Church and Society in Edinburgh 1850-1905

By

Christine Lumsden

Church and Society in Edinburgh 1850-1905

By

Christine Lumsden

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing

Church and Society in Edinburgh 1850-1905

By Christine Lumsden

This book first published 2025

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-6392-0
ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-6392-6

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

PREFACE

This study examines the relationship between denominational affiliation, class and gender in the city of Edinburgh between 1850 and 1905, a period of transition from a semi-rural economy to industrialisation and rapid population growth. The churches played a leading role in the movements for social and political reform, both locally and nationally. The diversity of church life is shown in the various schisms within Scottish Presbyterianism, which gradually reunited, although always with some individual congregations remaining outwith the unions. The various religious revivals, which occurred during this period, are also considered. They stimulated church growth and led to the development of philanthropy as an expression of faith in Christ.

Although Presbyterianism was the dominant form of church government in Scotland, other denominations also played their part in the religious life of the city. In the social analysis of congregations, contrasting pairs of churches are examined, as are missions to the poor, who preferred to worship in their own environment. These missions were usually operated as evangelical outreach from large charges, as examples of Christianity in action where members sought to improve their social and moral conditions.

My thanks are due to many who made this book possible. Professor Stewart J. Brown, New College, Edinburgh University, proved a wise and stimulating doctoral supervisor. The opportunities to give papers on various sections of my thesis at the Ecclesiastical History seminars in New College helped to focus my ideas and led to some interesting discussions. The staff of New College and Edinburgh University libraries gave invaluable assistance in finding my way through the voluminous maze of Victorian books and pamphlets. I must also thank the staff of the National Archives of Scotland, both in Register House and West Register House, Edinburgh, the National Library of Scotland and Edinburgh Central Library, especially those in the Edinburgh Room. Dr. Ian Balfour, Charlotte Chapel, arranged for me to have access to their records, as also did the directors of Edinburgh City Mission and Carrubbers Christian Centre. Finally, a special thank you to Rev. Garry Ketchen, Rev. Dr. Derek Murray and Mr. David Polland whose helpful comments and questions on drafts of the text reminded me of the difference between an academic study and a book for the general reader.

Christine Lumsden, Edinburgh, June 2014

INTRODUCTION

In considering church and society in Edinburgh between 1850 and 1905, the relationship between church affiliation, class and gender is set in the context of social and political change, with particular reference to the growth of denominationalism. As well as examining the role of the leaders in the particular congregations studied, I include something of the experiences of the ordinary church member, who has often been overlooked. In this way I present a more balanced picture of these congregations.

In Scotland, denominationalism began with the fragmentation of Presbyterianism, particularly since the eighteenth century, when "there was a gradual and inexorable shift to a 'volantaryist' position or belief in the separation of church and state." [1] At the same time non-Presbyterian congregations were being formed, giving a greater diversity in practice and belief. Faith and church attendance then became matters of individual choice, rather than being imposed by the state.

The social dislocation caused by industrialisation, and the consequential movement of population from the country to towns and cities were also factors in the fragmentation of Christianity. Particularly in the towns and cities, the more evangelical dissenting denominations had a greater appeal than the Established Church for artisans, making these churches more socially homogeneous. However, in the congregations examined in detail, professional classes formed the majority in the Presbyterian churches, although this may have been partly because of the location of these churches.

Throughout the period of this study, Edinburgh was profoundly influenced by the social vision of Thomas Chalmers, who lived in the city from 1828 to 1847, and was one of the most important figures in Scottish church history. Chalmers devoted his life to

> the cure of pauperism, the reclamation of the city masses, the effective organization (*sic*) of Churches if they are to be dissevered from connection with the State.[2]

By the 1830s, however, the state was beginning to take over responsibility for social welfare and education, partly because of the duplication in these services, which hitherto had been the responsibility of the churches, caused

by denominationalism. The divisions within the Church of Scotland over patronage and government interference in its affairs led ultimately to the Disruption of 1843 which, Chalmers maintained, was

> a tragic severing of the relationship between the true Church of Scotland and a British State which had broken its pledge to preserve the Church's integrity.[3]

From around 1850, the Presbyterian churches were gradually reunited, reversing the schisms of the earlier period, although with a few dissenting voices remaining outwith these unions. This diversity of religious belief led to pressure from the 1870s for the disestablishment of the Church of Scotland, which influenced Gladstone's final election campaigns in Midlothian. The second half of the nineteenth century was a period when religion and politics were intertwined at both local and national level, as leading churchmen served on local councils and as Members of Parliament, particularly after the electoral reforms of 1832 and 1834 for national and local government respectively. The careers of two Edinburgh business men, Adam Black and Duncan McLaren, both dissenters from the Established Church, will be considered as examples of this new style of politician.

Between 1850 and 1905 the British Empire was approaching its peak and Scots played a significant part in its development, both in political and religious terms. As will be seen in Chapter 5, one Edinburgh church, Free St. George's, had within its membership men who had worked in India at a senior level in the Bengal Civil Service and for the Honourable East India Company, which, under its Presidencies, governed large swathes of India, regarded as the crown jewel of the Empire. Augustine Congregational Church was the church of choice for staff and students of the Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society, founded in 1841 to train Christian doctors for work overseas. (The work of the Society will be described in Chapter 4.)

Scottish missionaries were in the forefront, spreading Christianity to all nations, not only preaching the gospel but bringing with them their expertise in education and medicine. David Livingstone, now best remembered for his exploration of Africa, became a national hero. Missionary biographies, often given as school or Sunday School prizes, were best sellers. Many congregations actively supported missionary societies, such as the London Missionary Society and the British and Foreign Bible Society. As we shall see in Chapter 7, the churches often modelled the outreach among the poor of their localities on such overseas work. The extent of Scottish support for missions is reflected in the choice of the (then) United Free Church Assembly Hall in Edinburgh as the venue for the World Missionary

Conference of 1910. In June 1907 the first meeting of the general committee to plan the conference took place there. The English societies were mostly represented by their Scottish agents rather than senior staff from London.[4]

In secular terms, this was a time of transition, as Edinburgh became more urbanised, with the growth of her population, although the increase was less rapid than that of Glasgow or Dundee, which were more heavily industrialised. The impact of these changes on individual churches will be considered in the analysis of members. The respective roles allocated to men and women will also be examined to discover how these changed over time and the factors which contributed to this change.

Outside the churches, Christian faith was challenged by scientific discoveries which questioned the literal interpretation of Scripture. Within the universities, especially in Germany, the school of 'higher criticism' of the Biblical texts also raised doubts about their authenticity. A period of study at German universities was common among Scottish theological students, so these new ideas were disseminated in the divinity schools of Scotland. Over several years this teaching led to charges of heresy against some ministers, culminating in the appearance of George Adam Smith before the General Assembly of the recently formed United Free Church in 1902. With the support of Principal Rainy of New College, the charges against Smith were dropped. (Smith's case will be discussed in Chapter 5). As we shall see in Chapter 3, Rainy had encouraged his students to assist with the Moody and Sankey campaign of 1873-74 and took part in the meetings himself. He therefore retained his evangelical faith, while coming to accept the more scientific approach to the Bible.

In analysing the role of members in the various churches, I have taken account of the Victorian ideology of separate spheres for men and women. Industrialisation had separated the home from the place of work, making the distinction between the two far greater than in a pre-industrial society. This ideal, with the male as financial provider and the female as homemaker, however, applied essentially to the middle and upper classes, where the family's success was measured by how well the parents performed these roles. Particularly for the ladies, philanthropy outside the home provided an outlet for their energies and gave them some purposeful activity. Especially work among children or the poorer members of society confirmed their tasks as carers. These contemporary social values influenced the role of women in the churches through the tasks allotted to their female members.

There are two main approaches. Firstly, Chapters 1 to 4 offer a general study of the city's social, political and religious life. Secondly, there is a

focus on individual churches with, in Chapter 5, a statistical analysis to determine the socio-economic status of their members. The next two chapters are particularly relevant in discussing class and gender relationships. Using case studies from individual churches, in Chapter 6 I consider how they disciplined their members to control their behaviour, a practice which impacted particularly on lower-class women. Chapter 7 examines evangelistic outreach within the city, as individual churches and nondenominational agencies, such as the Edinburgh City Mission, sought to reach the poor with the gospel and to alleviate their social conditions.

Those church memberships analysed in Chapter 5 are from contrasting pairs of congregations. The two Presbyterians are St. Stephen's Church of Scotland and Free St. George's, situated in the north and west of the New Town respectively. The late eighteenth-century Argyle Square Chapel, which became Augustine Congregational Church, is compared with the nearby Brighton Street Evangelical Union (Congregational) Church, established in 1845. Because of their different forms of church order, (to be described in Chapters 2 and 5) two Baptist congregations are considered. The first was founded in 1765 as the original Scotch Baptist church, which was led by a lay pastorate consisting of at least two elders. The congregation met in Bristo Place during the period of this study and, as Bristo Baptist Church, is the oldest continuing Baptist church in Scotland. The other, Charlotte Baptist Chapel, situated in Rose Street, began in 1808 on 'English' lines, with the form of church leadership common among Baptists in England. This consisted of one full-time pastor paid by the congregation. Charlotte Chapel now has the largest membership of Scottish Baptist churches. As a counterweight to the predominantly middle-class church records, I have also examined two nondenominational mission agencies which operated primarily among the poor. The Edinburgh City Mission was established for evangelistic work throughout the city, while Carrubber's Close Mission, in the High Street, worked with the population in its immediate vicinity. .

With that introduction, we now turn to the city of Edinburgh itself as we consider its physical structure, people and politics. The building of the New Town created the beginnings of a socially segregated city. Let us look at these contrasting, yet interlinked, worlds.

Notes

[1] Callum G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 1997) p.17
[2] James Dodds, *Thomas Chalmers: A Biographical Study* (Edinburgh: William Oliphant and Co. 1870; repr. Routledge/Thoemmes Press1995) Preface v-vii (p.vi)
[3] Stewart J. Brown, *Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth in Scotland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1982) p.337
[4] Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Michigan, Grand Rapids: William B. Eardmans Publishing Company 2009) p.22

CHAPTER ONE

PHYSICAL STRUCTURE, PEOPLE, POLITICS

Introduction

So that we may understand the social structure of Edinburgh in the middle of the nineteenth century we need to consider its development during the preceding hundred years. To all outward appearance, the Edinburgh of the early 1700s was still mediaeval, surrounded by ancient walls with, as its northern boundary, the valley of the North Loch, now Princes Street Gardens, and eastwards towards what is now Waverley Station. The main thoroughfare, really four streets in one – Castlehill, Lawnmarket, High Street and Canongate - running from the Castle to Holyrood Palace, was known as the Royal Mile. Six gates, or ports, gave access, while outside the city walls of Edinburgh proper were the fashionable burghs of the Canongate (the fourth of the streets) and Portsburgh, the trade or business quarter, in all a total city population of about 40,000.[1]

1.1 Physical Development

Imagine, if you will, the burgh of the Canongate at the foot of the Royal Mile. In the tall, tightly-packed tenements there lived, in close proximity

> two Dukes, sixteen Earls, seven Barons, seven Judges, and thirteen baronets, and with them in perfect amity side by side many of the poorest in the land. [2]

At the end of the Canongate was Holyrood, the home of an unusual population. As well as a royal palace, it provided sanctuary for those threatened with imprisonment for debt. The right of girth, or sanctuary, is referred to in a process before the Supreme Courts in 1569 as having existed since the Abbey of the Holy Rood was founded by King David I in 1128,

> quhilk privilege has been inviolable observit to all manner of personis cumand wytin the bounds aforesaid, not commit and, the crymes expresslie exceptit for all manner of girth; and that in all tymes bigane past memorie of man.[3]

By the seventeenth century, responsibility for those seeking sanctuary rested with the Bailie, or keeper, of the Palace of Holyroodhouse, a hereditary office held by the Dukes of Hamilton. Those anxious to avoid their creditors lived in a cluster of houses round the palace. As they could not be arrested on a Sunday, the debtors were allowed one day's freedom each week, provided that they returned to their voluntary imprisonment by sunset. If any creditor saw his debtor among those streaming across the sanctuary boundary into the Canongate, the creditor would do his best to prevent his return and arrest him. Accordingly, despite his apparent freedom on Sunday, the debtor had to keep a constant watch. The right of sanctuary remained until imprisonment for debt was abolished in 1880, although the houses were demolished in 1857. Their somewhat ramshackle appearance probably led Sir Walter Scott, when he was himself facing bankruptcy, to write in his journal on 1 November 1827

> I suppose that I, the Chronicler of the Canongate, will have to take up my residence in the Sanctuary, unless I prefer the more airy residence of the Calton Jail.[4]

However, the mid-eighteenth century was to mark the beginning of a new Edinburgh. In 1752 there was published a pamphlet entitled *Proposals for carrying on certain Public Works in the City of Edinburgh.* Although he was not the author, the pamphlet owed much to the Lord Provost George Drummond, who held office for the third time from 1750 to 1751. The object of the pamphlet was

> To enlarge and improve this city, to adorn it with public buildings, which may be a national benefit, and thereby to remove, at least in some degree, the inconveniences to which it has hitherto been liable.[5]

In this way it was hoped to halt the drift of the "quality" to London, which had been accelerated by the parliamentary union of 1707, and make Edinburgh a city fit to be the "metropolis of Scotland when a separate kingdom and still the chief city of North Britain." [6] With the publication of these *Proposals* the movement for the transformation of the city was set in train.

A series of Acts of Parliament from 1753 onwards extended the city boundaries to accommodate its increasing population. The preamble to the first of these Improvement Acts, that of 1753, lamented certain conditions of the city, in particular "the lack of convenient accesses and of proper public buildings".[7] Under this Act, responsibility was entrusted, not to the Town Council, but to thirty-five Commissioners who were nominated and empowered to erect public buildings and also to make

> easy and commodious access between the High Street of the city and the country northward, southward, and westward to the utmost extent of the present royalty.[8]

The first improvement under the 1753 Act was the building of the merchants' Exchange, now the City Chambers, in the High Street.

Before the North Loch could be bridged for further building, the boundaries of the burgh, or royalty, had to be extended. Plans for this had been discussed as early as 1750, when the city Magistrates had prepared a Bill to be laid before Parliament for permission. However, they did not proceed because their plans had been opposed by the county landowners, but within a few years the increasing pressure for space made such an extension essential and the landowners' opposition was withdrawn.[9]

In 1759, when drainage of the North Loch began, the Magistrates had issued a pamphlet, for public consultation, in which they stated that an Act of Parliament was necessary

> in order to enlarge the limits of the town chiefly towards the north for the mutual advantage of those who may hereafter inhabit the adjacent fields and of the inhabitants of the present city.[10]

The new boundaries were to include the lands purchased by the town "or which might afterwards become the property of the town", and also all the feus granted by the charities Heriot's Hospital and Trinity Hospital, where the feuars, by their charters had to "bear a proportion of the public burdens and the taxes of the city" .[11] Perhaps this statement indicates one reason for the original opposition. (A feu is a Scottish form of land tenure whereby the owner grants rights to the use of land, often for house-building, in return for an annual payment known as feu duty. The feuar is the person to whom this right is granted.)

The Act, passed in 1767, finally allowed the North Bridge to be built. However, the magistrates had already commenced building the bridge in 1763 when the Lord Provost, again Drummond, had laid the foundation stone.[12] Completed in 1772, the bridge gave access from the north side of

the High Street to the new district across the North Loch. Subsequent legislation, in 1785, 1786, 1809 and 1814, paved the way for new buildings to the north of what was to become Princes Street, and also west towards Haymarket, the area known today as the New Town.

However, this was not Edinburgh's first New Town. From the 1760s, "houses that were deemed fine mansions" were erected in what became George Square.[13] These buildings, and also those in the neighbouring Buccleuch Place, were constructed in the Scottish vernacular style rather than

> the more imposing international classicism of the buildings of the New Town north of the drained North Loch.[14]

So the city as we know it gradually took shape with access to the new areas to the north via the Mound, from the Lawnmarket, and to the south via South Bridge.

When the North Bridge was almost completed, the next project was the erection of a building suitable to house the public records of Scotland, then stored, somewhat neglected, in

> two laigh rooms under the Inner Session House [---] the ratts, mice and other vermine having defaced the most valuable of them'.[15]

In 1767 the city council appealed to the Treasury for assistance as they had no funds available. The government allocated £12,000 from money obtained by the sale of forfeited estates (after the 1745 rebellion) and trustees were appointed to administer the fund. A prominent site, at the junction of North Bridge and Princes Street, was acquired, despite complaints that it was, at the northern boundary of the royalty, too far from the Law Courts. Robert and James Adam were appointed architects. The foundation stone was laid on 27 June 1774 and the construction of Register House was begun. Progress was deliberately slow, as the following minute of the Trustees shows.

> [W]hen the work comes to go on, there shall be no building during the winter, that is after the last day of October, nor before the first of March, and that the building shall be carried on so leisurely from year to year as to allow the parts built successively to settle and consolidate, before the others are put above them.[16]

Unsurprisingly, funds ran low and worked stopped for six years, leaving Adam's acknowledged masterpiece "the most magnificent pigeon house in

Europe".[17] Once more the government stepped in, and in 1788 the first part of the building was ready for occupation.

Another important building of this period was the new University of Edinburgh (now known as Old College). Edinburgh, the youngest of Scotland's four ancient universities, was a post-Reformation Protestant foundation established by the Town Council, so known as the "Toun College". In 1558 Robert Reid

> had bequeathed to the town of Edinburgh the sum of 8,000 merks for the purpose of erecting a University within the city.[18]

While Queen Mary, in 1566, had prepared a charter to provide an endowment for the College, her abdication the following year and the consequent turmoil meant that it could not be put into effect. It was left to her son, James VI, to grant the foundation charter in 1582, carrying out his mother's wishes. Building at Kirk o' Field, the site of his father Darnley's murder in 1567, had begun the previous year and the Council appointed Mr Robert Rollock, then at St. Andrews, as professor. He commenced teaching on 11 October 1583.[19]

By the late-eighteenth century, it had become necessary to replace these sixteenth-century buildings, which an Italian traveller in 1788 described as "nothing else than a mass of ruined buildings of very ancient construction". [20] At this time there were around one thousand students and the professors included some of the most eminent men of the Scottish Enlightenment. A more imposing structure was required. On 2 November 1789 the Council decided to advertise for subscriptions to finance the new building with Robert Adam appointed as architect. The foundation stone was laid two weeks later, £15,366 having been promised.[21] Construction did not proceed according to plan, however. Contracts proved troublesome as members of the Town Council and Trustees tried to secure jobs for themselves and their friends. Adam died in 1792.

With the outbreak of war against revolutionary France in the following year, work was slowed, then was stopped in order to meet the needs of manpower for the war effort. In addition, a succession of bad harvests increased the price of food so that the Edinburgh Town Council had to spend more on poor relief. The situation was so grave that in 1799, following the example of their predecessors at Register House, the Trustees sought help from the Treasury in London. In their petition to Henry Dundas, Lord Advocate and responsible for government in Scotland, they explained that all the money had been spent and they had

accumulated £5,000 debt. The document goes on to describe the effect on the students.

> [A] considerable part of the east and north fronts [are] unroofed, and the beams and joisting exposed to the injury of the weather; the College area being at the same time embarrassed with sheds, stones and other materials [---] the thirteen hundred students [---] suffer in many respects greater inconveniences than were felt during the miserable state of the old buildings.[22]

Probably more important to the Trustees was the possibility that the great expense already incurred would be of no avail as the new building was open to the elements, a not inconsiderable problem in a city notorious for its winds. In addition the tradesmen were demanding payment, even though they had been promised interest. The petition ends with the plea

> while the Trustees do not yet know from what funds either principal or interest is to come [---] they presume to ask for some help in the admirable task of completing the unfinished and decaying buildings.[23]

Although a grant of £5,000 was made to secure the building, it was not until July 1815, the war with France finally over, that the Council advertised for architects to submit plans to complete the new University buildings. William Playfair was given the commission and in the same year Parliament granted the Town Council the annual sum of £10,000 for ten years to finish the work. However, it was not finally completed until 1834.[24]

Between 1780 and 1827 the population of Edinburgh doubled from 60,000 to 120,000 and the building of the New Town and, beyond the old walls, the southern extension to George Square led to unprecedented development. The aristocracy, professional men and wealthy merchants now moved from the cramped confines of the Old Town to the magnificent splendour of these spacious streets. The social stratification of the city had begun. The Old Town was left for those who could not afford to move and became increasingly crowded as immigration from the neighbouring countryside and small towns and, to a lesser extent from the Highlands of Scotland and Ireland, added to the population.

Part of the city's early nineteenth-century expansion was due to improved transport links to meet the demands of an industrialising economy. Among the earliest was the Union Canal for the transmission of heavy goods between Edinburgh and Glasgow by linking to the Forth and Clyde Canal. As well as goods, there was provision for passenger boats. An Act

of Parliament in 1817 empowered a joint stock company to cut the canal which was begun a year later and completed in 1822. The prospect of work on digging the canal brought the first large-scale Irish immigration to the city. There is a certain notoriety attached to the construction of the canal, since among these Irish labourers were Burke and Hare, who developed a profitable sideline in murder, selling the bodies of their victims to Dr. Robert Knox, the ambitious lecturer in anatomy at the Edinburgh University Medical School and rival to Professor Alexander Monro, *tertius*.

A few years after the Union Canal opened came the railways, the first of which were used to carry coal from the outlying mining areas. Each railway required an act of parliament before it could be constructed. The earliest of these coal-carrying railways was that between Leith and Dalkeith, in Midlothian, completed in 1833. Because there were no accidents on the line it became known as the "Innocent Railway". Soon the city was encircled with railway lines. Where the railways went, industries followed. Breweries, distilleries, rubber, chemical, and print works, were all to be found near the railways. For those employed in these factories housing was necessary as the Old Town had become increasingly overcrowded. So were built the late-Victorian tenement flats, wherever space could be found, contrasting with the classical, carefully planned symmetry of the New Town. However, even some of these New Town streets were left incomplete as funds were diverted to develop the railways.

Later improvements, too, did not come without controversy. In 1871 work began on a new street to link George IV Bridge and South Bridge. The construction of what is now Chambers Street

> swept away Adam Square, North College Street, and several historic wynds, and otherwise completely altered the appearance of this locality.[25]

The demolished houses were "massive, convenient and not inelegant, and in some instances three storeys in height".[26] From the 1730s they had been home to the aristocracy and professional men who had left nearby South Bridge as it became more commercialised.

From the 1880s to the early 1900s Edinburgh expanded further to the west, south, and east as surrounding country areas were built upon. The artisans who could afford to do so moved into new flats in Leith Walk and Easter Road in the east, and Gorgie or Dalry in the west, while the middle- and upper-classes went further from the centre to the more expensive flats and imposing mansions and villas on the outskirts of the city. The age of suburbia had come, further assisted by the introduction of the horse-drawn

tram in 1871, gradually replaced by cable traction from 1888. For those with higher wages it was no longer necessary to live near the workplace. So after a hundred years, the duke no longer lived beside, or even near, the dustman. Demarcation lines, both economic and geographical, between the various strata of Edinburgh society were firmly in place.

1.2 People

Having set the social geography in this city of contrasts, let us now examine the society of nineteenth-century Edinburgh. From the confines of its mediaeval royalty, to the elegant grandeur of the New Town, and splendour of its Victorian suburbs the city has grown to accommodate her professional and merchant class. Interspersed with these are the more humble dwellings of the ordinary people, manufacturing workers, shop assistants, and various tradesmen. While it was no longer the seat of Parliament, Edinburgh still retained the status of a capital city. It had within its boundaries headquarters for finance, insurance and investment companies, and the Court of Session, the highest law court of Scotland. It was the meeting place of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and, from 1843, that of the Free Church. In 1847, the United Secession and Relief Churches came together to form the United Presbyterian Church. That Church's governing body, or Synod, also met in the city. To some extent these three church assemblies substituted for the Scottish Parliament, which had been dissolved in 1707.

Edinburgh was important for education, having a number of private schools and the University. It was also a world renowned centre for medical training with its large teaching hospitals. The city therefore had a strong professional core as regards employment, based mainly on law, education and medicine. Publishing and printing played an important role in supporting these professions. Otherwise, the city's industrial base was relatively small, consisting mainly of services and the manufacture of consumer goods for an essentially local market.

The most striking feature of the period 1850-1905 was the growth of the urban population as Scotland became increasingly dominated by her four main cities. Although Edinburgh's population did not grow as rapidly as that of Glasgow or Dundee, which were both more heavily industrialised, nevertheless between 1851 and 1871 her population increased from 160,302 to 196,979. Connected to this population increase was the movement to the new suburbs to the south and west, paralleling the exodus from the Old to the New Town a hundred years earlier. In response to this shift was the "mania for church building which became

almost frenzied" as the three main Presbyterian churches competed with each other in "passionate evangelicalism".[27]

1.3 Politics

With the social and physical changes came political change. The turning point in Edinburgh's politics, as in Scotland as a whole, came with the Reform Act of 1832. Henry Cockburn, who, as Solicitor-General, had assisted in drafting the Scottish legislation, expressed his understandable enthusiasm thus.

> It is impossible to exaggerate the ecstasy of Scotland, where to be sure it is like liberty given to slaves: we are to be brought out of the house of bondage, out of the land of Egypt. [28]

What was the effect of electoral reform on Edinburgh? To appreciate the extent of the change we should first examine the pre- Reform situation. Under the 1707 Act of Union, the city had one member nominated by the Town Council, who elected from their own number delegates who in turn chose the Member of Parliament. The citizens as a whole were not consulted. From 1768 to 1832 Edinburgh was represented by successive members of the notable Scottish legal family of Dundas. The most prominent was Henry Dundas who entered Parliament in 1774 as the Member for Edinburghshire (Midlothian), a seat which was in his family's gift. In 1790 he transferred to the city of Edinburgh, serving as her Member of Parliament until 1803, when he was raised to the House of Lords as Viscount Melville. Henry Dundas had become Lord Advocate in 1775 and, as noted above, had total responsibility for government in Scotland. His powers of patronage were such that he was known as "King Harry the Ninth".

The Reform Act of 1832 was the culmination of a long campaign in which Cockburn, although a nephew of Dundas on his mother's side, had played a leading role. In March 1823 he had written "Considerations submitted to the Householders of Edinburgh, on the State of their Representation in Parliament" in preparation for a public meeting to consider a petition on the subject.[29] The petition, drawn up by his friend Francis Jeffrey, asked Parliament

> to confer on the householders the right of electing the member for the city, under such limitations as might seem proper.[30]

Despite 6,847 signatures, the petition, and a proposed Bill to amend Edinburgh's representation, was rejected. Three years later a second attempt was made, this time supported by 7,242 householders as signatories to the petition. This was opposed by the sitting MP, William Dundas, and again rejected by the House of Commons. The result was rioting as protests grew.

With the change to a Whig government under Earl Grey, the prospect for reform became more hopeful, especially with the appointment of Francis Jeffrey as Lord Advocate and Henry Cockburn as Solicitor-General in December 1830. Cockburn gives his view of the situation in the closing sentences of his *Memorials*.

> We have come upon the public stage in a splendid, but perilous scene. I trust that we shall do our duty. If we do, we cannot fail to do some good to Scotland. In the abuses of our representative and municipal systems alone, our predecessors have left us in fields in which patriotism may exhaust itself.[31]

The inadequacies of the pre-Reform electoral system were evident in the case of Francis Jeffrey. As he did not have a parliamentary seat when he was appointed Lord Advocate, he had to find one, becoming the member for Malton, in Yorkshire. At a subsequent election, the citizens of Edinburgh petitioned the Town Council to nominate Jeffrey as their MP. Despite the support of 17,000 signatures, the Council elected another Dundas, Robert Adam, by seventeen votes to fourteen. Such was the outcry at this that the Lord Provost

> narrowly escaped being thrown over the North Bridge and was pursued into a shop in Leith Street, from which he had to be rescued by a troop of dragoons.[32]

However, Robert Dundas's tenure as Edinburgh's Member of Parliament was to be short-lived.

Jeffrey was successful in the election for Perth Burghs, since at that time a candidate could stand for more than one constituency. At last he, with Thomas Kennedy, the Member for Ayr Burghs, was able to pilot the Scottish Reform Bill through Parliament. The passage of the Bill, however, was not without its excitements. In May 1832 word reached Edinburgh that the Prime Minister, Earl Grey, had resigned, putting any further progress in jeopardy.[33] A few days later, Grey was recalled, prompting Cockburn to respond

> Loud was the popular joy, most grave though grateful was the relief of observant and calm men, who saw the country unexpectedly delivered from a crisis more painfully interesting than any that had occurred in Britain since 1688.[34]

The Bill finally received the royal assent on 4 June 1832. For the Whig Cockburn the Reform Act of 1832 had the same political significance as the Glorious Revolution of 1688, when the Roman Catholic James VII and II was forced to abdicate in favour of his Protestant daughter, Mary, and her husband, William of Orange.

How did the Reform Act affect Edinburgh's politics? Under the Act, the Scottish electorate as a whole had increased from 4,500 to 65,000 as the middle classes were enfranchised. It was in the burghs, however, that the consequences were most marked. No longer did the right to nominate their Members of Parliament lie with the self-perpetuating oligarchies of the Town Councils but was given to the new electors, the £10 householders, effectively the middle classes. Edinburgh's parliamentary boundary was enlarged beyond the old royalty to take in "the entire population recognised as belonging to the community of the city."[35] In addition the city's representation was increased to two Members.

1.3.1 Adam Black

Among the Edinburgh citizens who supported the extension of the franchise was Adam Black, a prominent publisher and bookseller, and deacon in a Congregational Church. His shop became a meeting-place for the reformers. With the passing of the Reform Act, Black lost no time, calling a meeting to decide on their course of action with regard to the choice of parliamentary candidates. Under the pseudonym "A Shopkeeper", he published a pamphlet naming several whom he considered suitable, recommending the Lord Advocate, Francis Jeffrey, and James Abercromby. Soon after, at a meeting of the Merchant Company (an association of Edinburgh's leading business men) Black proposed that measures should be taken to secure the return of the two candidates whom he recommended "as the first real representatives of the city of Edinburgh".[36] This was agreed unanimously and a committee appointed for this task, with Black as convenor, the earliest Liberal committee in Edinburgh. The first election to the reformed Parliament, with the newly enfranchised men voting in public at the City Cross, resulted in 4,056 votes for Jeffrey, 3,856 to Abercromby, and 1,519 to Blair, the Tory candidate. Accordingly, Jeffrey and Abercromby were duly elected as the city's Members of Parliament.

From that election onwards, Edinburgh's politics during the nineteenth century were overwhelmingly Whig/Liberal.

The politicians who had succeeded in bringing about electoral reform were regarded as radical but they were in effect a consortium of various interests. The initial supporters of the 1832 Act included the Duke of Argyll as well as leading lawyers like Cockburn. Such men were unwilling to extend the franchise further, linking it to property and status. Later, men like Duncan McLaren, who represented the new middle class, supported the extension of the urban franchise to most householders. After the Second Reform Act of 1868 and the Third Reform Act of 1884, as the skilled working men became enfranchised, a coalition of the Liberals and the infant Labour Party acted as a pressure group to improve the position of the working classes. This gradual extension of male suffrage made the local party organisations more democratic, especially in the larger burgh constituencies, which became the heartlands of radicalism. The Liberals were increasingly identified with the Free Church and other religious dissenters in Scotland.

The extension of the franchise in Parliamentary elections could not be carried further without changes in local government and these were initiated almost immediately. In the opening session of 1833, Jeffrey, as Lord Advocate, piloted the Royal Burgh Reform Act, passed in 1834, through the new Parliament. This Act ended the old closed corporations of local government in the burghs and sought to bring them into line with modern conditions. Among the first members elected to the reformed Town Council was Adam Black, who was appointed city treasurer.

This office was something of a poisoned chalice, however, as the city was declared bankrupt in 1834, owing £400,000 to ordinary creditors and £250,000 to the Treasury, who had advanced this sum for the development of Leith Harbour. The three years of his term as treasurer enabled Black to begin the process of stabilising the city's finances and settling the debts. The task was completed by his successor, Duncan McLaren. Black refused to stand for re-election to the Council in 1836 but was again a member three years later and was soon embroiled in controversy.

In November 1840 the Lord Provost's term of office expired and some of Black's friends persuaded him to stand, considering that his record of public service hitherto made him the most suitable candidate. Against him was Sir James Forrest, also a Liberal, and member of the Church of Scotland, whose sole reason for standing was to stop Black, the dissenter. It was a bitterly fought contest. Black considered that not only his own rights, but those of all who were outside the Established Church were at stake. The majority of Edinburgh's citizens were probably in favour of

Black but they did not have a vote. The election of the Lord Provost was entirely a matter for the Town Council.

Most of the councillors then were Tories and members of the Church of Scotland. To elect a dissenter would create difficulties in a Church already facing the possibility of division. Black's election success depended on the votes of three new councillors, two of whom had been elected to support his nomination as Lord Provost. When the votes were counted, these two had voted against Black, leaving Forrest the victor with a majority of three. In thanking his fellow councillors, Forrest declared, "I disclaim from the bottom of my heart all hostility to Dissenters!"[37] His actions certainly belied these words. Despite this personal defeat, however, Black remained a town councillor. The Disruption of the Church of Scotland in May 1843, which will be discussed in Chapter 2, altered the political as well as the ecclesiastical climate. In November that year Adam Black was elected unanimously as Lord Provost, the first non- Established Churchman to hold that office. He was re-elected in 1846 but resigned from the Council in 1848 before completing his second three-year term.

Black was also involved in national politics. A parliamentary by-election had occurred in 1839 with the award of a peerage to James Abercromby (Lord Dunfermline). Black had suggested that the Liberal committee approach the historian and essayist Thomas Babington Macaulay to be their candidate. He was the eldest son of Zachary Macaulay, a member of the strongly evangelical Clapham Sect, a network of politicians active in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Their main concern was the abolition of slavery but they also sought to alleviate the social problems and poverty caused by rapid industrialisation. Macaulay therefore came from a radical background. He accepted the committee's invitation and was elected as a Member of Parliament for Edinburgh on 4 June 1839. Black acted as what we would now call his agent in the constituency, corresponding with him on matters affecting the city. Macaulay lost his seat in 1847, a defeat which Black regarded as

> depriving Edinburgh of a representative who conferred dignity on the city, and was admired by the Senate and the country as a statesmen, an orator and an honest man. [38]

One factor which contributed to Macaulay's defeat was the government's proposal to endow Maynooth College, a Roman Catholic seminary near Dublin, by increasing its grant and making it permanent, rather than, as hitherto, by voting for the grant annually in Parliament. This was a move which Macaulay supported. In strongly Calvinist Edinburgh, still suffering

the aftermath of the Disruption, the major opposition came from "the more bigoted representatives of the Free Church and Dissent".[39] Although a Congregationalist, Adam Black was also in favour of the endowment for Maynooth. He reasoned that as long as the state supported religious institutions financially, it was unjust to withdraw assistance from a particular one.

This stance had led him into difficulties with his own church, Argyle Square Chapel. One Sunday in March 1845, the minister, Lindsay Alexander, announced that a meeting would be held in the church to petition Parliament against the continuation of the grant to Maynooth. So Black was faced with the choice either to oppose his fellow members, or to abstain in any vote on the subject. He decided to attend the meeting to "testify against the Maynooth cry". [40]However, he had also prepared a series of resolutions as an amendment to his Church's proposal. While the resolutions affirmed their basic objection to state aid for particular "theological tenets", Black considered that it was not expedient to petition Parliament at that time. His main reasons for this view were as follows.

> 1st. The most zealous opponents of the grant are the parties who have appropriated to themselves the largest share of the public property which has been devoted to upholding ecclesiastical establishments, and whose object evidently is to rouse the zeal of Dissenters to co-operate with them in maintaining their present ascendancy.
>
> 2d. Because we conceive that every man is answerable to God alone for his religious belief, and that the State is not competent to decide what theological tenets ought to be adopted and maintained; therefore if we were to petition against this grant on the grounds that it was for the support of theological dogmas which we consider unscriptural and dangerous, we should thereby imply that the State has a right to judge what creeds are to be countenanced as true and Scriptural, and thus admit a principle subversive to religious liberty.
>
> [---]
>
> 6th. While we testify against all grants from the public funds for the promotion of any theological creed, we do not consider that we should be justified in joining in the clamour now raised against a particular sect, and *that* the sect which has suffered from the domination of a High Church party, who, while they take every opportunity of lording it over Dissenters, are now desirous to use them as tools for the accomplishment of their own purposes. [41]

To his amazement, his amendment was carried so that the petition was not sent. Black's action was universally condemned by the other churches in Edinburgh, both Established and Dissenting, who were resolutely opposed

to the Maynooth grant. We can therefore understand why Black described Macaulay's defeat as "one of the most painful of the public transactions in which I have been engaged".[42]

An alternative reason for Macaulay's failure was put forward by Cockburn. He commented on the experience of a deputation to London "to enlighten their representative".

> The truth is, that Macaulay, all his admitted knowledge, talent, eloquence, and worth, is not popular. He cares more for his history than for the jobs of his constituents, and answers letters irregularly, and with a brevity deemed contemptuous; and above all other defects, he suffers severely from the vice of over-talking, and consequently of under-listening. [---] It was this and not Maynooth that gave Macaulay trouble. [43]

However, his opinion, and that of the Edinburgh electorate, changed in the general election of July 1852, when Macaulay was re-elected, having "the support of the old Whig party, and of a large proportion of the more educated citizens".[44] Cockburn's description of the election is as follows.

> Edinburgh relieved itself of part of its disgrace in rejecting Macaulay in 1847 by choosing him now on the current general election; and it was done in circumstances honourable both to us and to him. He would not formally stand. He made no application – solicited no vote – wrote or uttered no address. He never appeared. He merely said privately that if elected he would act; and under all the disadvantages of absence, and of active canvassing by four present opponents, he was at the top of the poll.[45]

The votes for Macaulay's opponents were split on sectarian lines, Established Church, Free Church, and Dissenters all having their preferred candidates, giving the seat to Macaulay. So atonement for his 1847 defeat was made, but he resigned on health grounds four years later.

Although he was over seventy years old and still running his publishing business, Adam Black was asked to stand for Macaulay's seat in the resulting by-election. His initial reaction was to refuse on the grounds that he was too old to begin a new career. However, learning that there was considerable support for his candidature, he agreed to accept the nomination. Black won the seat comfortably and served as a city Member of Parliament for nearly ten years, being returned unopposed in the general election of 1859.