectarian attitudes towards other Churches, and on these principles the Church advanced and grew. In 1778, when evangelicals within the Church of Scotland united with Burgher and Antiburgher Synods in violent opposition to the Government's Roman Catholic Relief Bill, the Relief Synod refused to join the 'No-Popery' alliance and declared that 'they heartily detested the doctrine of

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1 Brown, Social History, p 38. 118 of the 136 congregations of the Relief Church entered the Union while 400 congregations from the United Secession Church joined the new denomination. Robert Drummond points out that 'The reason for the absence of the others was not opposition to union. It was that they had already ceased to exist.' 'Later Story of the Relief Congregations' In Records of the Scottish Church History Society, VIII (1944), p 171.
persecution for conscience sake.' Although they expressed their concern over 'the spread of Popery' they believed that Acts of Parliament should not be used to restrict the freedom of individuals in religious beliefs and practices, but resolved 'to keep themselves to their own churches, as the places where they would stem, by their preaching, the flood-tide of Popery.' In 1779 Patrick Hutchison, Relief minister of St. Ninians, originally maintained that 'Popery ought not to be tolerated in any Protestant state, nor the penal laws against it repealed' but later in that year stated that 'those who are good and peaceable subjects of the civil state, should be allowed the free exercise of their religion.' During the later struggle for Catholic Emancipation in 1829, as the historian Ian Muirhead observed, 'the Relief Church...favoured emancipation.' In taking this position, the Relief Synod broke with the Westminster Confession of Faith which condemned the Pope's authority and

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3 Struthers, *History of the Relief Church*, p 310. During this period, Thomas Bell of Glasgow was not connected to the Relief Synod, and published a series of sermons 'on the alarming increase of Popery' in which he went so far as to 'maintain that the magistrate should wear the sword for the honour and defence of both tables of the law.' p 312.


6 Ian A. Muirhead, 'Catholic Emancipation : Scottish Reactions in 1829' In *The Innes Review*, XXIV (1973), p37. Muirhead indicates that 'the majority (though not all) supported this viewpoint. He gives the example of 'the minister of a Relief congregation south of Edinburgh' who 'told his congregation that the admission of the Catholic subjects of this empire to their civil rights would have the tendency to lessen rather than increase the number of adherents to the Church of Rome, a man rose in his congregation, and with the assistance of some others, turned the minister out of his pulpit and out of his church.' p 116. Struthers felt that the 'ministers of the Independent, Secession, and Relief churches were nearly unanimous for granting emancipation, but not their people.' *History of the Relief Church*, p 456.
expressed the hope that the civil magistrate would suppress such blasphemies and heresies.  

As early as the Spring of 1788, the Relief Synod asked the Burgher and Antiburgher Synods to 'deliver our sentiments against the inhuman system of the slave-trade.' 8 In 1792 Neil Douglas, minister of the Relief congregation in Cupar wrote on The African Slave Trade, a strong condemnation of the trade which expressed the feelings of his denomination. This was at a time when many members of the General Assembly of the established Church questioned the relevance of the issue. 9

By April 1834, significant changes within the United Secession Church led to discussions on the possibility of union with the Relief Church. 10 The influences of the Enlightenment had previously brought the congregations of the United Secession Church to adopt the attitude of the Relief Church towards the relationship between the civil magistrate and matters of religion.

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7 Westminster Confession of Faith, chapters XXII, 7; XXV, 6; XXIX, 2 and 6.

8 Struthers, History of the Relief Church, p 348. It was 12 May 1789 before William Wilberforce first spoke on the slave trade in the House of Commons.


10 McKerrow, Secession History, p 700. This coincided with an overture of the Presbytery of Dysart within the Relief Synod.
After 1829, both the Relief Church and United Secession Church had adopted Voluntaryism and along with the Secession Church's abandonment of renewing the Covenants, the way was open for steps towards a union of the two Churches.

The question of open communion was settled by the sixth Basis of Union which stated:

> That with regard to those Ministers and Sessions who may think that the 2d section of the 26th chapter of the Confession of Faith authorises free communion - that is, not loose or indiscriminate communion, but occasional admission to fellowship in the Lord's Supper of persons respecting whose Christian character satisfactory evidence had been obtained, though belonging to other religious denominations - they shall enjoy in the United body what they enjoyed in their separate communions - the right of acting on their conscientious convictions.

Although this catholic emphasis had isolated the Relief Church from the Secession Church through much of its history, the United Presbyterian Church would become non-sectarian and ecumenical in its relationship with other Churches.

Geographically, the United Presbyterian Church was strongest in the cities and towns of the Scottish Lowlands. It did not make any real inroads into the Highlands, where the Free Church of Scotland, formed in 1843, had a very large following of

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11 The Basis of Union spoke of the united Church asserting 'the obligation and the privilege of its members, influenced by regard to the authority of Christ, to support and extend by voluntary contribution, the ordinances of the gospel.' See Proceedings of the Synod of the United Presbyterian Church. (Edinburgh, 1847), p 10.

members and adherents. Calum Brown describes the Church as 'a powerful, strongly middle-class and by then predominantly urban denomination...[which] achieved considerable political influence in Edinburgh and Glasgow, with many town councillors and several MPs.'

In 1900 the United Presbyterian Church joined with the majority of the Free Church to form the United Free Church of Scotland. In 1929, the large majority of the United Free Church entered into union with the Church of Scotland. The Church of Scotland in 1929 was very different from the Church which had deposed Gillespie in 1752. No longer did patronage, restricted communion and liberty of conscience constitute divisive issues. Although the name of Gillespie had been largely forgotten by 1929, since that date the principles which he had embraced and which had led to his deposition and the founding of the Relief Church have largely defined the ethos of the Church in Scotland.

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13 Burleigh, Church History, p 363.

14 Brown, Social History, p 37.

15 The Free Church of Scotland was formed in 1843 when 454 out of 1195 ministers left the Established Church.

16 In 1900 over 90 per cent of the United Presbyterian Church Kirk sessions and 95 per cent of Free Church presbyteries agreed to union.
Conclusion

Thomas Gillespie had entered the ministry of the Church of Scotland in 1741 with his mind and heart set on exercising a ministry of pastoral care and preaching within the confines of the parish of Carnock. No one who attended his induction service could have imagined the impact which his life would have on the ecclesiastical politics of the eighteenth century, as well as the influence he would exercise on the piety of countless Christians to whom he ministered over the next thirty-three years. His involvement in the Cambuslang and Kilsyth awakenings brought him to the attention of evangelicals, in Britain and North America. His name would be linked to the establishment of a new Presbyterian denomination, which offered a spiritual home for evangelicals who were weary of the controversy over patronage and who welcomed a more ecumenical spirit of fellowship between Christians.

Gillespie was an ecclesiastical politician of considerable influence, whose main achievements were in articulating the evangelical opposition to the institution of patronage in the Church of Scotland. 1 Gillespie had maintained a consistent opposition to patronage during his ministry in Carnock. Between 1744 and 1749 he had also come to play a leading role in the efforts of the Presbytery of Dunfermline to restrict patronage and give a greater voice to popular sentiment in the selection of ministers. His involvement in the Inverkeithing dispute of 1749 to 1752 was the

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1 John K La Shall says that 'His significance lies in the principles which his firm stand helped to establish.' See the article on 'Thomas Gillespie' in The Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography. Edited by Donald M. Lewis, (Oxford, 1995), Vol. 1, p 442.
culmination of his conscientious opposition to a practice which he believed was weakening the unity of the Church and undermining the effectiveness of ministers in local parishes. For Gillespie, the property rights of patrons were of a secondary concern when compared with the need to appoint ministers who preached with power the gospel of personal salvation through grace and who could command the confidence of their parishioners. 2 Opposition to patronage had already swelled the membership of the Original Secession Churches, and he feared that if patronage continued to be imposed within the parishes of Scotland, without due regard to communal opinion, the result would be still further secessions of Church members, until the Established Church no longer represented the majority in the nation. 3 Many contemporaries felt that Gillespie’s stand at the General Assembly of 1752 had indicated a stubborn attitude on Gillespie’s part, a sectarian spirit that placed private beliefs above the unity of the Church. In truth, however, he was deeply concerned for the unity of the Established Church. He was motivated by a conviction that he must be faithful to the promptings of his Christian conscience, but also by the belief that only by restricting patronage could the unity of the Church of Scotland be preserved. 4

2 Gillespie speaks of the ‘immediate design’ of ministers as being ‘the conversion of sinners, and the edification of the body of Christ’ and warns of the danger of being ‘taken up with others things than his work, secular business, company, diversions…a notable instance of the art of hell in this regard is, his influencing ministers…to countenance the exercise of patronage.’ Treatise on Temptation, pp 129-131.

3 This was a common argument during the Schism Debate in 1765. See Morren, Annals of the General Assembly. Vol. 2, pp 305ff.

4 Gillespie feared that the ‘settlement in vacant churches of persons disagreeable to the body of Christian congregations, at least not by their choice, by which Satan well knows edification will be signally obstructed, and the life and power of religion eaten out, through the divisions, animosities with which such settlements are attended.’ Treatise on Temptation, p 131.
Gillespie had demonstrated his continued concern for the welfare of the Church of Scotland by refusing to preach within the Carnock parish church after he had been deposed from the ministry in 1752. He declined to become identified with the adversarial spirit which he believed had influenced the refusal of the Secession clergy in the 1730s to give up their parish livings. At the same time, he had felt he could not entreat the General Assembly of 1753 to reinstate him as a minister of the gospel, as such an action would only strengthen the system of patronage which he sincerely believed was dividing the national Church. In voluntarily leaving the Church he loved, he believed that he was serving its highest interests, and that his sacrifice would contribute to its long-term unity.

While Gillespie is generally remembered as the founder of the Relief Church, his relations with that Church were ambiguous. It is not clear that he wanted to form a new Presbyterian denomination and he does not seem to have felt at home in the new Church. For all its professions of unity and fellowship, the Relief Church was soon torn by conflict, and Gillespie found himself embroiled in controversy with men like James Baine and Alexander Simson, who themselves had left the Church of Scotland on issues of principle and who were adamant that their conscientiously held views were as valid as those of Gillespie. Following the conflicts within the Relief Church surrounding the settlements of Alexander Pirie at Blairlogie and James Cowan at Colinsburgh, Gillespie became disillusioned with the Relief Church and evidently

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5 See Struthers, History of the Relief Church, pp 93-94.
6 See Lindsay, Life of Thomas Gillespie, pp 298-303.
longed to return to the Church where he had begun his spiritual pilgrimage. His deathbed request that his congregation return to the Church of Scotland reflected his enduring commitment to the ideal of a national Church. 7

In his theology, Gillespie was primarily a pastor, inspired by a devotion to the bible as the supreme source of inspired revelation. He dedicated his life to expounding what he saw as the simple truths of scripture to the common people. 8 He exercised his ministry as a pastoral theologian within the context of a Christian Scotland which had been shaped by the theology of the Westminster Assembly of Divines. In his youth, along with most of his contemporaries, he would have memorised the Shorter Catechism and known much, if not all, of the Westminster Confession of Faith by heart. He was familiar with the many disputes over the interpretation of the Confession in early eighteenth-century Scotland, and his contact with the Marrowmen made him aware that any deviation from the Confession could bring a charge of heresy.

None the less, he declined to be rigidly bound by the Confession and instead embraced a more open theological approach. Gillespie had discovered a broader evangelicalism during his two years at Doddridge’s Academy in Northampton, where he had been exposed to evangelical clergymen within the Church of England, as well

8 He warned his fellow ministers to avoid the danger of being more concerned with ‘the manner than the matter of discourses...about fine style, proper address, handsome delivery, meet pathos, just neat periods, while they are thus kept from being concerned about...love to the souls of men, which is the life and soul of right ministerial performances and exercises.’ Treatise on Temptation, p 137.
as to pastors associated with Independent and Baptist congregations. He had come to recognise that differences of opinions could be held by Christians who were conscientiously committed to preaching the gospel. 9 This is not to say that Gillespie's preaching encouraged a freedom of enquiry among his parishioners or that he accepted Arminian as well as Calvinistic interpretations of certain passages of scripture, as Doddridge had done within his theological curriculum. Rather, it is to say that Gillespie sought to transcend a sectarian spirit and that he held an ecumenical vision of the New Testament. Indeed, one of the greatest disappointments which Gillespie experienced when he was deposed from the Church of Scotland was the unwillingness of former ministerial friends to assist him in his ministry in Dunfermline. An episode which might appear to contradict this estimate of Gillespie's tolerant views was his opposition to Alexander Pirie's settlement in Blairlogie. But here he seems to have become convinced that Pirie was unsound in his doctrine of Christ, which touched the very foundation of the Faith.

Throughout his life Gillespie appears to have followed Doddridge's advice to read authors representing diverse theological interpretations. Within his sermons he referred to the writings of Pelagius. 10 We might have expected Gillespie to have embraced a more moderate form of Calvinism, such as that which he had encountered in Northampton. And indeed Gillespie did not make the contentious subject of

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9 Gillespie would have known of the contact which Doddridge had with such evangelicals as John Wesley, George Whitefield, Count Zinzendorf and the Moravians. See Nuttall, Philip Doddridge 1702-51, p 25.

10 See Chapter 6, footnote 22 of Thesis.
Predestination a dominant note in his preaching. For example, it was only in 1761, twenty years after he had begun his ministry in Carnock, that he preached a series of sermons on Romans 9. When he did consider the subject of election, he accepted the classical Reformed understanding of the doctrine, as expressed in the Westminster Confession. He adopted the framework of covenant theology to expound the saving work of Christ, with its understanding that the work of atonement which Christ accomplished on the cross was designed only for the elect.

One area in which Gillespie departed from the Westminster Confession was in its statement of the role of the Civil Magistrate in religious matters. Gillespie did not believe that the civil power should be used to enforce acceptance of the Christian faith or to suppress different religious opinions. Following his example, none of the elders who were ordained during his ministry in Carnock subscribed to the Westminster Confession. Rather they simply declared their adherence to the scriptures and the rules of the Church. Moreover Gillespie dissented from the decision of the Presbytery of Dunfermline not to sustain a call to a Dunfermline charge given to a Mr Ogilvie, because Ogilvie refused to subscribe to the Confession of Faith concerning the Power of the Civil Magistrate in religious matters. On another occasion he dissented from the proposal of the Presbytery of Dunfermline to involve

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11 Gillespie knew that magistrates could ‘persecute for conscience sake.’ Treatise on Temptation, p 116.

12 See Minutes of the Dunfermline Presbytery 1751-1760, CH2/105.8, p 151c.

13 See Records of the Presbytery of Dunfermline, CH 2/105.6, pp 414, 423-4.
the magistrates of the town in bringing Erskine's ministry in the Abbey Church to an end.

One of the most important aspects of Gillespie's pastoral theology was the emphasis on the celebration of the Lord's Supper within the structure of the Presbyterian communion seasons. He had been converted during a communion season in the Borders and throughout his ministry he gave particular attention to the drama of the sacrament. During his ministry in Carnock, Gillespie moved from one communion season to another, enjoying the 'holy fairs', and ministering to the hundreds of people who came on spiritual pilgrimage. The Lord's Supper stood out in his thinking as the chief means which God provided to strengthen and deepen the faith, love and hope of the believer. After he had been deposed from the Church of Scotland, the communion seasons in Dunfermline may have occupied an even greater amount of his time and energy, in part because he could no longer look for assistance from former colleagues in the Established Church. At each of thirteen sacramental occasions following his deposition, he preached no fewer than nine sermons and exhorted at seven or eight tables. 14

Gillespie's lasting influence in the history of the Church in Scotland was his open attitude in welcoming to the Lord's Table all who made a credible profession of faith in Christ as head of the Church. He abandoned the normal Scottish practice of allowing only Presbyterians to partake of the bread and wine and extended his circle of fellowship to Episcopalians such as George Whitefield and to Independents. His

encounter with Doddridge's ecumenical spirit at Northampton, as well as his experience during the Evangelical Revival, taught him to appreciate the spirituality of the many Christians who did not share his views on Church government.

One of the more interesting aspects of Gillespie's thought had been his interaction with Enlightenment thought. Beginning during his years of study at Edinburgh University, it had been strengthened through his contact with Philip Doddridge, who encouraged all his students to become 'citizens of the intellectual world.' 15 Gillespie's friendship with John Erskine and Jonathan Edwards, leading evangelicals who espoused the ethos of the Enlightenment, also contributed to his openness to Enlightenment language and ideas. 16

In his preaching Gillespie used terminology which was characteristic of the Enlightenment, including words such as 'enlightened' and 'light', to describe both scriptural revelation and the experience of conversion. He was prepared to borrow words and images from contemporary culture to convey biblical truth. 17 Another feature of Gillespie's thought which reflected Enlightenment influence was the emphasis he gave to reason. In his editing of the McCulloch manuscripts, for example,

15 Peter Jones, 'The Polite Academy', p 160. David Bebbington speaks of Doddridge as being 'as much an Enlightenment thinker as a Calvinist theologian.' Evangelicalism in Modern Britain, p 54.

16 See articles by George M. Marsden on 'Jonathan Edwards' and John R. McIntosh on 'John Erskine' in Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, pp 345-6 and 363.

17 However, his use of Enlightenment terminology did not mean that he believed that the 'light of reason' was sufficient, in and of itself, to bring sinners to a knowledge of God. On the contrary, Gillespie was convinced that the human conscience, which he described as the 'light of nature', would never bring a person to a personal experience of God's grace without the direct action of the Holy Spirit in conversion.
Gillespie had expressed his concern that the emphasis which some converts gave to sensations and religious emotions could undermine the authority of the scriptures as the only means to know the will of God. He minimised the value of religious ‘enthusiasm’, stressing instead the relationship between reason and revelation. He also emphasised the need to investigate and test the claims of converts, which reflected a commitment to critical thought and rational investigation. Gillespie also shared an eighteenth-century view of progress, not in terms of the perfectibility of man or society, but rather in terms of the progress of the gospel. He believed, for example, that the Cambuslang revival was the first fruit of a wider spiritual awakening, destined to lead to the conversion of Israel and to additional spiritual blessings among Gentile nations.

The optimistic spirit of the Enlightenment can also be discerned in the emphasis which Gillespie gave to the free offer of the gospel. This he preached to every person without distinction. His belief that Christ had died only for the elect did not hinder Gillespie from pleading, in sermon after sermon, with all men and women to accept the free offer of salvation which God extended to every individual in the world. His desire both to communicate the free offer of the gospel and to maintain his belief in a limited atonement suggests a tension: he was evidently struggling to retain his early adherence to a Calvinistic stress on particularism while, at the same time, he was embracing the universalism and optimism of the Enlightenment. 18 The optimism of the Enlightenment was also reflected in his emphasis on the doctrine of assurance

18 See Camic, Experience and Enlightenment, pp 1-91.
of salvation. Gillespie summoned believers to experience a full assurance of faith in Christ. He spoke of the difference between an objective assurance based on the promises of God and the work of Christ, and a subjective experience of assurance which grew out of a reflection on the work of God in the believer's life.

Gillespie's engagement with the ethos of the Scottish Enlightenment was also reflected in his connections with the medical world through his father-in-law, John Riddel, who was a physician in Edinburgh. Gillespie took a keen interest in medical science. He argued, for example, that in their thirst for knowledge, doctors must avoid experiments which might endanger the lives of their patients. Aware that physical illness could be caused by overeating, excessive drinking and bad digestion, he advised his parishioners to maintain a disciplined and moderate manner of life. But this is not to say he rejected a belief in the power of prayer for physical healing. He encouraged the elders of the Church to pray with the sick and to anoint them with oil, and he believed that prayer for physical healing would be answered by God.

The influence of the Enlightenment was further reflected in Gillespie's views on the importance of social morality and personal ethics. He believed that the law of God had a part to play in the life of the believer, and never suggested that the obligations of the moral law were lessened by the gospel. Gillespie was eager to assert the duties of personal morality in daily life. In his Treatise on Temptation, for example, he applied the standards of Christian discipleship to people in different social
spheres, from farm labourers to civil magistrates. It might be noted here that Gillespie always wrote with a simple style, seeking to reach the consciences of all his readers. Although he shared the Enlightenment programme for the improvement of society, he did not follow the example of such Moderate divines as Hugh Blair and cultivate a polished and refined style of writing.

Gillespie also shared in the Enlightenment project for reform in both Church and community. He appealed to Parliament not to meddle with Church affairs in those areas where Christ's authority alone should be recognised. In leaving the Church of Scotland and forming the Relief Presbytery, he endeavoured to create a communion free of sectarianism and oppression. He believed that he was not abandoning the principles of the Established Church but seeking to restore the Church of Scotland to an original purity in doctrine, worship, principles of government and openness in communion. In his conviction that every male member of a local congregation should have a vote in the election of its minister, Gillespie demonstrated a commitment to liberty of conscience and the inherent dignity of the individual. His opposition to patronage however, did not mean that Gillespie opposed the existing political order. He advised his congregation to be loyal subjects of the Hanoverian monarchy and to pay their taxes. He expressed his opposition to the Jacobite rebellion in 1745 by holding a day of fasting and in asking God's blessing for George II. Following the defeat of the rising, Gillespie travelled to Edinburgh along with

19 See Treatise on Temptation, pp iv-xvi.
other members of the Dunfermline Presbytery to offer congratulations to the Duke of Cumberland. 20

Gillespie took an interest in wider social issues. He lived in a society where the relief of the poor was still the responsibility of the Church, and he urged his elders to show compassion to those who were in need. Early in his ministry in Carnock, for example, Gillespie demonstrated concern for a dumb woman who was made pregnant and then abandoned by the father of the child. Rather than simply condemn the woman for fornication, Gillespie asked the kirk session to pay a local nurse to care for the child and to buy some clothes. As well as caring for the needy, Gillespie condemned any actions which would inflict suffering on others. He instructed employers to pay adequate wages, and warned money lenders to refrain from demanding more than the legal interest. 21 None should become wealthy at the expense of the poor. Gillespie believed that the Church had a prophetic role in which ministers were duty bound to condemn sin and injustice, wherever it manifested itself.

Thus Gillespie engaged with Enlightenment thought in a variety of different areas. He shared in the Enlightenment commitment to freedom and social justice, and in its emphasis on the importance of reason (although he did not believe that reason alone could bring men and women to a knowledge of God). He adopted an optimistic attitude towards the past and the future of humankind, an attitude based, not on the

20 Gillespie believed that government was essential for 'good order and harmony' within society and that it was dangerous to 'speak evil of dignities; to undervalue and condemn the office of magistracy' because it is an 'ordinance of heaven.' Ibid. p 122.
perfectibility of human nature, but on the sovereign purposes of God. He recognised the universal needs and value of all peoples, believing that the work of Christ brought hope to all who would turn to him in faith and repentance. He embraced the distinctive language of the Enlightenment, and endeavoured to communicate the gospel to the educated social orders as well as to the labouring people of the Dunfermline neighbourhood. Despite this positive engagement with the Enlightenment, however, Gillespie continued to hold fast to the traditional doctrines of the Westminster Confession of Faith. He showed no tendency, for example, to adopt a more moderate form of Calvinism with regard to predestination and the extent of the atonement. 22

Gillespie's life was, in many respects, haunted by failure. He failed to restore what he viewed as the fundamental principles and a spirit of unity in the Church of Scotland. After leaving the Established Church, he witnessed continued divisions within the Relief Church. He experienced disagreements in the settlement of ministers. He discovered that some of his ministerial colleagues did not share his vision of open communion. He detected, among people like Pirie, a spirit of enquiry which did not sit comfortably with his own commitment to Calvinist orthodoxy. By the end of his life, he witnessed the collapse of many of his dreams and visions. Perhaps not surprisingly, in latter years he became inflexible, intolerant of those who opposed his authority, a man with a quick temper. 23 He died a disillusioned man, who

21 Ibid., pp 63-68.

22 See Chapter 6, pp 154-155, 156-159 of Thesis.
declined to attend the meetings of the Relief Synod when it was formed in 1772, believing that the Relief Church should move towards reunion with the Church of Scotland, with local congregations becoming Chapels of Ease.

Despite the disappointments that he had experienced as a minister in both the Church of Scotland and the Relief Church, the principles which Gillespie embraced were in many respects advanced for his time. They are principles which have continued to influence the life of the Church in the latter part of the twentieth century. These principles include a belief that each individual, regardless of economic background or educational attainment, is of equal value in the eyes of God and should have a voice in the affairs of the Church, including the selection of the minister. The Church should be no ‘respecer of persons’, and should not be controlled by Crown or aristocratic patrons. While the Church should teach loyalty to the political order, this should not include submission to an unjust regime or to a state that seeks to control the Church for political or social advantage. The Church must maintain its independent witness. While the Church should embrace a defined set of doctrinal standards, grounded in scripture, it should not allow its own specific beliefs to result in a narrow sectarianism or to force it to withdraw from communion with other Christian denominations. On the contrary, in Gillespie’s insistence upon open communion with all who held the headship of Christ can be discerned the beginnings of the ecumenical outreach in the Scottish Reformed tradition. Further, the Church must not withdraw from society, but should rather engage with the culture of its day, must enter into society to seek to elevate society. The kingdom of God, Gillespie

23 See Struthers, History of the Relief Church, p 94.
believed, would not be achieved by a remote Church, a Church in the desert, but by a Church that embraced the language, learning and culture of its society, and worked to transform them from within. Gillespie knew disappointment and failure in his own lifetime. But his ideals have survived and in many ways have triumphed.
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