The Medieval Priesthood in Northern Scotland.

by

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Introduction.

From the days of the Early Church in the Middle East, boys were singled out for the priesthood from what would appear today to be a very early age – often from when they were seven. But we should remember that boys were expected to mature into manhood at a much earlier age too. In the Anglo-Saxon world a boy would be treated as a man from the age of about ten years from which age they were expected to work as hard as any man and to take on adult roles! We should also remember that the present age of criminal responsibility is still 10 years in England[1] and 8 years in Scotland, [2] so the contrast between medieval custom and today's expectations is not as stark as we might think.

Major and Minor Orders.

A youth who was destined for a life in the Latin Church was expected to progress through a number of stages of 'priesthood' which were related to his age and training. There were seven such stages which were divided into two groups – *minor* orders, and *major* orders.

Minor Orders	Doorkeeper	**Major Orders**	Sub-Deacon
	Exorcist		Deacon
	Lector		Priest (Presbyter[3])
	Acolyte		

Boys who were in minor orders were marked out by the clerical tonsure and, at their *ordinations*, they often received *instruments* that were seen to signify their office. This explains why, in many medieval paintings, boys are often seen with tonsures - it does not signify that they were *priests*, but rather that they were in one of the minor orders. The boys progressed through these minor orders from the age of seven, but none could become an *acolyte* before he was fourteen. Entry to the *major orders*, which, *inter alia*, required a commitment to the vow of *celibacy*, took place from the minimum age of eighteen for a sub-deacon, nineteen for a deacon, and twenty-four to become a priest.[4] This is not to say that a youth could not be ordained as a priest at an earlier age but this

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[1] https://www.gov.uk/age-of-criminal-responsibility (accessed 15/02/2022)

[2] https://www.mygov.scot/young-people-police (accessed 15/02/2022)

[3] 'Presbyter' is an honorific sometimes used in the case of a priest who was considered to be an 'elder' or 'senior'. It is derived from the Greek 'πρεσβύτερος' (presbyteros) meaning "senior" or "elder". Strictly speaking this is not an order of priesthood. In Acts 14:23, the Apostle Paul ordains presbyters in the churches he founded. They were to be the leaders of the Christian communities which he had founded and, for this reason, in the Early Church the term was sometimes synonymous with 'bishop'.

[4] Towards the end of the medieval period, the Council of Trent (1545-1563), fixed the ages of 21 years and 1 day for subdeaconship, 22 years and 1 day for deaconship, and 24 years and 1 day for priesthood.

could only happen if the pope had granted him the grace of a *dispensatio* (papal dispensation) which exempted him from the Canon Law ruling of having to be twenty-four years of age.[5]

During all of what was a lengthy period of seventeen years, the 'trainee' was fully occupied in learning – scriptural instruction, reading, writing, Latin and Greek grammar (possibly also Hebrew), the celebration of the mass and other services, ecclesiastical ceremonial, hagiography, singing, law (both civil and canon), etc. As a consequence, priests were considered to be some of the most educated individuals of their time.

We often encounter 'clerks' in the old charters and there is, occasionally, a degree of misunderstanding about their place in ecclesiastical society. Youths might determine that the priesthood (major orders), and all that it would demand, was not for them and, armed with a significant body of learning, they diverted from the path leading to *ordination* and, instead, trained as *clerks*. Regularly, we see them travelling to distant universities to continue their studies – often in jurisprudence – then to return 'home' to act as *clerks* and/or *notaries public*. We find them acting as clerks to ecclesiastical subjects such as bishops and archdeacons, but they could also find employment with the greater nobles of the land, especially the earls, justiciars, and even at the Royal *chapel* or *camera*. These clerks (regularly described using the Latin "*clericus*") often remained in minor orders, with only a proportion being ordained into the major orders. This raises the question of, "were all clerks priests"? Most modern historians only use the term priest to apply to those who were in *major orders*, but it is sometimes a difficult question to answer.

In the case of a royal appointment, a clerk would necessarily become closely acquainted with his master, the King, and this could lead to selection for preferment to a major ecclesiastical dignity such as a bishopric. A clear example of this took place at Easter, in 1210, when Richard de Prebenda (of the *provend*), described as "*Clericus et cognatus regis* [William]", was 'elected' to the bishopric of Dunkeld. Earlier, in 1187x1199, Richard was described as "the King's clerk" and he was obviously already well on his way to greater things.[6] As *Clerk of the Provend*, Richard had control of the food supply for the whole of the Royal Court and, consequently, would have been responsible for handling and accounting for large sums of money. It was a position of great trust. However, was Richard in major or only minor orders before he was consecrated bishop? Such situations did commonly arise and we routinely encounter cases where an individual was only *ordained* into major orders the day before he was *consecrated* a bishop!

At this point it is important that the scholar understands that there is a difference between *ordination* into one of the *orders of priesthood*, and an individual's *election* or *appointment* to what we might call an ecclesiastical *rank*: rector, archdeacon, canon, bishop, cardinal. To us today it might seem extraordinary that an individual who was only in *minor orders* could be appointed directly to the *rank* of cardinal, thus becoming one of the *Princes of the Church*, but it was not unusual! Likewise, we find bishops appointed to one of the great dioceses whilst still only in *minor orders*. An interesting example of this is the case of Gilbert Mackachyn, clerk, vicar of Egilsay and Rolsay

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[5] An 'extreme' example of this occurred in 1386 (24 January) when Alexander Senescalli, a scholar of Dunblane diocese, supplicated that the Pope would grant him a dispensation for his 'defect of age' that he might be promoted to all grades of holy orders and to accept one, two, or three benefices, with or without cure, even though he was only in his twelfth year! He also craved dispensation from his 'defect of birth', being the natural (illegitimate) son of King Robert by an unmarried woman! Alexander's supplication also petitions the Pope to grant that in future supplications, no mention need be made of his *defects* or his dispensation from them.
[Burns (1976), 114]
On page 62 of the same source we find that King Robert had another illegitimate son called Thomas Senescalli, who was born when King Robert was as yet still just *seneschal* of Scotland. Thomas, too, was involved in supplications to the Pope, asking to be provided to the archdeaconry of St Andrews on 15th June, 1381, at which time, aged about twenty years, he was already a canon of Glasgow!
[Burns (1976), 62]
[6] Inchaff. Chrs., p. 262; Moray Reg., p. 5; RRS, ii, no. 135, p. 209; Chron. Melrose, 51.

(Ronaldsay), Erkaden (Orkney) diocese. On 19th February, 1430, Gilbert supplicated the pope that he might receive the orders of acolyte, sub-deacon, deacon and priest in the Roman Court …from some Catholic prelate, granting the prelate licence to confer holy orders on Gilbert.[7] At the other end of the scale, so-to-speak, we might find the rector of a fairly simple country parish church in major orders (as a *priest* or *presbyter*), having laboured long and hard to finally obtain his ordination into the ultimate order of *priesthood*. We must see *ordination* and *promotion* within ecclesiastical administrations, as two separate things which, in many instances, were not linked in any way.

Another commonly asked question involves the position of the *canons* of a cathedral. Whether they were all priests is not clear. Very often we can only tell by searching through what information there is about the individual before they were appointed to a canonry. The situation is even less clear when we are dealing with someone who held a 'canonry' in a *collegiate church* since these were often much more 'shadowy' figures about whom even less is known.

A cathedral canon was appointed by the diocesan bishop (usually with the tacit approval of the dean and chapter). He, like the other members of the chapter (*canons*), shared the responsibility of governing all of the many properties and activities of the cathedral. Canons came from all sorts of backgrounds and were regularly noted for their abilities – particularly academic scholarship. However, many canons saw their canonry as a *sinecure*, and were very much 'sleeping partners' in the life of the cathedral's chapter. Although the *statutes* of many cathedrals required the canons to be 'resident' within the *chanonry* (cathedral precincts), in practice this rule often applied to only a select group who, in time, became what we now know as *residentiary canons*, or *canons in residence*. The majority of canons were members of the chapter in name only since they held a number of such positions *in plurality*, sometimes in geographical locations that were great distances apart.[8] Normally, they were required to supply a *vicar* who would stand in for the canon, especially for those duties which related to the services in the *choir* of the cathedral. For this reason, these vicars would become known in certain establishments as *vicars choral*. It was also often stated in the cathedral's constitution that certain of these *vicars* were to be in *priests orders* whilst others needed only to be in one of the lower orders of priesthood.

Another question which arises is whether all canons were prebendaries and, *vice versa*, whether all prebendaries were canons? In medieval times, certainly in Scotland, the term *prebendary* related to one whose income was derived mainly from an identifiable source (secular or ecclesiastical) usually outwith the cathedral - this 'source' being known as his 'prebend'. This was as opposed to the case of a *simple canon* whose income came from a share of the Cathedral's internal "Common Fund". A canon who held a prebend received a share from the Common Fund also, in addition to his prebendal income. A canon who held a prebend was usually referred to by the name of that

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[7] **CSSR, iii**., p. 77.

[8] As the medieval period progressed, it became increasingly easy for the clergy to hold a number of 'titles'. Although it was necessary to supplicate the Pope to give a clergyman a *dispensation* to allow this. The permission was given most readily in the majority of cases so long as the clergyman could pay the often significant fees that were required!

A typical example of the unimportance of geographical boundaries is that of Edward de Lawedre who, on 30th May, 1426, supplicated that the Pope would dispense him that, along with the Archdeaconry of Lothian, St Andrews diocese, and a perpetual vicarage of St Giles in Edinburgh, both of which he already held, he might be allowed to hold one other benefice for life, notwithstanding that he also already held a canonry and prebend of Moray. Edward had an M.A. from the University of Paris and a Lic. Theol. from Rome. At the time of this supplication he was working as an Abbreviator of Apostolic Letters in the Curia, within the Vatican. The supplication originated from Archibald Douglas, Duke of Touraine, Earl of Douglas and Longavil, in whose household Edward held the position of *chancellor*. The 'pluralism' exhibited by Edward knew no geographical boundaries, and it is certain the he regarded most of his benefices simply as *sinecures*! He declared that he had already been dispensed for 'defect of birth', being the son of an unmarried man and an unmarried woman, and this only adds another dimension to the degree of success that he had had in gaining favours from his masters at the Vatican. [CSSR, ii., p.130]

prebend, e.g. in Moray diocese, we encounter the "Canon of Dipple,"[9] whose income accrued from these two parish churches, whereas a canon who did not possess a prebend would simply be known as a "Canon of Moray." The sum provided by prebends was very variable – some were so extensive that they made the prebendary a wealthy man indeed, whereas the income of other prebendaries could be much more modest. A prebend, because it was often created by an endowment from one of the noble families who were patrons of the cathedral in question, often also carried a certain '*kudos'* which might, for example, result in that canon being seated in a more prestigious stall (seat) in choir.

However, the answer to our original question here is that, in the medieval age, not all canons were prebendaries nor were all prebendaries canons, although this latter case was much less common. A clear distinction should be made between being a *canon*, which meant that the individual was a member of a *chapter* (of a cathedral or collegiate church), and being a *prebendary* which related only to an individual's source of income.

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[9] Thomas Archer presented a fascinating supplication to the Pope on 28th February, 1430. In translation it reads:

> *Commissio privationis*
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> *Since a certain son of iniquity, John de Hawyc, who bears himself as rector of Kylmany, St Andrews diocese, and chaplain of the Apostolic See, at the instigation of the devil and with rash daring, laid violent hands on a certain Henry Bron, priest, vicar of said church, on a certain Sunday about the time of High Mass, when Henry was celebrating there in his vestments and priestly ornaments, thus incurring sentence of excommunication; and, moreover, setting aside the fear of God and relaxing restraints, when under sentence of excommunication he did not fear to celebrate and take part in masses and other divine offices, and often took part therein openly and publicly, whereby he has rendered himself unworthy of the said rectory and merits deprivation; therefore Thomas Archer, treasurer of Dunkeld, supplicates that the Pope would give mandate to some good man in those parts that he inform himself summarily anent the foregoing, and that if he finds it to be as alleged, or sufficient for the deprivation of John, he remove him from the said rectory (£46 sterling), void as above or in whatsoever way, and collate, and provide the said Thomas: notwithstanding that Thomas holds the treasurership of Dunkeld and the rectory of Mukkart, St Andrews diocese, and the canonry and prebend of Dupyll (Dipple) in the church of Moray (total, £60 sterling); and he is prepared to demit the rectory of Mukkart (£6 sterling).*
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> *Concessum ut petitur. G.Cons.*
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> *Rome, S. Apostoli, Prid. Kal. Mar., anno 13.*
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> [**CSSR, iii., 81**]

Minor Orders.

In order to embark on the journey towards ordination as a priest, a candidate required to have been *baptized* and, usually, *confirmed* in his Faith by a bishop. Ideally, a candidate would also be able to read and write, both in his native language but, most particularly, in Latin, since this was the language of the Church across western Europe.

DOORKEEPER (Lat: *ostiarius*; Scot: *doorward*, *durward*)

This was the lowest of the four *minor orders*, to which a 'trainee' would be admitted after receiving the tonsure and surplice. In ancient times a porter had the duty of opening and closing church-doors, guarding the church and raising the alarm when necessary. On occasion such individuals are encountered bearing the Anglicised version of their Latin title – *ostiary*.

That the position is an ancient one is confirmed by a letter of 251 CE, written by Pope Cornelius (I) to Bishop Fabius of Antioch, in which the Pope says that there were then in Rome, 46 priests, 7 deacons, 7 subdeacons, 42 acolytes, and 52 exorcists, lectors, and ostiaries or doorkeepers.[10]

The 'rite' by which the minor order of *doorkeeper* was conferred consisted chiefly of a service *commissioning* an individual to exercise the office and the handing over of the *instrument* which they would require in order to carry out their duties – in this case they were presented with the keys of the church for them to touch with their right hand. The bishop admonished the candidate to, "conduct yourselves as having to render an account to God for those things which are kept under these keys."

Since doorkeepers could be young boys it is reasonable to assume that their duties were not onerous, and that their days were occupied mostly in study. However, when services were taking place, their teachers would possibly be occupied elsewhere and the *doorkeepers* would have had to be kept occupied - probably in relatively subservient rôles. The translation of the term *ostiary* into *janitor* would, perhaps, reveal greater meaning when it comes to the rôle they fulfilled within the church.[11] In certain large churches, we regularly find that handicapped individuals were given 'jobs' as doorkeepers and made responsible for the general round of cleaning duties necessary in a large building.[12]

It was typically thought that this order conferred "the office of caring for the dignity of the house of God and maintaining good order therein."

We must avoid imagining that all doorkeepers were children. Seven years was the **minimum** age at which a youngster could be commissioned, but there does not appear to be any rule which laid down a maximum age.

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[10] Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, VI, 43. http://www.seanmultimedia.com/Pie_Cornelius_I_Letters.html (accessed 16/02/2022) where 'doorkeeper' becomes 'janitor'.

[11] "Their functions were similar to those of a modern *verger.*"

[12] Victor Hugo's famous portrayal of the handicapped Quasimodo's devotion to Notre Dame, though a fictional construct, has much in common with the image of the medieval *doorkeeper*. The character's name came from the first words of the Antiphon that was sung as the officiant approached the altar for Mass on the Sunday following Easter: "Quasi modo geniti infantes" (like new born infants). Hugo's story tells us that, as a young child, Quasimodo had been found abandoned inside the cathedral, at a place where orphans and unwanted children were left by their parents and he had been given the name by one of the priests.
The full version of the antiphon, drawn from 1 Peter 2:2, is as follows: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word without guile, that you may grow thereby: If so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious." [King James Version.]

LECTOR

In early times the main rôle of the lector was to read the Epistle, and in some places the Gospel, during services. In processions, the lector had the responsibility of carrying the holy texts and of placing them on the altar in preparation for mass. In ancient times it also conferred the office and grace to read the Holy Scriptures to the assembled faithful.

When an individual was presented to the bishop for ordination to this order he was offered the Sacred Scriptures (or the Breviary) to be touched with the right hand. It was important for the candidate to understand that his reading was not to be a theatrical performance but that what he read was what he believed in his heart, so that he was able to teach by word **and** example. Sincerity and a modest tone, which could still be heard throughout the church, was what was expected.

EXORCIST

This was the third rung up the ladder leading to ordination. An *exorcist* was responsible for the imposition of hands upon '*energumens*'[13] and the exorcising of '*catechumens*.'[14]

At the Council of Carthage (397 CE), there appeared in its seventh canon, a prescription for the rite of ordination of an exorcist.[15] The bishop was to give the candidate the book containing the formulæ of exorcism, known as the ancient *Book of Exorcisms*, saying, "Receive, and commit to memory, and possess the power of imposing hands on *energumens*, whether baptized or *catechumens*."

ACOLYTE (Lat: *acolythus*)

This was the final stage in minor orders before being *ordained* into major orders as a sub-deacon. Acolytes were specially dedicated to serving at the altar, and perhaps administering Communion both during the Mass and at other times using the 'reserved host.' It was the responsibility of a bishop to examine the candidate(s) before he admitted them to the order. An acolyte received the 'instruments' of an unlit candle, an empty cruet and a linen bag which signified his highest duty of carrying the consecrated hosts.

The letter of Pope Cornelius (I) to Bishop Fabius of Antioch[16] is the first clear and authentic reference to acolytes in the Roman Church.

On 25th October, 1431, Robert de Crannach, MA, BDec., then described as "an acolyte of Aberdeen Diocese", was provided by the Pope (*perinde valere*) to the deanery of Dunblane cathedral.[17] It is to be noted that on 21st November, 1424, the same Robert de Crannach, MA of Paris, was described as

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[13] In old Christian literature this term was used of *demoniacs* - those thought to be possessed by devils, to be of abnormal mental (and at times physical) states, especially the insane.

[14] In the Early and Medieval Churches this term was used to denote those (of any age) who were undergoing instruction in preparation for being Baptised.

[15] Koziol & Underwood, p.18, no. 95.

[16] *vide supra*.

[17] CSSR, ii., p. 194.

"clerk to the late Earl of Buchan, Constable of France,"[18] when it was also recorded that Robert had been in the Roman Court for almost two years and for the greater part of this time he had been ill!

A little earlier, in 1419, a notable Scottish pluralist – Ingeram de Lyndesay - who spent much of his time residing in the Curia, was described as an "acolyte of Glasgow diocese" whilst, at the same time, holding the rectory of the church of Ratho in St Andrews diocese. Ingeram was well educated, having already obtained the degree of Bachelor of Decreets but, because he had been so busy at the Roman Curia, "he has hitherto not been conveniently able" to take higher orders. Canon Law requirements were such that he was bound to take higher orders to allow him to hold a church 'with cure'.[19] In a supplication to the pope, dated 3rd May, 1419,[20] Ingeram is styled a "clerk of Glasgow diocese" but one month later, on 5th June, 1419,[21] he is styled an "acolyte of Glasgow". In this latter supplication Ingeram, then in the Curia, asks the Pope that he should be dispensed so as to be able "to receive in Curia, on the Saturday of the approaching Ember Week, from some Catholic bishop, subdeacon's, deacon's and priest's orders **on the one day and by a single laying on of hands**, and thereafter freely and lawfully to minister in the said orders."[22] This is an extreme example of an individual making his way up towards the ultimate – the order of priesthood.

One of the acolyte's principal functions was to prepare the altar prior to Mass taking place, including lighting the candles, and then washing the communion vessels after Mass. However, he could also be called upon to carry the cross in front of a procession, carry candles in procession and, at other times, such as the singing of the Gospel, to carry a thurible and ensure that it was ready for when the priest was about to *cense* the altar, his fellow priests and the congregation. In extreme situations, an acolyte could be called on to substitute for a sub-deacon and perform certain of his duties as well as his own.

About the year 500 CE, in the most important churches in Gaul, the candidate for becoming an acolyte was first instructed by the bishop in the duties of his office, and then a candlestick, with an extinguished candle, was placed in his hand by the archdeacon, as a sign that the lights of the church would be in his care; moreover, an empty cruet was given him, symbolic of his office to present wine and water at the altar for the holy sacrifice. A short blessing followed.[23]

Major Orders

The major orders of priesthood were sometimes known as the *sacred orders*.

SUB-DEACON

This was the first of the orders which required a vow of celibacy and from this point onwards the Church accepted full responsibility for supporting the individual in material ways.

The principle functions of the sub-deacon were to assist the deacon at Mass by presenting the chalice, paten, etc.; receiving the offerings of the faithful; reading the Epistle; and, in times of persecution, transmitting messages between the churches. Upon his ordination the sub-deacon

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[18] This was John Stewart, 1st Earl of Buchan (1380-1424). He died on 17th August 1424 at Verneuil-sur-Avre, Évereux, fighting on the Franco-Scottish side, against an English-Burgundian army, and alongside his comrade in arms the Earl of Douglas. Douglas was in command of the Scottish army at this battle, at which his forces suffered a severe defeat.

[19] It was usual that a one year period of grace was allowed, after taking up a benefice, during which time the individual was expected to have himself promoted to the appropriate Holy Orders.

[20] CSSR, i., p. 39.

[21] CSSR, i., p. 39.

[22] CSSR, i., p. 67.

[23] Munier (1960), Sixth Canon.

received the *amice*, *maniple* and *tunic*. The bishop presented an empty chalice covered with a paten, to be touched by the candidate with his right hand; the archdeacon presented a cruet with wine and water, and a basin, with finger-towel, to be touched by the candidate in the same manner.

In the ancient Roman Church, the sub-deacons administered many of the temporal goods of the Holy See and it is to be supposed that this model was repeated in certain of the larger dioceses. They were also sent on important missions by the popes.

It is not common to find a cleric in Scotland who is described as a sub-deacon. But one such was David Strathauchin (Strachan?) who, in 1462, is described as being one of the two sub-deacons in Aberdeen Cathedral. At the time, he also held the prebend of Methlick.[24]

DEACON

The title *deacon* is almost as old as the Church. Writing about 63 CE, St Paul addressed, "all the saints who are at Philippi, with the administrators (bishops) and deacons."[25] Later, St Paul, in a letter to Timothy, says that, "deacons must be, chaste, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre, holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience."[26] St Paul goes on to lay down that deacons, "should be the husbands of one wife: who rule well their children and their own houses." For the deacon, then, celibacy was not yet a required commitment.[27]

The diaconate was established primarily to relieve the bishops and presbyters of their more secular and invidious duties, notably in distributing alms to the faithful. They became the natural intermediaries between the celebrant and the people and, inside the church, they made public announcements, marshalled the congregation, preserved order, etc., whilst outside of it they were the bishop's deputies in secular matters, especially in the relief of the poor. Deacons took a large share of the responsibility for the instruction of *catechumens* and in the preparation of the altar for services. From the days of the Acts of the Apostles we find deacons administering the sacrament of Baptism,[28] although this was commonly only allowed *in extremis*. However, it is true to say that deacons were intimately involved in the processes leading up to Baptism - inquiries about the candidates, their instruction and preparation, the custody of the *chrism* (which the deacons were to fetch when consecrated) and, occasionally, the actual administration of the Sacrament as the bishop's deputies. All seem to have formed part of the recognized functions of deacons.

Within the major churches there were often seven deacons and, traditionally, their supervision was entrusted to an *archdeacon*, who was appointed from amongst the seven, and was sometimes also known as the *diaconus episcopi* (the bishop's deacon).

At his ordination the deacon received from the bishop a *stole* (which he would wear over his left shoulder only), a *dalmatic*, and he was invited to touch a copy of the Gospels with his right hand. Although the spirit of the ritual was, without doubt, ancient, the form of words which accompanied the laying on of hands by the bishop cannot be traced back further than the twelfth century.

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[24] Abdn. Reg., ii., 98; Temple (1894), 406.
[25] Philippians 1:1 "οὖσιν ἐν Φιλίπποις σὺν ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνοις"
[26] 1 Timothy 3:8 sq.
[27] *vide infra*. First and second Lateran Councils of 1123 and 1139.
[28] Acts of the Apostles 8:38. The deacon Phillip is found administering Baptism.

As early as 1187x1203, we find Bricio (Brice), a "Deacon of Moray," amongst the witnesses to a charter in which his bishop, Richard, granted the church of Abernethy to one Patrick Dunbar, along with its half *dabhach* of land and all its other legal belongings.[29]

The Roman Catholic Church introduced the requirement for priests (including deacons) to be celibate in 1123[30] and this was enforced again in 1139.[31] However, for much of the early medieval period, priests in both Scotland, England, and Normandy were not only permitted to marry, but were encouraged to prepare their own sons for ecclesiastical careers.

PRIEST

Ordination as a priest was at the apex of the series of Holy Orders.

From the very earliest of times in the Christian Church the priest was responsible for the very highest act of worship – the Mass. Priests exercised more or less sacerdotal functions as intermediaries between man and the Divinity.

Within the priesthood it was considered that there were two degrees – the bishop, who administers all the sacraments and the priest who was considered to be a *sacerdos* of the second rank. The bishop alone had the power, to confirm lay-people in their faith, to ordain priests of the second rank and to consecrate new churches. By his priestly ordination, a priest received the power to offer *sacrifice* (i.e. to celebrate the Eucharist), to remit sins, to bless, to preach, to sanctify, and in a word to fulfil the non-reserved liturgical duties or priestly functions. In the exercise of these functions, however, he was subject to the authority of the bishop to whom he had promised canonical obedience. It is for this reason that, in charters, priests are identified by their diocese, i.e. the diocese within which they took their vows of obedience.

It was believed that every degree of Holy Orders conferred a certain *authority* together with the *grace* necessary for its proper exercise. This authority and grace increased in proportion to the dignity of the respective order. The Church considered it appropriate that a candidate should make best use of the 'interstices' of time between successive ordinations to prepare himself in order that he should be well instructed and well grounded in the corresponding degree of virtue, so as to enable him to 'ascend from degree to degree', growing constantly in knowledge and piety.

PARISH CLERK

The position of Parish Clerk was one of some importance although the occupant was not expected to be in Holy Orders of any kind. There is an interesting case, recounted in a document in the Grant Charter-chest, of the settlement of a parish clerk in the church of Duthil[32] in pre-Reformation times. It records that the parishioners, whose names are mentioned, assembled in the church, and the applicant for the vacant clerkship, Mr. Andrew Grant, appeared before them requesting their

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[29] Moray Reg., 38.
[30] First Lateran Council, during the pontificate of Pope Calistus II.
[31] Second Lateran Council, convoked by Pope Innocent II.
[32] This church is the traditional burial place of the Chiefs of Clan Grant – often known as Grant of Freuchie (or Grant of Ballachastell) and it lies within the Grant's *regality* of Strathspey.

suffrages. The parishioners unanimously gave him their support, and during the celebration of high mass, which followed, he proceeded to the altar step and in a loud voice requested the parishioners who consented to his election to stand up. Upon this, says the notary who recorded the proceedings, every one in the church arose, so that I saw no one sitting, and all with one voice exclaimed, 'We choose Magister Andrew Grant[33] to be our parish clerk of Duthil, and no other, unless we are compelled to the contrary by James Laird of Grant, and if we should be so compelled by the said James to elect another, we will that last election to be null and void to any one accepting it, inasmuch as it could not be called election, but compulsion. The precept for the induction was granted by Alexander Dunbar, Dean of Moray, who, as the see of Moray was then vacant, acted as Vicar-General. It is directed to the curate of the church of Duthil, and on the back of the precept a notarial instrument is endorsed intimating that William Wallace, the curate, had performed his function of inducting the new clerk into his office by delivery of the *amphora* and *aspersorium* with the holy water, and admonishing the parishioners, under pain of the greater excommunication, to pay the dues and rights of the clerkship to Andrew Grant, and to no other. The Notarial Instrument is dated 13th January 1537.[34]

It is interesting to note here that the Parish Clerks' appointment was marked by a service *commissioning* him to exercise the office and the handing over of the *instrumenta* (*amphora* and *aspersorium*) which he would require in order to carry out his duties. The church was obviously being served at that time by a *curate* – William Wallace. In the original notarial instrument it is recorded that Andrew Grant is replacing William Grant who is deceased. It also tells us that there were two priests serving the church at that time – Alexander Farquharson and William Wallace, who are both styled as *chaplains*. The instrument was prepared 'in common form' by Thomas Scherar, presbyter of Aberdeen diocese, who was a Notary Public by apostolic authority.

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[33] The implication here is that Andrew Grant was a university graduate holding a 'masters' degree.

[34] Fraser (1883), iii., 268-269. Because of the changes made to the Calendar in 1600, the year here is 1538 and this then tell us that the day in question was a Sunday – which agrees with the instrument which tells us that the commissioning took place during High Mass that day, at about 10.00 a.m.

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