

Paper, Parchment and Protestants: Reformers and the Preservation of Catholic Ecclesiastical Documents in the Parish of St Andrews, c.1550–80¹

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Many historians have emphasised the large amount of documents lost during the Scottish Reformation. Yet a substantial number of Catholic records survived the religious upheavals. This article focuses on the Catholic ecclesiastical documents preserved in the St Andrews burgh archives. In the summer of 1559 St Andrews became a Protestant burgh, and experienced considerable damage to religious buildings. Nonetheless, many of the papers of Catholic institutions were preserved. The main individuals involved in keeping these documents appear to have been committed Reformers. This article examines evidence for the preservation of Catholic documents being a deliberate policy on the part of Protestant officials, and considers possible motivations for their actions.

In his recent book on *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation* Alec Ryrie declared that: ‘Later Protestants had little interest in preserving the records of the popish Church.’² Ryrie’s statement echoes a lengthy tradition in Scottish historiography of bemoaning the quantity of ecclesiastical documents lost at the Reformation, rather than marvelling at the number of records that survive.³ Archives from across Scotland bear witness to the fact that the Reformers did not implement

¹ I am grateful to the St Andrews Local History Foundation for funding this research and to Professor Roger Mason and the reviewers of *Scottish Archives* for their remarks on draft versions of this article. I would also like to thank the staff of the University of St Andrews Special Collections for their unflinching help and advice.

² A. Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation* (Manchester, 2006), 98.

³ In the eighteenth century Thomas Innes regretted ‘the loss that our antiquities have sustained from blind zealots’, claiming that during ‘the days of the reformation ... many precious monuments of our antiquities were daily perishing, or put to sale for waste paper or parchment’: T. Innes, *A Critical Essay on the Ancient Inhabitants of the Northern Part of Britain, or Scotland* (London, 1729), vol. 2, 585–6. Similar views have been expressed by modern historians. David McRoberts argued that the Reformers embarked on an ‘orgy of destruction [of] archives, manuscripts and printed books’, and that as a result of Protestants’ ‘senseless attacks [the] archives of cathedrals, monasteries and lesser churches have almost entirely disappeared’: D. McRoberts, ‘Material Destruction Caused by the Scottish Reformation’, in (ed.) D. McRoberts, *Essays on the Scottish Reformation* (Glasgow, 1962), 457–8.

a total holocaust of the papers of the church they tore apart.⁴ Although many liturgical and devotional manuscripts do seem to have been destroyed during the religious upheavals, a significant proportion of the Catholic Church's administrative documents were preserved, often by devout Protestants.⁵

Individuals and institutions who played an active part in establishing Reformed worship, nevertheless took measures to ensure the survival of Catholic records. In the conspicuously Protestant city of St Andrews the provost and burgh council preserved numerous manuscripts concerning the management of the Catholic Church's affairs, despite having contributed to the overthrow of the old ecclesiastical hierarchy.⁶ Protestant burgh officials' selection and retention of pre-Reformation ecclesiastical records has received relatively little scholarly attention, yet it has implications for understanding both the nature of the religious changes and wider sixteenth-century attitudes to the importance of written evidence. This paper will examine what sorts of Catholic ecclesiastical documents survived in the hands of the St Andrews burgh council, and what evidence there is for their preservation being a matter of intentional choice, before discussing what motivated committed members of the Reformed Kirk to preserve the records of an institution they were so determinedly dismantling.

The burgh of St Andrews had a sudden, dramatic and destructive Reformation.⁷ Until the summer of 1559 St Andrews was Scotland's Catholic religious capital.⁸ It was the seat of the country's senior archbishopric, the site of the shrine of the nation's patron saint, and the base for much of Scotland's ecclesiastical administration. However, during the summer of 1559 Archbishop Hamilton and his supporters were driven from the city and the burgh authorities

⁴ In particular many cartularies survive, such as those of the Church of the Virgin and St Anne, Glasgow, NLS Adv MS 9A.1.12, and Crail Collegiate Church, NLS Adv MS 34.4.6. Records concerning anniversary masses were also sometimes preserved, such as the obit book for the burgh of Ayr: J. Paterson, *The Obit Book of the Church of St John the Baptist, Ayr* (Edinburgh, 1848).

⁵ Although there are several contemporary references to the Reformers burning 'mass books' there are far fewer comments regarding the destruction of ecclesiastical records by Protestants. Writing in the seventeenth century, John Spottiswoode was unusual in reporting that 'The registers of the church and Bibliothekes [were] cast into the fire': J. Spottiswoode, *The History of the Church of Scotland*, quoted in McRoberts, 'Material Destruction Caused by the Scottish Reformation', 441.

⁶ John McCallum suggests that 'the Reformation in St Andrews enjoyed considerable support from the burgh leadership and the university': J. McCallum, *Reforming the Scottish Parish: The Reformation in Fife, 1560–1640* (Farnham, 2010), 43.

⁷ Jane Dawson refers to St Andrews' 'Reformation Day' and argues that the citizens 'literally awoke on Sunday 11 June 1559 in a town full of Catholic churches and went to bed that night with a Protestant burgh': J. Dawson, "'The Face of Ane Perfyrt Reformed Kyrk': St Andrews and the Early Scottish Reformation", in (ed.) J. Kirk, *Humanism and Reform: The Church in Europe, England and Scotland 1400–1643* (Oxford, 1991), 415.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 414.

officially embraced Protestantism.⁹ In the process there appears to have been substantial damage to ecclesiastical property, and in particular to religious images. On 20 June 1559 Sir James Croft (who was in communication with leading Scottish Protestants) informed the English government that the Lords of the Congregation ‘have put downe the pryorye of Sancte Androwes in thys sorte: altering the habyte, burninge of Images and mas bokes and brekyng of awters’.¹⁰ In his *History of the Reformation in Scotland* John Knox proudly recorded that the provost, bailies and ‘commonalty’ of St Andrews ‘did agree to remove all monuments of idolatry, which also they did with expedition’, a comment which again implies that widespread iconoclasm took place.¹¹ There may also have been more extensive attacks on religious buildings: for example Lord Herries claimed that the Reformers went ‘to St Androes, and heer they spoyled all; and not content with the spoyl of the whole Churches and Monasteries, they pulled doune the verie walls of the Gray and Black Friers Monasteries, goodlie things and of great antiquitie’.¹² Yet, despite these disturbances, many records from Catholic institutions survive.

Documents concerning the pre-Reformation church in St Andrews are kept in a variety of locations,¹³ with the most notable collections being those archives preserved by the university and the burgh council.¹⁴ It is the latter with which this paper is concerned. Now held in the University of St Andrews Special Collections (on behalf of the National Records of Scotland), the St Andrews burgh archives contain at least 255 individual manuscripts relating

⁹ Archbishop Hamilton fled the town on the day that Knox preached at Holy Trinity Church, St Andrews, on the text concerning ‘the ejection of the buyers and sellers forth of the Temple of Jerusalem’: W. C. Dickinson (ed.), *John Knox’s History of the Reformation in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1949), vol. 1, 182–3.

¹⁰ TNA, SP 59/1, f. 212 v.

¹¹ Dickinson, *Knox’s History of the Reformation*, vol. 1, 182.

¹² Lord Herries, *Historical Memoirs of the Reign of Mary Queen of Scots*, (ed.) R. Pitcairn (Edinburgh, 1836), 40. The extent of the devastation to the buildings of the two friaries in St Andrews is debatable. Janet Foggie suggests that ‘There was not the wholesale destruction which has sometimes been posited’: J. Foggie, *Renaissance Religion in Urban Scotland: The Dominican Order, 1450–1560* (Leiden, 2003), 282. It is, though, clear that by the early 1560s there had been significant damage as, in a charter from April 1561, Friar John Grierson (the Provincial of the Dominican Order) referred to the ruins of the St Andrews Dominican Convent: St Andrews University Library (hereafter StAUL) B65/23/343.

¹³ For instance, the Register of St Andrews Priory is in the National Library of Scotland, Adv 17.1.3. A collection of St Andrews manuscripts, including the letter book of Prior Haldenstone, are now in Wolfenbüttel, having been removed from the Cathedral Priory by Marcus Wagner in the 1550s. See J. H. Baxter (ed.), *Copiale Prioratus Sanctiandree* (Oxford, 1930), xvii–xxxi.

¹⁴ The various university collections contain a large amount of material concerning the pre-Reformation Church, notably the series StAUL UYUY110, StAUL UYSS110, StAUL UYSL11 and StAUL UYSM110.

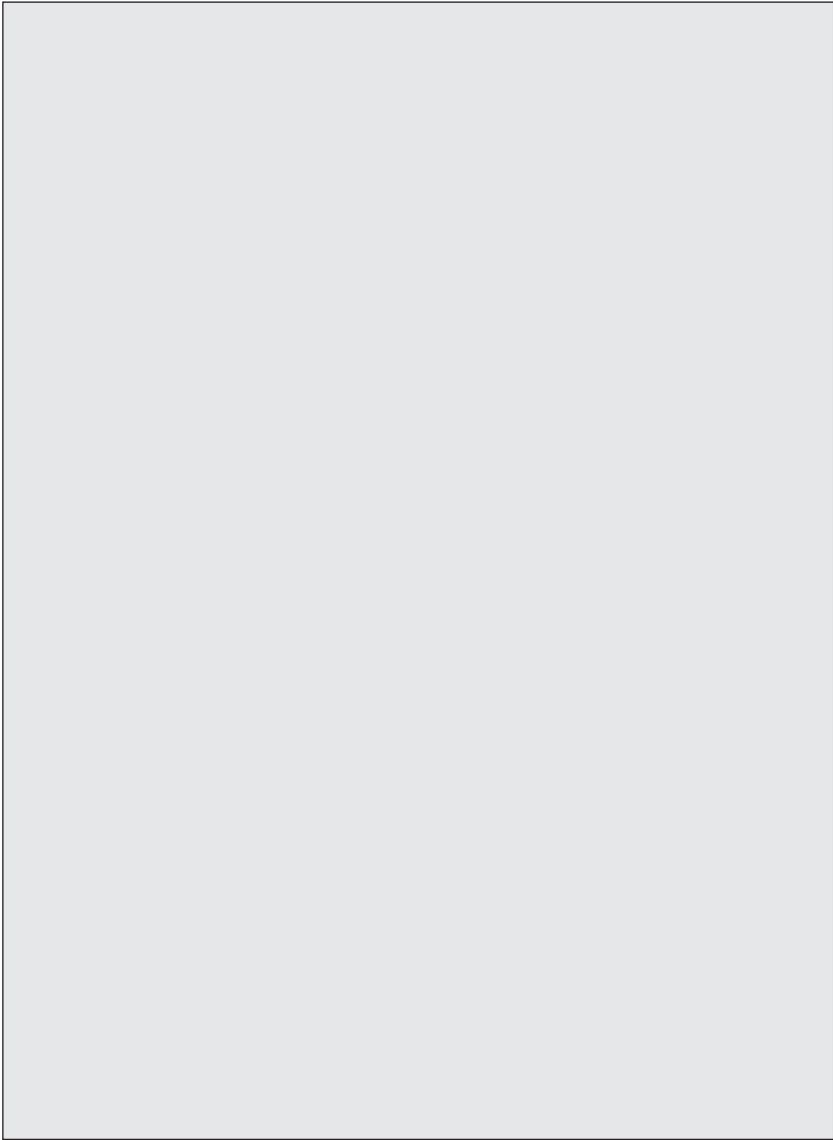


Plate 1 The *Town Church Cartulary*, StAUL B65/1/5, f. 24r. (Courtesy of the National Records of Scotland.)

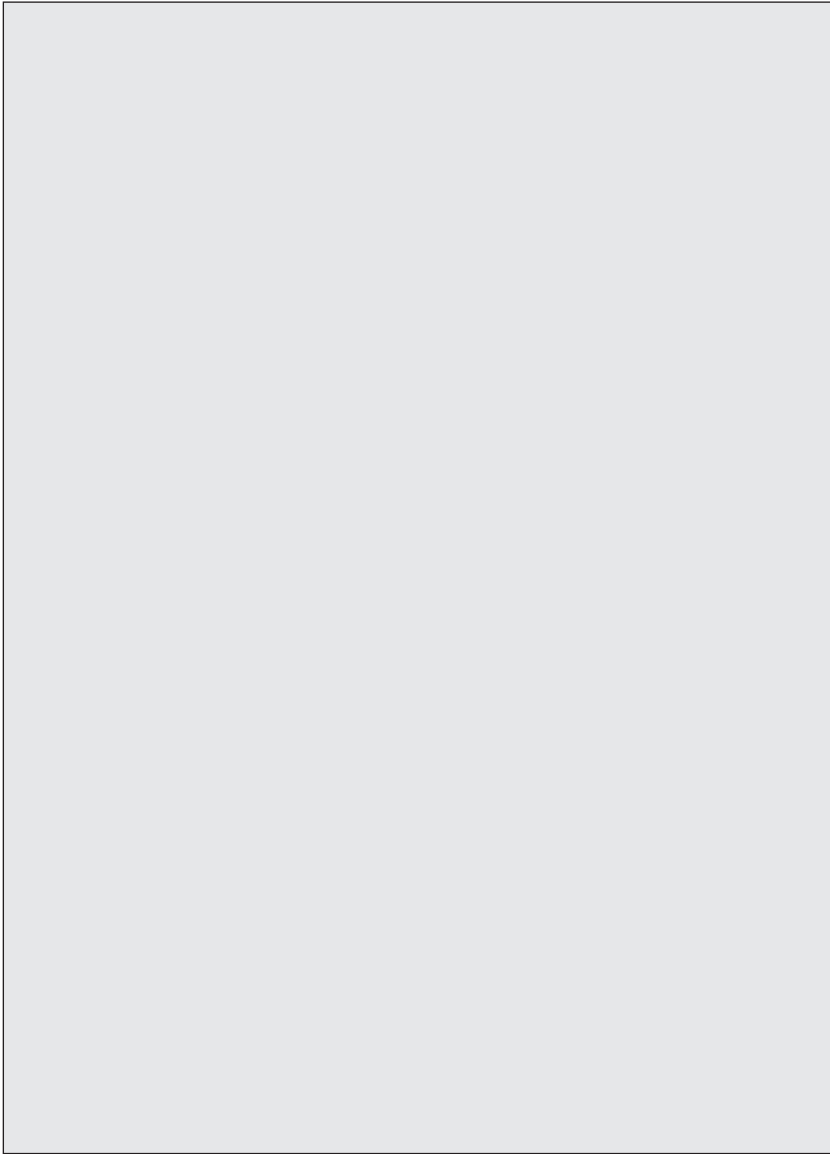


Plate 2 The *Register of Evidents*, StAUL.msDA890.S1R4, p. 2. (Courtesy of St Andrews University Library.)

to the pre-Reformation church, as well as two cartularies concerning the affairs of the Catholic Church in St Andrews.¹⁵ In addition there survives a third cartulary, the *Register of Evidents of the City of St Andrews*, which was in the hands of the burgh council throughout much of the early modern period, and will therefore in this paper be considered with the main burgh archives, although it is now technically part of the university's own collection of manuscripts.¹⁶

Of the three cartularies, the *Town Church Cartulary* (Pl. 1) was probably completed before the Reformation, and mainly details transactions concerning two chaplainries of the Virgin Mary in the parish church of Holy Trinity.¹⁷ The *Black Book* and the *Register of Evidents* (Pl. 2) were compiled before, during and shortly after the Reformation crisis.¹⁸ The *Register* was begun in the late fifteenth century by a priest from Holy Trinity, with the avowed aim of ensuring 'that the chaplainries established, and to be established, may endure perpetually in future times, together with the names of the founders of the same'.¹⁹ However, in the 1560s John Motto, the common clerk to the city of St Andrews, used the *Register* to record both ancient rights pertaining to the burgh and the redistribution of chaplainry property.²⁰ The *Black Book* was the only one of the cartularies to be started in the sixteenth century, John Motto having begun its compilation in 1550 on the orders of the burgh council.²¹ The early documents all concern Holy Trinity Church, but around 1560 Motto started to include charters relating to other religious foundations in the city and some secular documents of relevance to St Andrews, such as details of tax exemptions.²²

Almost half of the extant individual manuscripts record the endowment of chaplainries and anniversary masses in the parish church.²³ A further forty-three documents deal with the administration of Holy Trinity more generally, forty concern gifts to the city's friaries, whilst thirty-four relate to the sale, purchase and feuing of church lands. However, a substantial minority (almost ten per cent) cover other aspects of church affairs. For instance, an instrument raising the St Andrews Dominicans' house into a convent has survived, as has a deed from 1519 describing the audience in which Pope Leo X agreed to the amalgamation of this friary with those in St Monans and Cupar.²⁴ There are also several agreements between the burgh council and the clerics of Holy

¹⁵ Respectively the archive StAUL B65/23, and the cartularies StAUL B65/1/1 and StAUL B65/1/5.

¹⁶ StAUL msDA890.S1R4.

¹⁷ StAUL B65/1/5.

¹⁸ StAUL B65/1/1, StAUL msDA890.S1R4.

¹⁹ StAUL msDA890.S1R4, p. 1. Translation, W. E. K. Rankin, *The Parish Church of the Holy Trinity, St Andrews, Pre-Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1955), 104.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 40–46, 67–85.

²¹ StAUL B65/1/1, f. 1.

²² *Ibid.*, ff. 28r–56v.

²³ StAUL B65/23.

²⁴ StAUL B65/23/75, StAUL B65/23/215.



Plate 3 Indenture between the Provost and Bailies of St Andrews and the Choir of Holy Trinity, StAUL B65/23/242. (Courtesy of the National Records of Scotland.)

Trinity concerning the conduct of services in the parish church, such as the indenture from 1527 (Pl. 3) wherein the procurator of the choristers promised the provost and bailies of St Andrews that the choir of Holy Trinity would ‘syng daly matinis hie mass and evinsang with nott of the best fasson’, and agreed that no priest would be appointed who could not ‘sing playn sang prickit sang and descant for the honour and uphalding of Goddis service’.²⁵ These are documents which are the product of, and whose content reflect, the traditions of Catholic Scotland. Significantly, though, the overwhelming majority of the extant documents also have an economic aspect or define wider obligations and privileges, which perhaps was what encouraged the St Andrews officials to preserve them.

The survival of the St Andrews charters and rentals was not merely a fortunate accident; it was the result of deliberate decisions made by local administrators. During the 1560s there appear to have been considerable efforts made to preserve the texts of documents relating to the revenues and rights of the Catholic Church. At least nineteen charters concerning the pre-Reformation church were copied into either the *Black Book* or the *Register of Evidents* after 1560. The effort involved in copying sometimes quite lengthy documents by hand gives an indication of how much these manuscripts were valued. The idea that St Andrews officials consciously chose to keep administrative documents concerning the old church is given further credence by the lists of charters of former Catholic institutions made during the 1560s.

²⁵ StAUL B65/23/242.

For instance, the *Black Book* contains an inventory of the charters of the St Andrews Dominican Friary, a substantial number of which have survived to this day in the burgh archives.²⁶ This inventory explicitly states that it was compiled ‘efter the tyme of reformacione of religione quhen all freris wes dischergit owt of this realme’.²⁷

The post-Reformation inventory of friary charters was compiled by ‘the command of Provest, baillies and consaill of [the] cite’.²⁸ Burgh officials appear to have been a driving force behind the preservation of Catholic administrative documents. The records discussed here were kept in the archives of the St Andrews burgh council, which were for many years stored in the town charter chest in the parish church of Holy Trinity. The majority of the documents which were copied into the *Black Book* and the *Register of Evidents* were transcribed by John Motto, the common clerk of the city of St Andrews. Motto frequently preceded his entries with statements such as the following concerning an extract from the Great Register of St Andrews Cathedral Priory:

In the Register of the Monastery of St Andrews, in the beginning of the Book, on the fifth folio of the same are contained the underwritten clauses correctly extracted by me, John Motto, notary public.²⁹

Motto appears to have been acting on the orders of Sir Patrick Learmonth, provost of the city of St Andrews, and the burgh’s bailies. At the start of the *Black Book* Motto declared that the cartulary was:

begun by Johne Motto comone clerk of the said cite be autorite and at the comand of honorabill man patrick lermouth of dearsy provest of the said cite.³⁰

Both John Motto and Sir Patrick Learmonth were closely involved with the implementation of Protestantism in the burgh of St Andrews. John Motto was one of the first elders of the St Andrews kirk session (being elected during 1559), and seems to have compiled the kirk session minutes.³¹ Sir Patrick Learmonth represented St Andrews at the Reformation Parliament, was instrumental in the removal of the city’s religious images, and (according to Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*) had in 1558 refused to organise the execution of Walter Mylne for heresy.³² They were men who (at least by the summer of 1559) were firmly

²⁶ StAUL B65/1/1, ff. 52r–53v.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 52r.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 52r.

²⁹ StAUL B65/1/1, f. 34r. Translation from *Calendar of St Andrews Charters*, StAUL B65/22, Charter 4. The Latin reads: ‘In Registro Monasterii Sanctiandree in principio libri folio quinto ejusdem continentur subscripte clausule veraciter per me Joannem Motto notarium publicum extractae’.

³⁰ StAUL B65/1/1, f. 1r.

³¹ D. Hay Fleming (ed.), *Register of the Minister Elders and Deacons of the Christian Congregation of St Andrews, 1559–1600* (Edinburgh, 1889–90), 2.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 8; Dickinson, *Knox’s History of the Reformation*, vol. 1, 182; J. Foxe, *The Unabridged*

allied to the Protestant cause and through their positions on the burgh council they were also central to the secular administration of St Andrews, both before and after the religious changes.

A variety of factors probably combined to make the preservation of Catholic records seem desirable to St Andrews' post-Reformation officials. It is notable that documents concerning the parish church of Holy Trinity are especially well represented amongst the surviving manuscripts. As patrons of many of the altars within the parish church the burgh council had been involved in the administration of Holy Trinity's chaplainries for over a century.³³ It would therefore not be surprising if they were concerned to keep the records of organisations they had played a part in running. Supporting this is the fact that many of the extant documents relate in some way to chaplainries where the burgh council had rights of presentation. Even (perhaps especially) amidst the religious changes, patrons retained a degree of interest in the fate of property pertaining to institutions they had endowed or administered. For example, the baxters' guild had an altar and chaplainry dedicated to St Aubert (also known as Obert) in Holy Trinity Church.³⁴ Following the Reformation the baxters acquired some of the altar's lands.³⁵ Similarly, in late 1559 the laird of St Monans, James Sandilands, successfully reclaimed a rent of seven merks that his father had donated to the St Andrews Dominican Friary.³⁶ The charter returning the annual rent states that as religion 'has ceased', and the friary 'being utterly overthrown and destroyed and all suffrages suddenly abolished and prohibited ... the granter thinks right that those seven marks of annual rent should be transferred to James Sandelandis present laird of St Monans true heir to the foresaid deceased James Sandilandis'.³⁷ The burgh council's past associations with Holy Trinity's chaplainries may have contributed to their decision to keep records of donations to Catholic altars.

Many of the surviving documents record concessions, rights and privileges pertaining to the burgh council or the parishioners of St Andrews. For example, one document preserved in the *Register of Evidents* contains an agreement by the parish priest 'not to levy exactions from parishioners as did certain

Acts and Monuments Online or *TAMO* (1570 edition) (HRI Online Publications, Sheffield, 2011), 1491, <http://www.johnfoxe.org> (accessed 29 May 2012).

³³ For example, the burgh council were patrons of the altars of All Saints (StAUL B65/23/80), the Blessed Virgin Mary (StAUL B65/23/253), the Holy Rood (StAUL B65/23/240), St John the Baptist (StAUL B65/23/95), St Katherine (StAUL B65/23/183), St Ninian (StAUL B65/23/253) and St Thomas the Martyr (StAUL B65/23/253).

³⁴ The Baxters' Minute Book lists successive donations to their altar (StAUL msDA890. S1B2).

³⁵ Rankin, *Holy Trinity*, 71.

³⁶ StAUL B65/23/340.

³⁷ StAUL B65/23/340. Translation from *Calendar of St Andrews Charters*, StAUL B65/22, Charter 340.

predecessors'.³⁸ Another charter records the freedoms of both the bishopric and the burgesses of St Andrews, including declaring that the archbishop has 'power to gyf and grant remissione and lyf grace to the convickynt in judgement to deid or dismembring As is contenit in the goldyne chartor and in the declaracione of Parliament registrat in the register bwkis of the Abbay of Sanctandros'.³⁹ Even though these were rights acquired through the influence of a now rejected ecclesiastical hierarchy, the burgh council was clearly loath to discard any privilege or agreement once gained. This aspect fits with much of the secular content of the *Black Book*, which substantially records privileges of the city of St Andrews.

Connected to this was the St Andrews authorities' experience of using relatively ancient charters to reinforce current rights and freedoms. For example, the citizens of St Andrews won a lengthy battle concerning trading rights in Cupar thanks to their possession of a large number of royal and episcopal charters, whilst the citizens of Cupar had only one charter concerning their rights and liberties.⁴⁰ The St Andrews officials had found that possession of documents could bring concrete advantages. The failure to produce relevant written evidence could seriously hinder legal proceedings and land transactions as Sir Thomas Swyntoune, chaplain to the altar of St James discovered. In 1530 a number of chaplains at Holy Trinity exchanged certain rents pertaining to their altars with rents payable to the Dominican Friary. All the other chaplains produced the relevant documentation, but Sir Thomas because he 'could not show the foundation of St James altar whereby it might be determined what tenement should be granted to the said friars he with consent of the provost and council discharged the said friars of payment of the said 4s annual rent' until the boundaries could be established.⁴¹ The wholesale destruction of St Andrews' ecclesiastical records would potentially have thrown away considerable benefits pertaining to the parishioners. In this context it is perhaps worthwhile noting that when in the early seventeenth century St Andrews lobbied to become a royal burgh the citizens used a range of charters dating back to the high Middle Ages.⁴²

Perhaps, though, the most significant factor contributing to the preservation of these records was the reallocation of church lands that took place in St Andrews during the 1560s. In the decade following St Andrews' official adoption of Protestantism the lands of Holy Trinity's chaplainries and the city's two friaries were acquired by the burgh council, a grant that was confirmed by Mary Queen of Scots by charter in 1567.⁴³ A proportion of

³⁸ StAUL msDA890.S1R4, p. 47. Translation, Rankin, *Holy Trinity*, 125.

³⁹ StAUL B65/23/103.

⁴⁰ StAUL B65/23/8–12, StAUL B65/23/27.

⁴¹ StAUL B65/23/253. Translation from *Calendar of St Andrews Charters*, StAUL B65/22, Charter 253.

⁴² StAUL B65/23/402.

⁴³ StAUL B65/23/352.

these estates were allocated for the use of the Reformed Kirk, but in the process of the reorganisation of church lands there was a substantial effort made to assess and quantify the extent of the ecclesiastical estates. This was a matter of particular urgency because of the nature of Mary Queen of Scots' donation. The charter gave 'power to the aforementioned Provost, bailies, councillors and community and their successors ... of ... levying ... rents, fruits, dues and benefits whatsoever, wheresoever they had been formerly levied ... as freely in everything as the foresaid prebendaries, chaplains and before written friars could have enjoyed and possessed', but does not specify in detail from what and where those rents were derived.⁴⁴ To clarify matters a number of inventories and rentals were produced by Protestant officials, including a detailed rental of the property of Holy Trinity's chaplainries.⁴⁵ It is clear that in this process use was made of the extensive collection of foundation charters relating to chaplainries in the city. For example, a typical entry in the rental reads: 'Thomas Grege land ... xvs. Item tharof ane instrument of saising and ane precept of the said xvs.'⁴⁶ Similarly the agreement recording the allocation of altar endowments to Holy Trinity Church on several occasions states that 'His indentit charter is in the common kyst of this citie.'⁴⁷

This concern for recording the property of the old church stemmed from more complex reasons than simply providing evidence of the extent of ecclesiastical lands. There was substantial controversy surrounding the fate of church lands at the Reformation.⁴⁸ This affected St Andrews. The aforementioned 1567 charter of Mary Queen of Scots refers scathingly to the fraudulent way in which 'a vast number of' the 'prebendaries, chaplains and friars ... after the change of the form of religion, disposed of their lands'.⁴⁹ Furthermore, in many areas of Scotland opportunists took advantage of the confused situation regarding kirk lands to acquire rents and properties for themselves.⁵⁰ Ownership of pre-Reformation charters both reinforced the legitimacy of the burgh council's claim to new lands, and provided local officials with the means to stage a legal challenge to any who disputed it. Such

⁴⁴ StAUL B65/23/352. Translation from *Calendar of St Andrews Charters*, StAUL B65/22, Charter 352.

⁴⁵ StAUL B65/1/1, ff. 39v–50v.

⁴⁶ StAUL B65/1/1, f. 39v.

⁴⁷ Rankin, *Holy Trinity*, 110; StAUL msDA890.S1R4, p. 9.

⁴⁸ J. Kirk (ed.), Introduction to *The Books of Assumption of the Thirds of Benefices: Scottish Ecclesiastical Rentals at the Reformation* (Oxford, 1995), xi–xvi.

⁴⁹ StAUL B65/23/352. Translation from *Calendar of St Andrews Charters*, StAUL B65/22, Charter 352.

⁵⁰ In the late sixteenth century Robert Pont (who himself had property in St Andrews) complained that 'from the yeare of our Lorde 1560 vnto this present time, the greatest study of all men of power of this land, hes bene by all kinde of inven|tions, to spoyle the Kirk of Christ of her patrimonie': R. Pont, *Three sermons Preached by Maister Robert Pont: ane Aged Pastour in the Kirk of God* (Edinburgh, 1599), 31.

evidence was clearly needed, as the burgh council had substantial difficulties in collecting the revenues to which they were entitled. Indeed, in 1570 the burgh officials had to appeal to the Lords of Session to enforce payment of rents. The Lords of Session ordered that all the debtors ‘and all other havand or pretendand to have entre tharto’ make payment to the burgh, or burgh procurators, ‘and no other’.⁵¹

Possession is said to be nine tenths of the law. In the confusion that followed the Reformation in St Andrews, it was not just possession of lands, but possession of charters recording the lands’ history that gave legal entitlement to property. Although the Protestants abandoned traditional worship, they did not disregard precedent in matters of land tenure. It was possible even at the start of the seventeenth century for St Andrews citizens to produce feu-charters from before 1559 and to have their claims recognised.⁵² Custom and tradition were still valued. When in 1564 Sir Patrick Learmonth leased a tenement belonging to Holy Trinity he agreed to pay the Master of the Fabric of the Parish Church the ‘yearly rents due and accustomed to be paid formerly and of old’.⁵³ A large number of Catholic ecclesiastical documents provided valuable records of those obligations ‘usit and wont’, and in particular those privileges existing ‘in all tymmis past memor of man’.⁵⁴

Contrary to Alec Ryrie’s claims it is clear that at least some Protestants were interested in preserving the records of the old church. For men such as the St Andrews burgh councillors, their possession of documents relating to the administration of the Catholic Church both served to legitimise their possession of lands formerly belonging to pre-Reformation religious institutions, and ensured that concessions won from the old church were not forgotten. The St Andrews officials’ decision to preserve these documents enables study of the pre-Reformation church. The choices made about what to keep also reveal much about the priorities of the burgh council, and the ambiguous relationship between the old church and the new Protestant establishment. In particular, it suggests that, though the statues and images of the old church could be torn down relatively quickly, the administrative structures of the Catholic Church proved far more complicated to dismantle.

⁵¹ StAUL B65/23/358. The burgh council was not the only organisation which had difficulty collecting the rents they were entitled to. In 1582 St Leonard’s College had to appeal to the Lords of Council regarding the failure of feuars and tenants of Portmoak to pay their dues (StAUL UYSL110/H/3).

⁵² StAUL B65/23/409.

⁵³ StAUL B65/23/347. Translation from *Calendar of St Andrews Charters*, StAUL B65/22, Charter 347.

⁵⁴ StAUL B65/23/323; StAUL B65/23/331; StAUL B65/23/382.