SHARDS OF HOPE –
An investigation into the history of Brechin Cathedral
from an eschatological perspective

by
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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
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To my father, Bert (1929-2004)

- who would have enjoyed this
Something had been buried that was not yet dead

-Sebastian Faulks, *Birdsong*
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FOREWORD

Ever since I was a small boy I have had an annoying habit of reading the last few pages of a novel first. To my mind, the fun was then to be had in working out how the ensuing story could possibly get to the conclusion that I already knew was coming. In this paper I have echoed that childhood habit, albeit in a theological model. Central to the Christian faith is the hope in a specific eschatological outcome, namely the new heavens and new earth promised by God. This final part of God’s salvation story is heralded in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ seen in the midst of history itself. The core of my project was to take this future eschatological conclusion to the narrative as my starting point and then look back, reflecting eschatologically upon the long history of my congregation at Brechin Cathedral. How did that history reflect, in a partial, fragmentary way the present yet coming Kingdom of God? This history begins in the misty world of the Celts c. 650 and I am but one in a long line of clergy serving the people of God in this place. The weight of this history has borne down on me as I prepared this paper, yet I was also conscious of the great hope for the future given by God in Jesus. I hope, in some small measure, to have reflected those twin themes of history and faith that are so much part of my life; but more than that, to have combined them in recounting an exciting, interesting, hopeful and eschatological story for the Church.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people who in many different ways have made this possible.

Firstly, my thanks to the fifteen individuals who so readily and willingly gave up their time to be interviewed, particularly for honesty and frankness in their responses; sadly, three of my interviewees have passed to greater glory since I recorded their thoughts. To my congregation at Brechin Cathedral for their patience and forbearance when congregational matters sometimes had to take second place to studies. Also to the Cathedral’s Education Committee who acted as my sounding board. Remembering too Elizabeth Ferguson, the Cathedral Archivist, and the staff at Brechin Library for their unstinting courtesy and willingness to meet my every request to delve deep into the archives.

Secondly, to my Faculty Committee of Rev. Dr. Edwin Christiaan van Driel of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and Professor Tom Greggs of Aberdeen University who so faithfully and cheerfully journeyed the long road with me and often kept me from straying. Particular mention must be made too of Rt. Rev. Professor Tom Wright of St. Andrew’s University for his time, kindness and inspirational thinking. Also thanks to Alison Robertson for acting as a second pair of eyes in reading the manuscript.

Thanks to the Ferguson Bequest Fund and the Hope Trust for their generous financial support in making the whole thing feasible. And for Marjorie’s initial challenge at Largs that motivated me to begin.
Last, but by no means least, to my mother, Margaret and my several friends, who have lived with this project nearly as long as I have and kept me grounded, sane and human throughout. To you all: my heartfelt gratitude.
CHAPTER ONE

Preparing the Stage

“Coming events cast their shadow before”

Can the future impact upon the present and the past? Conventionally we think of time’s arrow flying in only one direction, forwards; we expect the future to follow from and be shaped by past events. But what might happen if that flow is reversed? What happens if the future, rather than the past, becomes the determining factor within time? In J.B. Priestley’s play Time and the Conways the main character Kay is celebrating her twenty-first birthday in the autumn of 1919. What the play’s characters are only vaguely aware of however is that their actions and conversations in 1919 are being influenced, even determined, by events in a similar scene some twenty years later. Their future is impinging directly upon their present and past. So noticeable was this temporal confusion for theatre critics when the play was first staged that Priestley was told he had written the three acts in the wrong order: Act 1 being in 1919, Act 2 in 1939 and Act 3 again in 1919. Priestley was using a dramatic device called a prolepsis, a flash-forward, and in this paper I shall argue theologically for a similar methodology; that the future under God is impacting directly upon the past and present of my congregation. In the case of the Conways, the future’s influence is much more baleful and malevolent, determined by an implacable power of Fate. My argument is considerably more hopeful: the future impinging upon our present and past is a future in which a loving God is fully sovereign. But we get ahead of ourselves; first some contextual background.

1 From Thomas Campbell’s poem “Lochiel’s Warning”
2 See J.B. Priestly, Three Time Plays (Corbeil, France: Pan Books, 1947), 89-181
When I arrived at Brechin Cathedral in the early autumn of 2010 there was a sense in which my congregation were uncertain of their future direction, their Christian identity. Indeed, this very issue had come out in my discussions with the nominating committee some months before I was inducted. To me this seemed rather curious. Here was a congregation which could trace its pedigree back into the misty world of the Celtic Church in the seventh century, yet it was not sure where it would go next. Was it exhausted? Had it any future at all? And more important to my ministry amongst these faithful people who seemed stuck in an ecclesiological lay-by, what could I do to help them get back onto the road?

My intuition was that it was going to be necessary to go back into the Cathedral’s history in order to go forward. I became convinced that part of the answer to my congregation’s crisis of identity lay in its extensive past. This was for two reasons: one based on a theological understanding and one grounded in a particularly theological view of history. Firstly, my claims throughout this paper are based upon an inaugurated eschatology: that God, in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ at Easter, has already begun the process of the Kingdom; that the events of the end-time have entered into time itself in the raising of Jesus from the dead. Moltmann memorably puts it: “with the raising of the crucified Christ from the dead, the future of the new creation of all things has already begun in the midst of this dying and transitory world.”3 This is my theological prolepsis, my forward-flash. Further, if God has already inaugurated the future Kingdom in the past, and it is not simply a vague hope for the future but already a living and present reality, then we should expect to find evidence of that Kingdom reflected within time. In my context this means within the Cathedral’s narrative itself. This was one reason why I believed

that it was necessary to explore our past in order to have clarity as to the congregation’s future.

My second reason is because of a particular theological understanding of history that I have developed. Ben Quash in *Theology and the Drama of History* puts it well when he argues that a theologian understands history in a peculiarly eschatological sense: “to see the dense, historical world as having an origin and an end in the creative purposing of God.” For me, history is not just a random series of events aimlessly drifting onwards. God is involved within history but in a particular way: eschatologically. That is to say, God relates to us and acts upon us from the future into the present and past. To cite Pannenberg: “as the power of the future he (God) dominates the remotest past.” History I would contend thus has a purpose, a telos, which finds its origin in God. Quash goes on:

The readiness to see history as having an origin and an end in God’s purposes generates the distinctively *eschatological* way in which Christian theology’s consideration of historical phenomena differs from other considerations. Christian theology asserts the relationship of all historical events, processes and agents to a transcendent order and with it to an ultimate meaning. I conjectured therefore that if the Kingdom of God is indeed inaugurated in Christ’s ministry and supremely in the Resurrection, and furthermore that God is acting upon God’s Church from the future into the past and present, then, as a result, buried deep within the Cathedral’s history we should expect to find clues to its future direction.

Therefore my argument within this paper is that my congregation has buried deep within its past and present life practices shaped by what I will call an *eschatological driver*; that is to say that the long and turbulent history of Brechin

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6 Quash *Theology and the Drama of History*, 3
Cathedral is moving towards an eschatological goal. Not a finis, where everything ends rather abruptly and indecisively, but rather a telos, where everything moves towards a purposeful and meaningful conclusion. In Isaiah, for example, God declares:

> Remember the former things, those of long ago…I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times what is still to come. I say my purpose will stand and I will do all that I please…what I have said I will bring about; what I have planned, that will I do.  

This telos is nothing less than the full consummation of God’s Kingdom on earth; that new creation hinted at by Paul in his letters and described in Revelation. As C. H. Dodd put it the Eschaton is “the one divine event to which the whole creation moves”. At story-level (and I shall describe my dramatic construct in a moment) one could simply see the eschatological driver as a plot device embedded by God, as author, within the narrative. Yet it is more than that; it is also the Holy Spirit acting as director of the play, moving and motivating the narrative along towards that already pre-determined outcome, the eschatological telos which God alone has decided. Wright himself points to “an eschatologically driven virtue ethic” in which a vision of the coming Kingdom, the new creation, ought to determine human behaviour so that “humans can already live in the present as people shaped by that future.” I am taking this idea a stage further and arguing for this eschatological driver to be seen as being at work within the congregational setting; that my congregation’s history only truly makes sense when understood eschatologically.

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7 Isa. 46:9ff. Also Habakkuk 2:3
8 Rom.8:21f, Rev.21:1-5, Isa.65:17-25
9 C. H. Dodd The coming of Christ (Cambridge University Press, 1951), 4
10 Fred Pfeil defines a plot device as anything which “gets the story moving or at the very least keeps it up.” See Another tale to tell: Politics and Narrative in Post-modern culture (London: Verso, 1990), 267. For example, a plot device in a crime thriller would be an unsolved murder; this would determine the direction of the rest of the story.
If, as I will argue, the direction of travel of my congregation is being pushed forwards towards this eschatological telos by the Spirit’s power, then (because God has already inaugurated the Kingdom in the ministry, death and Resurrection of Jesus) we should expect to find buried in our past and present practices that reflect that coming eschatological future. For an eschatologically driven community our future should impact upon our present, and our past. This is what I set out to prove in my project. Thus my congregation’s conundrum over its identity will I believe be solved by reflecting upon its eschatological future, but the clues to that future will, I contend, be found in its past and present practices. In other words we will “recognize that the resources for the future lie in the shelved elements of the past.”

So I began to picture the history of the Cathedral as a kind of cluttered antique shop, filled to the rafters with all sorts of articles from different periods and provenances, some valuable, some junk. As Eugene H. Peterson translates Matthew 13:52: “the owner of a general store who can put his hands on anything, old or new, exactly when you need it.” What was needed was to sift through this clutter to ascertain which past practices might still be of value to us in the future. But which criteria to use, how to determine which aspects of our history were valuable and which less so?

To answer that question I must now introduce my dramatic device that I intend to use to aid in this eschatological understanding. I shall speak of the Cathedral’s story, the narrative plot of the history of this ancient Church in which we daily serve and worship. But I shall also speak of the metanarrative, the story of God’s Kingdom, the unfolding drama of salvation in which God is supremely

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12 Samuel Wells Improvisation: the Drama of Christian Ethics (London: SPCK, 2004), 152
sovereign. The metanarrative is the overarching story which defines and gives reference to all the other stories, be they personal or ecclesiological. Gabriel Fackre in his *The Christian Story*14 is a great aid in understanding these terms “narrative” and “metanarrative”. For Fackre the “metanarrative” is God’s Story contained in the Old and New Testaments as apostolically understood by the saints. This is God’s salvation history, God’s dealings with humanity from the very beginnings of time. Yet Fackre contends this “metanarrative” requires translation into a local context, this is the narrative of the congregation, the way in which a particular Christian community has uniquely understood and acted out the “metanarrative” over time. Sometimes, as we will see from the Cathedral’s story, these two stories, narrative and metanarrative, will run parallel to each other without necessarily touching. The congregation’s narrative may in fact appear at times to have little to do with God’s story, to move away from the metanarrative. But we will also observe that there are occasions where these two dramas, Cathedral narrative and Kingdom metanarrative, intersect and crossover; this is the crux of my whole argument. It is these times of intersection which I shall focus upon as proof of my eschatological driver, the telos of the Kingdom. These intersections are what I will call “Kingdom moments”, instances when the “metanarrative”, God’s Story, shines clearly through the darkness of history in the congregation’s story, its narrative. These are the temporal points when the shards of the Kingdom will become visible.

God’s action within history is, I would contend, easier to see as we look back.15 Because within time we are players within the drama, we are often only conscious of the line we are delivering, the scene in which we are playing. Unlike the

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14 Gabriel Fackre, *The Christian Story* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. Eerdmans, 1978) see particularly the Introduction and chapters 1 and 7
15 I am reminded of the story of Elijah who did not see God face to face but only experienced the Lord passing by; in other words, saw God’s past action, God’s back. (I Kings 19:11)
eternal God who overarches all time, we cannot see the entire drama; it is hidden from our eyes.\textsuperscript{16} The signs of God’s Kingdom become, I would claim, more apparent as we study the historic process. These moments where Cathedral and Kingdom narrative intersect and overlap are truly the moments when the people of God, past or present, are already living in the eschatological future of God. Sometimes these points of intersection are obvious, at other times less so. Spiritual discernment shall become a key concept as the paper unfolds. What we are thus seeking after in this project are the signs of God’s Kingdom breaking through from the future into the present, as witnessed as we look back into the past. One of the central claims of my project therefore is that God’s action in relation to God’s people is embedded within the historical process; it is within history itself that we find clues to God’s presence and activity amongst us. Yet, this is not always apparent; it requires an amount of digging down below the top-soil of the past on our part that we might uncover God’s footprint.

So what of my dramatic device? The Cathedral has had a long story of about fourteen hundred years, and, as with the plot of any story, the final chapter or act should determine the tone of the rest of the narrative. For example, if the narrative is a murder mystery we would expect the killer to be revealed in the final scene, or in a romance, the star struck lovers to be re-united in bliss. Sam Wells in his book \textit{Improvisation: the Drama of Christian Ethics} adds a helpful theological scaffold onto Fackre’s structure of metanarrative. Wells seeks to understand God’s story, the metanarrative, as a Five Act play: Act One being creation, Act Two Israel, Act Three Jesus, Act Four the Church and crucially Act Five, the defining Act in the drama, is the Eschaton. Thus the entire drama becomes driven by an eschatological outcome to

\textsuperscript{16} 1 Co. 13:12
the plot, the telos. As Wells understands it “Eschatology seeks to show the sovereignty of God in the outcome of his creation….that God who began the story and transformed the story will end the story as he sees fit.”\textsuperscript{17} Thus in the case of the Cathedral congregation its story is an eschatological story and its telos, or final chapter, is the consummation of the Kingdom of God, the completion and realisation of all our hopes; that is where we are heading and all the long history up until that point has been geared in that direction, towards the Kingdom. This is my eschatological driver seen within the congregation’s life and witness. It is my argument within the project that if this is indeed the case then we should expect to find, embedded in the Cathedral’s past, shards of the Kingdom; practices and examples within its past life that will point ahead to that final fifth chapter, that denouement when God shall dwell with God’s people and there will be new heavens and a new earth\textsuperscript{18}. I have quite deliberately referred to these pointers towards God’s Kingdom as \textit{shards}, for shards are by nature broken fragments, incomplete and far from perfect in form.\textsuperscript{19} As we shall see, this is true of these eschatological shards in a congregational context, revealed amongst an often broken people and in periods of history that far from perfectly reflect God’s reign. Tom Wright has called my shards “signposts in the fog pointing to the Kingdom”\textsuperscript{20}. Wolfhart Pannenberg (whose helpful understanding of providence we shall discuss in detail in chapter two) refers to the “flashes of eternal joy”\textsuperscript{21} of the Kingdom that we might expect to find in the Church’s history. Thus my project is an attempt, both in historical investigation and ethnographical reflection, for me to be the theological archaeologist, to dig deep into

\textsuperscript{17} Wells \textit{Improvisation}, 52
\textsuperscript{18} Revelation 21:1 and Isa. 65:17-25
\textsuperscript{19} We will find evidence of the fragmentary nature of these shards in considering the evidence from the Cathedral’s narrative in Chapter Three.
\textsuperscript{20} Interview with Rt. Rev. Prof. Tom Wright at St.Andrew’s University, 9\textsuperscript{th} October, 2013
\textsuperscript{21} Pannenberg, \textit{Theology and the Kingdom of God}, 88
the historic soil of my congregation and unearth which are these practices that point ahead to the present and yet coming Kingdom of God.

The God who was witnessed to in the Cathedral’s past is also the God we now worship and will be the God whom we will finally see face to face in the fully realised Kingdom of God. This God whom we shall fully encounter in our eschatological future has, I would claim, embedded within the congregation’s past signs of divine action, hints of God’s kingdom. And it is these hints which I shall delight in revealing in chapter three. My project is thus both historical and eschatological because, for me at least, and I believe for my congregation, these two aspects of its life are in fact inseparable. History leads ultimately to eschatology and eschatology is the interpreter of history. As Pope Francis asserts in his recent apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* “True Christian hope, which seeks the eschatological kingdom, always generates history.”

Within my research therefore I have delved deeply into the historical records of my congregation, utilising Kirk Session minutes (almost continuous since 1615), the various historical papers of the Society of Friends of the Cathedral, several books on the history of Brechin (most of which are now sadly out of print) and even translating a few of the Latin Medieval charters of the Cathedral chapter to get a flavour of life in that era. Yet, because I am convinced that our God is not confined to the past but is also very much present with us, nudging us forwards into God’s future, I have also conducted over a dozen in depth interviews about people’s experiences of the Cathedral’s history. Most of these were with members of long-

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22 *Evangelii Gaudium* (Catholic Truth Society, 2013), 91
23 The Society of Friends of Brechin Cathedral was founded in 1947 by Rev. James Anderson, the minister of the day. One of its key aims and objectives is "encouragement of research into the history of the Cathedral".
standing within the congregation, some were with my predecessors in office, but a few were with “outsiders” to the congregation’s life, observers who were able to offer a unique bird’s eye view of the Cathedral’s life from a slight distance without being fully involved. It must be stated at the outset that within the interviews much of the historical reflection (particularly by congregational members) was upon the practices and style of various past ministers. People found it easier to carry out a historical assessment in this way. It is this very exciting and heady mix of contemporary interview and historical documentation which will thus form the evidential basis of my project.

The structure of my paper will thus echo the dramatic device of which I have spoken. Any drama requires scenery and props so in chapter two I shall outline the theological props and biblical scenery on which my project is based. We shall look at why I feel the Church should be eschatologically driven, why an inaugurated eschatology (as opposed to some other form of eschatology) is vital, why such an eschatology demands a particular doctrine of Providence and what kind of God am I thus pointing to if I proceed down this line of reasoning. One other key theological issue will be the “template”\textsuperscript{24} of the Kingdom I am going to use as my metanarrative basis. In other words, which parts of Scripture best reflect for us the nature of that Kingdom that is present and yet to be fully realised. Here I will explain why an understanding of the Kingdom limited to one or two key Scriptural passages simply will not do; a broader basis of understanding the Kingdom, grounded in the fullness of Scriptural promise, is fundamental if we are truly to see how the two narrative strands fully intersect. I will thus draw upon not only the four Gospels and the letters of Paul, but also Old Testament and inter-Testamental apocalyptic literature as my

\textsuperscript{24} I am grateful to Prof. Tom Wright for permission to use this conceptual tool.
Kingdom “template” so that a fuller understanding of the nature of the coming Kingdom may emerge. I shall also offer a brief discursus on practices, particularly from an eschatological and historical standpoint.

In chapter three, we shall then turn to the evidence itself. Amongst the practices outlined will be the care and education of the young, the bias towards the role of women, the issue of forgiveness and conflict resolution. Outlining the theological and biblical basis as to why these are truly eschatological practices, I shall explain why I see these practices as congruent with my eschatological driver; in other words, why for me they point squarely to the Kingdom. I will thereafter present the evidence for these practices utilising my data. I shall end that chapter by outlining why the whole issue of diversity is absolutely essential to understanding the reality of God’s multi-coloured Kingdom.

Chapter four takes a different tact. This time we shall focus on the negatives, the periods in the Cathedral’s life when we seem to have moved away from the Kingdom and yet why, in fact, the Kingdom still breaks through the fog of plague, war and discord. We shall examine the rather less salubrious parts of the Cathedral’s past, distant and more recent, and see why I can claim that even in these darker days the tenacious Kingdom still breaks through.

Chapter five will allow the critics of my drama to find voice. Are there other ways of understanding a telos within the Church? Does history actually have meaning at all or am I reading too much into it? And how far must we beware the evidence, historical and ethnographical, that is presented? What limits are there to my evidence? And what part might I, the researcher, have played in misinterpreting the historical data? What are the limitations of the theological models I have
employed? I shall also discuss secularization and argue that this is a phantom villain who need not trouble us as much as we fear.

In the final chapter, I shall endeavour to draw all these strands together in an effort to see clearly the way ahead for my congregation. How can these Kingdom moments still shape us in the present time, even allowing for the impact of secularization? I shall also boldly suggest that the tenacity of the Kingdom’s constant breaking through that we see reflected in the Cathedral’s story is in fact a sign of continued hope for the future not only of Brechin Cathedral but indeed the whole Church.

In broad brush strokes, this is the outline of my project: grounded in the congregation’s history, interpreted through the eyes of today’s people of faith, with an eschatological driver and outcome at its heart. What I am seeking for is as Richard Bauckham correctly states in his preface to Moltmann’s *Theology of Hope*:

> a hermeneutic of Christian mission, which recalls the revelatory events of the past not in order to remain in the past but for the sake of their promise of the future, can meet the modern experience of history by giving it eschatological direction.25

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CHAPTER TWO

Biblical Props and Theological Scenery

“Heaven…the place where the divinely intended future for the world is kept safely in store…like new props being brought out from the wings and onto the stage”

Before the actors assemble upon a stage to deliver their parts, before the drama of the play can be performed, before ever a line is spoken, first we must know what are the scenery and props that are integral to the production. In this chapter I shall indicate the theological proposals which I will use to describe the theological and biblical backdrop against which the Cathedral’s drama is played out. We shall first examine the type of eschatology I will be utilising and the scriptural underpinning of this. Then, in the light of the inaugurated eschatology I will propose, consider the impact of this eschatological model on the doctrines of Providence, divine agency and pneumatological understanding. Finally, in a short discursus I will consider my use of the concept of eschatological practices.

THE ESCHATOLOGICAL SCENERY

As stated in my introductory chapter, the Cathedral’s history is being determined by what I have called an eschatological driver; that is to say the narrative of the Cathedral is being driven towards an eschatological telos, or goal, by the power of God manifested through the Spirit. This eschatological driver has such divine power within it that it has left, scattered and embedded in the soil of history, shards that point ahead to the fully consummated Kingdom of God. Or, to put it another way, as

1 N.T. Wright The Resurrection of the Son of God (London: SPCK, 2003), 368
Fackre observed, in what ways does the overarching metanarrative of the eschatological Kingdom translate into the local narrative of the Cathedral? The practical outworking of this interpretation of the Cathedral’s narrative from an eschatological perspective I will outline in my next chapter. So why do I make this claim that the Church generally, and my congregation in particular, has at its heart an eschatological driver? This is based upon, as I stated previously in Chapter One, an inaugurated view of eschatology. But before we turn to my various arguments in support of an inaugurated eschatology, let me first suggest why other alternative eschatological understandings are, to my mind, unsatisfactory.

In this section I will briefly discuss Schweitzer as the originator of a modern eschatological sense before moving on to consider C.H. Dodd’s realized eschatological understanding and lastly N.T. Wright as the theological source upon which I will base my own understanding of inaugurated eschatology.

It was Albert Schweitzer, arguably the father of modern eschatological thought, who re-discovered for us the eschatological intensity of Jesus’ own ministry and witness. Yet, while Schweitzer recaptures that eschatological sense within the gospels and the Pauline literature, he also asserts that this eschatological imperative is now lost to the Church; it simply cannot recapture the eschatological context in which Jesus preached and lived. For Schweitzer Jesus can only be understood within the eschatological worldview of his age. In a very famous quote, Schweitzer sums up his position:

Jesus….in the knowledge that He is the coming Son of Man lays hold of the wheel of the world to set it moving on the last revolution which is to bring all ordinary history to a close. It refuses to turn, and He throws Himself upon it. Then it does turn; and crushes Him. Instead of bringing in the eschatological

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conditions, He has destroyed them. The wheel rolls onward, and the mangled body of the one immeasurably great Man, who was strong enough to think Himself as the spiritual ruler of mankind and bend history to His purpose, is hanging upon it still. That is His victory and His reign.  

For Schweitzer Jesus’ mission was ultimately a failure, if an heroic one. The eschatological worldview that Jesus held is alien and lost to us; the historical and apocalyptically driven Jesus is a stranger to us and the Church must simply accept this.  

Schweitzer’s view is that while the Christian can be “possessed and dominated by a hope of the Kingdom of God”  

this Kingdom is to be of a purely spiritual rather than physical in nature. The Kingdom of God as Schweitzer interprets it becomes a progressive thing dependent upon humanity being in accord with the Spirit, with little relevance to the sovereign in-breaking of God within time or indeed beyond time. Thus for me Schweitzer’s view is a denuding of the real eschatological power of Jesus’ message and is where I fundamentally part company with him. Schweitzer, it seems to me, breaks irretrievably the link between Jesus and the Church. If indeed the Church is grounded in and founded upon the Resurrection, then as the living community of witness to the living Christ it must surely have buried deep within its very lifeblood that eschatological driver seen so visibly in Jesus. In short, Schweitzer’s consistent eschatological viewpoint will not do. Eschatology still is vital to the Church. The question is: in what form?

We turn then to the possibility of a realized eschatology, particularly as propounded by C. H. Dodd. In a realized eschatology God’s purpose is indeed eschatological but this purpose has already been realized in the ministry of Jesus; the

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3 Albert Schweitzer The Quest for the Historical Jesus (New York: Dover Publications, 2005), 369
4 Albert Schweitzer The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), 383
5 Ibid. 384
Kingdom has already arrived in all its essential form during the ministry of Jesus, the future aspect of the Kingdom is largely illusory. Dodd puts it thus:

The human mind of Jesus Christ was a poet’s mind. He saw the great Day of the Lord; not only saw it, but acted it out. He saw that Day come, in the brief spell when He worked and suffered in Palestine. He saw it extended into history yet to be. He saw it extended into the world beyond history, where alone the kingdom of God can be perfectly revealed. And yet it was there, really and actually. The Day had come.6

For Dodd therefore “the eternal meaning which gives reality to history is now exhausted. To conceive any further event on the plane of history would be like drawing a check on a closed account.”7 For Dodd therefore any suggestion of futurist eschatology is in fact an interpretation of the early Church with no basis in Jesus’ ministry or proclamation.

Yet again, I would argue that Dodd, as with Schweitzer, cuts the historical Jesus off from the lifeblood of the continuing Church. The eschatological account Dodd considers defunct is in fact still very much open because, as I will seek to show in Chapter Three, the eschatological driver is still very much at work within the Church of the past and present. This is where my historical shards will stand their ground. Further, this rather optimistic view of realised eschatology does not square easily with the horror of two World Wars and countless other tragedies and barbarities before and since. If we are living now in the fullness of the Kingdom, as realised eschatology demands, then what does that say about the kind of God we worship? Or indeed the kind of Kingdom Jesus declared? A realised eschatology does not say much to those who are, as Moltmann forcibly puts it “victims on the underside of history”8, those on the shady rather than the sunny side of the street. If

7 C.H. Dodd The Apostolic Preaching (Harper and Row, London; 1964), 144
this world is as good as it gets, what hope does that gospel offer to the poor and marginalised? The Biblical witness itself also points to a Kingdom that in fullness is yet to be, is not with us yet but still ahead of us on the road. So, as with Schweitzer, Dodd also leaves too many unanswered questions.

Part of the reason why Schweitzer and Dodd seek to downgrade the futuristic aspect of the eschatological model is because of what is sometimes called the delay in the parousia. Jesus seems to indicate that he will return, imminently, and then apparently does not; his promise lies unfulfilled. Was Jesus mistaken (as Schweitzer claims) or has the Day of the Lord already arrived (as Dodd hints at)? Yet is there not a third possibility: is there in fact a delay at all? Wright, for one, is dismissive of this notion: “it was not a matter of final events being bound to occur within a stated period of time; rather they might occur at any time.” Sam Wells too casts doubt on the delay aspect, questioning why we think we live in particularly significant times. Wells asks: “What if…..the church still has thousands of millions of years ahead of it? Perhaps we are the early Church, still haggling over details, and rightly so.” Part of my assertion in this project is that God’s eschatological timetable is still in place; there is no delay. The eschatological driver is still at work. For if God has acted eschatologically already in the Resurrection (as inaugurated eschatology asserts) any sense of delay to the completion of this process is purely subjective. We need not be

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9 We might think for example of the vision of Stephen at his stoning (Acts 7:55f.) or the visions of John in the Revelation (Rev. 21 and 22 for e.g.). Eschatological visions which indicate that while the Kingdom is present with us it is not yet in a fully realized form.

10 One other realized form of eschatology (that of Kathryn Tanner) also bears scrutiny. In part, Tanner offers some interesting insights, even if her telos is very different to my own. However I will examine Tanner’s view in Chapter Five, for Tanner will act for me as the critics’ voice of my inaugurated eschatological understanding.


12 A good restraining principle for any historical reflection!

13 Sam Wells Improvisation: the Drama of Christian Ethics (London: SPCK,2004), 56
concerned about delays, the promise has already been shown verifiably in Jesus rising from the dead.

Given my argument in Chapter One that the Cathedral’s story is being eschatologically driven by the Spirit towards an eschatological telos, the best lens through which to interpret this history is by an *inaugurated eschatology*. Here I must introduce Wright’s view of eschatology which I will fully utilise within my paper. Absolutely central to Wright’s understanding is the bodily resurrection of Jesus; this is the fulcrum point, “the hinge on which the door of history turned.”[^14] The Kingdom in its fullness is both seen and inaugurated in the mission/ministry of Jesus, but supremely in his resurrection from the dead.[^15] This is the moment when the future time fully breaks into time present (now past). The actuality of the End-time is witnessed within time itself. As Pannenberg dramatically put it: “with the resurrection of Jesus, the end of history has already occurred”[^16]

Further Wright’s argument is that Jesus’ *bodily* resurrection says something not only about the future but the present too: “The resurrection of Jesus did not merely offer new, or more sharply defined, hope for the future. It gave new perspective to the present time, cosmically and personally.”[^17] Thus, in relation to our own ultimate destiny, we will not after death merely become spirits within an ethereal realm but embodied creatures in transformed bodies living within a new creation[^18]. The very physicality of Jesus’ resurrection, and the fact that this has *not yet* occurred to any of the other dead (to which the graveyard around the Cathedral bears testament) points to eschatology being begun but not yet complete, in other

[^14]: Borg and Wright *The meaning of Jesus*, 121
[^15]: Ibid., 37
[^17]: Borg and Wright *The meaning of Jesus*, 121
words inaugurated. The new creation finds its beginning in the resurrection of Jesus and is culminated when God will be all in all; the coming Kingdom has a physical reality and a material outworking to it. It is a new Earth that is promised, not merely a new Heaven. Matter matters and this stress upon the physical universe and its importance in God’s schema\textsuperscript{19} will be reflected in many of the eschatological practices I will reveal in Chapter Three. As Wright says the resurrection of Jesus heralds for us “the drastic and dramatic birth of new creation from the womb of the old.”\textsuperscript{20}

We therefore live in the between-time, between the now and the not yet, the inauguration of the End and its consummation. And if the Church is indeed living between the times, then the eschatological tone of Jesus’ ministry cannot be lost within the Church (as Schweitzer asserts) for this tone has been vindicated, verified and stamped with the imprimatur of God’s sovereign action in the Resurrection. This tension between the now and the not yet, continuity/discontinuity of the Kingdom is one main characteristic of inaugurated eschatology and in the next chapter we will see it, time and again, reflected in the Cathedral narrative. God has acted in the resurrection of Jesus, God has revealed God’s eschatological hand; yet God is still to act, the Kingdom, now launched has still to reach completion, a flowering of the hope and love of God. Central to my argument is that this “not yet” aspect of the Kingdom continues to assert its influence over the already or “now” aspect of the Kingdom. Wright puts it thus “the belief that the future has already come forward to meet us in the present.”\textsuperscript{21} Because we live in the between times and because the future comes forward to meet us in the now, the eschatological driver seen so

\textsuperscript{19} Wright *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 737
\textsuperscript{20} Wright *Surprised by Hope*, 115
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid. 134
powerfully in Jesus is still at work in today’s Church. The eschatological balance sheet Dodd would regard as finished is still in credit, the account is not yet closed; God has further work to do to bring to fruition God’s Kingdom.

Wright’s challenge to the current Church, based upon the centrality of the bodily resurrection of Jesus, is that “our task in the present…is to live as resurrection people in between Easter and the final day, with our Christian life, corporate and individual, in both worship and mission, as a sign of the first and foretaste of the second.” 22 My intention is that my project, outlined in this paper, is perhaps in some small way a response to this great challenge to see how we might live as Easter people.

Having therefore established that an inaugurated eschatology based on Wright is the form I intend to use, as it is the best eschatological lens through which to examine the Cathedral’s history (and that other alternative eschatological understandings are to some degree found wanting), let me now seek to lay out the Biblical underpinning of such an inaugurated eschatology.

In his definitive work on Resurrection, The Resurrection of the Son of God, Wright argues persuasively and coherently that Scriptural narrative points undeniably to an inaugurated eschatology. In this paper I do not propose to go through all of these scriptural references that indicate that promise, but simply to draw out a few main thoughts. These are the scriptural fence posts upon which my inaugurated eschatological scenery will be affixed.

22 Ibid., 41
Starting with the Old Testament, we find in the likes of Ezekiel 37\textsuperscript{23} and Daniel 12 a clear suggestion of restoration for the people of Israel; but more than that, a definite pointer to a general resurrection of the dead. Daniel states: “multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.”\textsuperscript{24} It is noteworthy that this resurrection hope within some parts of the Old Testament is not just for Israel but the whole earth, a hope echoed again in Isaiah 2 when “in the last days the mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills and \textit{all nations will stream to it}.”\textsuperscript{25} Israel will no longer be separate and alone in receiving God’s promise of restoration and renewal, but rather will be the conduit through which all the other peoples will also benefit; “Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.”\textsuperscript{26} This diverse, multi-coloured nature of the coming Kingdom in which all peoples have a place is one we shall return to in the next chapter when we consider the Cathedral’s narrative.

We should also note that the whole notion of the eschatological messianic banquet (which will also be further elaborated in the next chapter) first makes its appearance in a wonderfully hopeful passage in the Old Testament:

On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine – the best of meats and the finest of wines. On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, a sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. \textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{23} Wright warns however that this passage probably started life as a metaphorical understanding of restoration for the people of Israel; the dry bones coming to life. Later rabbinical interpretations translated it into a literal resurrection. See Wright \textit{The Resurrection of the Son of God}, 120
\textsuperscript{24} Daniel 12:2
\textsuperscript{25} Isaiah 2:2 italics mine.
\textsuperscript{26} Isaiah 60:3
\textsuperscript{27} Isaiah 25:6f. The parallels with Rev. 21:4 are obvious.
In terms of the resurrection from the dead, Wright correctly makes clear that this promise in the Old Testament scriptures is one for the future, not an account of what has happened; “it is what will happen to people who are at present dead, not what has already happened to them.” So far therefore, this Old Testament promise of eschatological hope is a futuristic one; what has yet to happen. Isaiah 53 is the link passage that begins to allow us entry into the New Testament understanding, for in Isaiah 53 here the resurrection hope focuses not upon the nation of Israel, or even the peoples of the earth, but one individual in particular; “he will see his offspring and prolong his days and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.” As Wright puts it, the servant passages in Isaiah are the turning point when “somebody really begins to think in terms of human beings themselves actually dying and actually being given a newly embodied life at some point thereafter”. What is significant, as Wright points out, is that the development of the eschatological motif within the Old Testament grows from an emphasis on the goodness of creation and the power of YHWH.

If we move from the Old Testament into the post-Biblical Judaic literature we find a considerable diversity of eschatological belief, indeed, in the case of the Sadducee party, no belief at all. Perhaps 2 Maccabees is the best example of the continuation of the bodily resurrection theme first encountered in Daniel 12. Here, the various seven brothers in the epic struggle with the tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes make clear what God’s vindication for their suffering will be: “you dismiss us from this present life, but the King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting

28 Wright The Resurrection of the Son of God, 109
29 Isaiah 53:10
30 Wright The Resurrection of the Son of God, 123
renewal of life.” Another passage of post-Biblical Judaism that is worth mentioning is II Baruch. Here there is a clear sense of the transforming power of God evident in the Eschaton and also the continuity/discontinuity theme we shall shortly encounter in the New Testament literature. Not only will “the earth surely give back the dead” but “they will be changed into any shape which they wished, from beauty to loveliness and from light to the splendour of glory.” Another passage from this Second Temple period that is extremely worthy of note is the Wisdom of Solomon, Chapter three:

But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them.

2 In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be a disaster, and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace.

4 For though in the sight of others they were punished, their hope is full of immortality.

5 Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good, because God tested them and found them worthy of himself; like gold in the furnace he tried them, and like a sacrificial burnt-offering he accepted them.

7 In the time of their visitation they will shine forth, and will run like sparks through the stubble.

8 They will govern nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord will reign over them for ever.

9 Those who trust in him will understand truth, and the faithful will abide with him in love, because grace and mercy are upon his holy ones, and he watches over his elect.

This incredibly hopeful vision points to a future time of vindication for those who have suffered for their faith. More than that, we are given a glimpse of the kind of society that will exist in this new creation, where the Lord God will reign but the

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31 2 Macc.7:9 (Wright’s translation)
32 2 Baruch 50:2 (Wright’s translation)
31 2 Baruch 51:9 (Wright’s translation)
33 Wisdom of Solomon 3: 1-9 (Wright’s translation)
faithful ones will govern the nations on God’s behalf. This notion of the nature of the divine Kingdom re-appears again in Chapter five:

But the righteous live for evermore; their reward also is with the Lord, and the care of them is with the most High. Therefore shall they receive a glorious kingdom, and a beautiful crown from the Lord's hand: for with his right hand shall he cover them, and with his arm shall he protect them.\(^{35}\)

Two things need to be noted from both the Old Testament texts and post-Biblical Judaic texts I have quoted. First, that this new world pictured has a decidedly physical quality about it; it is not some kind of ethereal realm of floating spirits. Second, that this new world is certainly \textit{a future} realm. As Wright says: “It was one particular story that was told about the dead: a story in which the \textit{present} state of those who died would be replaced by a \textit{future} state in which they would be alive once more.”\(^{36}\)

The eschatological motif so far outlined is entirely futuristic, certainly not a realised form. In order to move to complete the Scriptural circle and reach an inaugurated understanding we must enter into the exciting world of Paul and the gospel writers.

So which are the key texts pointing to an inaugurated eschatology within Paul? One of Paul’s earliest letters, I Thessalonians\(^ {37}\), deals with a pastoral concern thrown up by eschatological expectation; namely, what happens to those who die before Jesus returns in glory? Paul seems clear that the Kingdom of God in its fullest most perfect sense is a future not present state. The dead are yet to be raised: “We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who died.”\(^ {35}\)

\(^{35}\) Wisdom of Solomon 5:15f. (Wright’s translation)
\(^{36}\) Wright \textit{The Resurrection of the Son of God}, 201
\(^{37}\) I Thess. 4:13-5:11
who have fallen asleep in Him.”

But something highly significant has already occurred within the historical process itself. The Resurrection is the game-changer, “the hinge upon which the door of history turned”\(^{39}\). Thus Paul clearly asserts a two-stage Eschaton: God raised Jesus, later God will raise the rest of the dead. But, Paul goes further: we are already living with the implications of this first Resurrection of Jesus. As Wright states “for Paul, the resurrection of Jesus was the sharp, shocking fulfilment of the hope of Israel, inaugurating a new, unexpected period in history in which those called by the gospel would live as children of day, waiting for dawn to break at last.”\(^{40}\) So for Paul, because the Eschaton has begun with Jesus’ raising by God and is in the process of being completed, we are “children of the day” who ought to “stay awake and keep watch”.\(^{41}\) It is because the Kingdom is inaugurated in the Resurrection of Jesus that Paul lays upon the Church an ethical consideration to live as children of light not darkness. We are already “resurrection people”\(^{42}\) and thus must already begin to live in the here and now as if the fullness of the Kingdom were already upon us. The Christian ethic is itself an inaugurated eschatological one.

In Galatians Paul takes a slightly different tact; the age to come has already broken through into the present age and this has current implications.\(^{43}\) In particular, we can glean something of the promised future inheritance, promised to God’s children, even in this present age.\(^{44}\) As Paul urges: “let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest.”\(^{45}\) This breaking through of the

\(^{38}\) I Thess. 4:14
\(^{39}\) Borg and Wright *The meaning of Jesus*, 121
\(^{40}\) Wright *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 219
\(^{41}\) I Thess. 5:5
\(^{42}\) Wright *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 217
\(^{43}\) Gal.1:4
\(^{44}\) See Gal. 4:1-7
\(^{45}\) Gal.6:9
coming Kingdom has implications not simply for the life of the individual believer but for the faith community itself, to live in a certain way:

For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise. 46

This new way of living within a society that is decidedly counter-cultural in its value system (because of the implications of the Resurrection) will become clearer when looking at some of the eschatological practices of the Cathedral in the next chapter. Wright puts it well when he says:

The thought of future inheritance…..is never an incentive to shrug one’s shoulders and wait passively for the final divine rescue operation, but always to be doing in the present those things which properly anticipate, and hence lead to, the future inheritance itself. 47

Where perhaps I differ slightly from Wright is that, for me, this doing of the things that anticipate the coming Kingdom is not only dependent upon a conscious choice by us, but rather is determined by that eschatological driver, given by God’s Spirit, that is embedded within the congregational narrative.

Philippians gives us another view of gaining the power of the Resurrection even within our lives in this present age: “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings.” 48 Yet Paul is clear that the Kingdom and its transforming power is only just begun and in a very personal passage sounds a clear note of an inaugurated eschatology:

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me…..forgetting that which is behind and straining towards that which is ahead, I press on towards

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46 Gal.3:27-29
47 Wright The Resurrection of the Son of God, 223. Italics mine.
48 Philipp. 3:10
the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.\textsuperscript{49}

Paul it seems is certain that while the change has begun in the Resurrection of Jesus the final settlement of the Kingdom is still to come, the prize yet lies ahead. An inaugurated eschatological understanding should lead us therefore to take a long-term view of history.

This leads us to the letters that are simply fit to bursting with eschatological motifs: Romans and Corinthians. Let me begin by drawing out some key eschatological themes from Romans. The first of these is that Paul begins to work out the \textit{political} implications of the Resurrection: “through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God, by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.”\textsuperscript{50} If Jesus is truly Messiah, and the Resurrection is a clear indicator of God’s vindication of him, then Jesus becomes Lord and Caesar no longer can be: “the Roman world is tottering; only God’s kingdom will last.”\textsuperscript{51} Paul is all too aware of the highly charged political implications of the Resurrection and, as Wright argues, this is why in Romans 13 Paul almost bends over double to show that the Christian faith is of no immediate threat to the Roman state.\textsuperscript{52} This in itself is a good indicator of an inaugurated eschatology; at present, the Church may seem to pose no threat to the worldly powers, although ultimately of course, the Kingdom will replace all of them.

The second point that arises out of Romans is the importance of the Spirit’s place in the eschatological scheme of things: “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Jesus from the dead will also give life to your

\begin{footnotes}
\item[49] Philipp.3:12-14
\item[50] Rom.1:4
\item[52] Eschatologically, of course, it was! Rome fell, God’s Kingdom still thrives.
\end{footnotes}
mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.”⁵³ The Spirit becomes that key link between the age to come and the powerful impact of the Resurrection on the present age; as Wright declares: “The Spirit…. is the present guarantee of the future inheritance.”⁵⁴ This is an important realisation for the pneumatological ground of my own project, for the Spirit will prove a crucial tool in discerning which practices point to the Kingdom and which do not. If the Spirit has, so to speak, a foot in both the present age and the age to come, it can be deduced that if the Spirit belongs to the coming Kingdom, and the Spirit is also present in the here and now, then it is the very work of the Spirit in the here and now that is initiating the Kingdom. The Spirit is both the guarantor and harbinger. The shards of the Kingdom of which I speak, are primarily the actions of the Spirit of the coming age working within this present age. The Spirit provides for us the inauguration of eschatological fulfilment in this present age, “the full and final redemption of the creation and ourselves with it….will be accomplished through a fresh act of creative grace when Jesus reappears, and this in turn is anticipated in the present by the work of the Spirit.”⁵⁵ More than that, Paul goes on to say that the indwelling of the Spirit within the believer is an echo of the Shekinah, God’s glory, indwelling within the Temple.⁵⁶

Another key theme in Romans is the two age motif and we see this clearly in Romans 12: “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”⁵⁷ This is such a key text that another translation may aid further our understanding, so as Wright translates Paul: “don’t let yourselves be squeezed into the shape dictated by the present age. Instead, be

⁵³ Rom. 8:11
⁵⁴ Wright The Resurrection of the Son of God, 256
⁵⁵ Ibid., 518
⁵⁶ See for example I Cor.3:16f, I Cor.6:19, Eph.2:22
⁵⁷ Rom.12:2
transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you can work out what God’s will is….”58 Here again we see the clear dichotomy between the present age and the age to come, yet we also realise that this transformation or renewal of our minds begins in the here and now; it is an inaugurated transformative eschatology; this is our eschatological driver. It also points to the continuity/discontinuity aspect of the Resurrection that we see in Romans 8, in which the creation itself is straining from the current age towards the hope of the age that is yet to come.59

One final word on Romans concerns the section Romans 14:7-12. Superficially this appears to be an ethical instruction on judging our brother until we come to that key phrase in verse 11: “every knee will bow before me and every tongue will confess to God.” Shades of Philippians 2:10f. : “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” But these texts are also echoes of that passage in Isaiah 2:2 when all the tribes and nations of the earth will flock to the mountain of the Lord. They point to the diversity and sheer richness of the membership of the Kingdom. As Wright puts the argument “The eschatological framework enables the ecumenical project between culturally divergent Christian groups to move forwards on the basis of the gospel itself.”60 In Chapter Three we shall see this diversity of the Kingdom at first hand in the ecumenical aspect and divergent nature amongst the Christian community in the Cathedral narrative.

Now we must turn to Paul’s key eschatological texts in I Corinthians, particularly I Cor.15. It is in this letter that supremely Paul’s eschatological narrative comes to the fore: the story runs from the present age into the age to come and there is both

59 Rom. 8:18-25
60 Wright The Resurrection of the Son of God, 266
continuity and discontinuity between these ages. For Paul’s worldview the Resurrection of Jesus is central; it is not just one topic amongst a host of others to be considered it is “part of the structure of everything else.”\textsuperscript{61} Thus we have clearly revealed Paul’s eschatological driver. The ground of Paul’s entire argument is the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead; this is the lynchpin upon which the narrative turns, the moment when the new age breaks forcibly in to the old, not only invading but transforming the present time. Paul has an unmistakable view of an inaugurated eschatology. So states Wright:

…..the point of the resurrection is not simply that the creator god has done something remarkable for one solitary individual (as people today sometimes imagine is the supposed thrust of the Easter proclamation) but that, in and through the resurrection, ‘the present evil age’ has been invaded by the ‘age to come’, the time of resurrection, return, covenant renewal, and forgiveness. An event has occurred as a result of which the world is a different place, and human beings have the new possibility to become a different kind of people.\textsuperscript{62}

It is not always clear exactly what the problem was at Corinth which Paul seeks to address. Was it too much eschatology?\textsuperscript{63} Or was it too little?\textsuperscript{64} In either case, one gets the distinct impression that the irrepressible apostle is writing to the Christian community to correct some fundamental eschatological misunderstanding!

So let us tease out some key themes in chapter 15 of I Corinthians. One of the key predicates in the chapter is how Paul understands God’s nature; God is a faithful God. As God has raised Jesus from the dead, so God will bring about a new creation in which all the dead are raised. The very fact that God has acted, that the new age breaks in to the present time in the Resurrection of Jesus is a guarantee of future promise that God will act to complete the eschatological project. As Paul puts it “we

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 309
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 332. Italics mine.
\textsuperscript{63} See Anthony C Thielston “Realised eschatology at Corinth” in New Testament Studies 24 (1978), 510-26
are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But…. if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile.” 65 For Paul, to deny the Resurrection is in fact a denial of God, who has acted within history to raise Jesus. This faithful God will very much be viewed again when we consider the darker periods of the Cathedral’s narrative in Chapter Four. The God who has acted eschatologically in the Resurrection of Jesus also acts eschatologically in the Cathedral’s narrative, and not just in one era of time, but in all eras. The eschatological practices we shall consider in Chapter Three are clear indicators of this faithfulness of God.

Second, Paul deals with the issue of suffering by asserting the continuity between this age and the age yet to come. The future age “gives meaning to what would otherwise be meaningless.”66 In a very personal aside to the Corinthians, Paul states: “why do we endanger ourselves every hour? ....If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons, what have I gained?”67 In other words it is the consummation of that Kingdom, inaugurated in the Resurrection and completed at the end of time that will make sense of all the sufferings that are so prevalent in the current age. Here again we have the long-term view of the narrative that is such a characteristic of inaugurated eschatology.

Just as the Risen Christ still bears the marks of crucifixion, so the scars of apparently meaningless pain from this world are carried forward into the new age and there both understood and transformed. This is the continuity aspect of the

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65 1 Cor.15:15
66 Wright The Resurrection of the Son of God, 339
67 1 Cor.15:30ff.
Kingdom. This will be a highly important thought in Chapter Four when we consider the dark, less illuminating parts of the Cathedral’s history.

Third, there is also discontinuity. The new age contains the old but is more than it; this world is a pale shadow by comparison to what is to come. If we may return to our dramatic construct, there is a sense in which the eschatological future is not only Act Five of the current tale, but in fact the prologue of a brand new adventure altogether. Here Paul uses transformative imagery: “the body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, raised a spiritual body.”*69 Just as the resurrection body of the Risen Christ contains the crucified Jesus, yet is more than that, able to appear in a locked room and cover distances in an instant, so there is discontinuity between this age and the world to come. In terms of the Cathedral, this means that the metanarrative of the Kingdom is never identical to the congregational narrative. The congregational narrative may (as clearly I am claiming!) reflect aspects of the Kingdom metanarrative, but the fullness of the Kingdom is never contained within the congregation’s story. The Kingdom metanarrative also stands over against the Cathedral narrative, almost in a kind of judgement upon it*70. There is continuity and discontinuity between the narratives, just as there is between this world and the age yet to come.

*68 Wright has a useful and helpful discussion on *soma psychikon* and *soma pneumatikon*, which I do not propose to deal with in the body of this paper. Wright’s basic contention being that the animating principle of our bodies can either be our self (psyche) or God’s Spirit (pneuma). Much of the modern confusion with this text Wright claims is because of the difference in worldview between Paul and our own technological, scientific age. See Wright *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 348-356.

*69* 1 Cor.15:42f.

*70* Interestingly, Kathryn Tanner holds a similar view which I shall outline in Chapter Five.
Finally, it is this continuity/discontinuity aspect of the Kingdom that “gives meaning and direction to present Christian living.”\textsuperscript{71} This is our eschatological driver. The very fact that the Kingdom is inaugurated in the raising of Jesus from the dead, and that we currently look forwards hopefully to the promise of the last day, means that in this present age we should be already living as children of the new age. The inaugurated eschatology has a very practical ethical outworking.\textsuperscript{72} As Paul puts it “always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.”\textsuperscript{73} Whatever is done in this life in accordance with the eschatological driver of the Kingdom will find its way into the new age to come; nothing is ever lost or misplaced in God’s scheme of things. Here we can truly dismiss Dodd’s assertion of the closed eschatological account; the account is still open and deposits made in this age will be carried forward into the age to come. The Resurrection of Jesus in history past, and the coming Kingdom of promise, are transformative of this present age.

On that hopeful note we leave Paul and turn our attention now to the Gospel narratives\textsuperscript{74}. Jesus’ ministry was to declare and make visible the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom that was imminent. So in Mark Jesus enters on the scene declaring “The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.”\textsuperscript{75} What the Gospel narratives show is the extent of how transformative that coming Kingdom could be on this present age, what Wright calls “predictions of great reversals in the new world.”\textsuperscript{76} So we find, for example, that with the arrival of the Kingdom, even in an

\textsuperscript{71} Wright \textit{The Resurrection of the Son of God}, 359
\textsuperscript{72} See, for example, Tom Wright \textit{Virtue Reborn} (London: SPCK, 2010), 149.
\textsuperscript{73} 1 Cor.15:58
\textsuperscript{74} Like Wright, I have deliberately placed my discussion on Paul before the Gospel narratives since Paul precedes them chronologically.
\textsuperscript{75} Mark 1:15
\textsuperscript{76} Wright \textit{The Resurrection of the Son of God}, 405
embryonic form, the structure of society in Jesus’ time (and indeed in ours too) is
turned on its head. The Child is given a central place in the Kingdom (Matt.18:1-3).
The role of women is greatly enhanced in comparison to the attitudes of the people of
Jesus’ day. Jesus seems to positively go out of his way to lift women up from the
bottom of society’s heap. We find this with the woman caught in adultery (John 8: 1-
11), the little joke Jesus apparently enjoys with the Canaanite woman (Mark 7:24-
30), the woman Jesus encounters at the well in the heat of the day (John 4:1-26), and
even his discussions with Mary of Bethany in which she is very much seen as a
disciple, even as Jesus’ intellectual equal (Luke 10:38-42). The teachings of Jesus
too, particularly the Sermon on the Mount, reflect this topsy-turvy, counter-cultural
nature of the Kingdom in which the “last shall come first”77 and the one who would
be master must be “servant of all.”78 Many of these very eschatological themes we
shall revisit again in Chapter Three when we consider our eschatological practices.

Another key theme is that of healing, for the various healing miracles
performed by Jesus are nothing less than that coming Kingdom breaking in to time.
The wholeness, the fullness of being that the new age demands, is seen in the
numerous occasions when Jesus seeks physical as well as mental/emotional
restoration for people. So Jesus makes the blind see, the lame walk, the leper clean,
even the dead are raised in the case of Jairus’ daughter and Lazarus. And Jesus
himself sees this as a key indicator that the Kingdom of God has arrived amongst the
people of Israel as we see in the Nazareth manifesto.79 Perhaps, rather surprisingly,
as we shall observe in Chapter Three, health care and the healing of individuals also
suddenly breaks in to the Cathedral narrative; another indicator of the breaking in of

77 Matt.20:16
78 Mark 9:35
79 Luke 4:18-20
the Kingdom? Forgiveness of sins and restoration of relationships forms another key part of this healing ministry. It has indeed been pondered whether the story of the Prodigal Son\(^80\) (or maybe it should really be the waiting Father?) was told in order to heal the division between the intemperate Peter and the colluding Matthew, the tax gatherer who was on the side of Rome.\(^81\) Indeed, the very complexity and diversity of the characters of the Twelve is in itself an indicator of the diversity of the Kingdom.\(^82\) We shall see this issue of forgiveness and diversity as hallmarks of the Kingdom in the next chapter when we look at the Cathedral’s narrative. Again, I would argue that the Gospel narratives show an inaugurated eschatology; we have signs of the Kingdom appearing, even growing like the mustard seed,\(^83\) but it is only in the coming age that fruition is reached.

So what of the Resurrection narratives in the Gospels themselves, what do they tell us, what eschatological hints do they provide? In fact, if we side with Wright, surprisingly little. Wright describes the Easter narratives as “strange” like “a solo flute piping a new melody after the orchestra has fallen silent.”\(^84\) And they are strange for a number of reasons: one, none of the gospel writers embellish the Resurrection accounts by other Biblical texts, they stand alone; two, there is a silence about any personal hope for the believer flowing from the accounts, they are primarily missional in nature; three, a very strange Jesus is portrayed, he seems to belong in two realities at once; finally, the presence of the women points to a peculiar historicity in the accounts for, if the tale were invented, the storyteller would

\(^80\) Luke 15: 11-32  
\(^81\) See Wes Avram Where the Light shines through (Grand Rapids,MI; Brazos Press, 2005)  
\(^82\) For a fuller discussion on this thought see my own essay entitled “Difference without division: hearing the many voices at the Table”, available online at www.brechincathedral.org.uk  
\(^83\) Matt.13:31f.  
\(^84\) Wright The Resurrection of the Son of God, 600
hardly have women as the principal witnesses. Wright thus concludes that here we have a very early oral tradition and that (unlike with Paul) this event of the Resurrection is so novel, so ground-breaking that no-one had yet had an opportunity to really digest its full meaning or implications for the world. The Easter stories are “the hurried, puzzled accounts of those who have seen with their own eyes something which took them horribly by surprise and with which they had not yet fully come to terms.” While not shedding any light on the nature of what had happened, this shocked response to the Resurrection event by the Gospel writers does, if Wright is correct, firmly back up my claim of an inaugurated eschatology. Something new had come about; the Resurrection had no comparison within the whole historical narrative hitherto, because this was an act of the new age dawning within the old. Moltmann states that the Resurrection has no analogy within history, for its analogy lies not in what has occurred but what has yet to occur: “The resurrection of Christ is without parallel in the history known to us….in the light of which all other history is illumined, called into question and transformed.” The Resurrection reveals within history something of the reality of the age that is yet to come.

Given the texts above that I have cited, Scripture, I thus contend, firmly points to and is filled with promises of a distinctly inaugurated eschatology.

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85 In Jesus’ time women were not considered to be reliable enough to be witnesses in a court of Law. It is noticeable that in many dramatic portrayals on stage or screen of the Resurrection, the male apostles at first often dismiss Mary Magdalene’s account of the Risen Christ as the ravings of an emotional woman!

86 Wright The Resurrection of the Son of God, 612

THEOLOGICAL PROPS

If an inaugurated eschatology is the scenery against which the drama of the Cathedral story is performed we turn our attention to the impact of that eschatological understanding upon two key theological areas. These theological “props” that will aid our understanding are:

i. The doctrine of Providence

ii. The divine agency

The doctrine of Providence

My project by its very nature is one which draws upon history, so how are we to understand God acting in history?

Firstly, what do I understand by Providence? How to define the concept?

Calvin understands Providence thus: “he (God) disposes and directs everything to the end he designs by his unsearchable wisdom.” Immediately we have this sense of the purposive end, the goal or telos. Indeed John Webster reminds us that providence is not merely about “world maintenance” but is teleological in nature. Because I want a view of Providence that fits both with my understanding of an inaugurated eschatology and my particular historical construal, I am going to locate my understanding of Providence within the doctrine of eschatology. However, caution must be exercised otherwise I will end up merely “supplying history with a frame.” Ben Quash warns of neglecting the sovereign nature of God to “make theories out of the providence of God.” Quash in particular is anxious that, in pursuing the kind of road I am about to go down, the whole tragedy of human existence may be simply

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89 John Webster “On the Theology of Providence” in The Providence of God edt. Francesca Aran Murphy and Philip G. Ziegler (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 162
90 Ibid., 164
91 Quash Theology and the Drama of History (Cambridge University Press, 2005),150
negated by an historical framework; in imposing a particular theological frame on history we shall forget that history brings darkness as well as light. Quash states: “part of the finality of the Christian story is an actualization of the ‘the whole tragic potentiality’ of human history on the cross.”\footnote{Ibid., 94} My dramatic device cannot therefore simply dispose of the tragic, painful elements within its narrative by imposing a doctrine of Providence based upon an over-optimistic view of human history (i.e. everything is going to work out alright in the end); Paul is one such who avoids this temptation. The apostle does not state that all things work together for our good\footnote{As is sometimes asserted in the commonplace, colloquial response to bereavements; i.e. I have often heard folk saying to a grieving relative “it must have been meant because it’s for the best”.
\footnote{Rom. 8:28 (Wright’s Kingdom New Testament) italics mine.}} in some kind of view of Providence where the end point of history provides the justification for all the misery that has gone before! Rather Paul declares: “We know that, in fact, God works all things together for good to those who love him, who are called according to his purpose.”\footnote{Jurgen Moltmann Theology of Hope, 182 gives an interesting section in which Moltmann debunks to a degree the doctrine of Providence.} Paul thus has a clear sense of the sovereignty of God, of God working within events. In employing a doctrine of Providence that has at its heart an eschatological driver, God and God’s eternal purpose must remain central.

Where might I find the kind of eschatological understanding of Providence that I seek? Jurgen Moltmann has hitherto been a very helpful companion on this eschatological quest, but on the concept of Providence, Moltmann is reticent, shying away from any sense of “mysterious knowledge of a divine plan for history”.\footnote{Ibid., 95} For Moltmann, particularly given his view of the Second World War, history can offer us little in the way of clues to God’s intentions; history stands almost in opposition to the coming Kingdom, the nova creatio. The problem with Moltmann’s model is that
we have a clear discontinuity between creation as it is vis-a-vis creation as it will be, almost to the exclusion of any element of continuity. This element of continuity however is demanded by the nature of the risen Jesus and the very Kingdom which we move towards; Jesus’ resurrected body is transformed (discontinuity) but still bears the scars of the crucifixion (continuity). We need therefore a doctrine of Providence in which history and its events will be carried forwards into the new creation, or at least understood in the light of the new creation yet to be.

My eschatological view of Providence is going to have to be located within a particularly eschatological understanding of God (and thus divine revelation) and it is here that Wolfhart Pannenberg comes into his own. Pannenberg seeks to avoid a view of God in which God acts within history through transcendent interventions; what might be called the God of the zaps. Instead Pannenberg begins from a particular view of revelation, in which it is only when we reach the conclusion of the tale that the full reality of the author of the script (i.e. God) is finally revealed. We see this in Thesis 2 of Pannenberg’s “Dogmatic Theses on the Doctrine of Revelation” in which he asserts “Revelation is not comprehended completely in the beginning but at the end of revealing history.”

Pannenberg’s key sentence is: “It is at the end of this chain of world events that God can for the first time be revealed with finality as the one true God…for *history receives its unity from its goal.*”

Pannenberg is not saying that God was not God before this end point but rather that God’s manifestation as God is revealed in fullness only on the final day, it is “the end of history that is one with the essence of God.” So as Frank Tupper puts it,

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97 Ibid., 133
98 Ibid., 133
describing Pannenberg’s position, “Revelation is not the imparting of supernatural truths about God, but is essentially the self-revelation of God.”

Yet Pannenberg makes an even more insightful move in Thesis 4: “The universal revelation of the deity of God is not yet realized in the history of Israel, but first in the fate of Jesus of Nazareth, in so far as the end of all events is anticipated in his fate.” In other words if we think back to Sam Wells’ five Act drama, which I alluded to in Chapter One, it is only when we reach Act III in which Jesus appears on stage that suddenly it becomes clear where this story is going and how it is going to end for at this point the plot outcome is made clear as the eschatological chapter breaks through. Here we have the inaugurated eschatology to which I have been pointing; Jesus and his fate is the prolepsis of the end days, the culmination of our metanarrative. As Pannenberg states:

the witness of the New Testament is that in the fate of Jesus Christ the end is not only seen ahead of time, but is experienced by means of a foretaste. For, in him, the resurrection of the dead has already taken place, though to all other men it is still to be experienced…only in the sense that the perfection of history has already been inaugurated in Jesus Christ is God finally and fully revealed in the fate of Jesus. With the resurrection of Jesus, the end of history has already occurred

If the end of history has already occurred in Jesus’ death and Resurrection where does this leave Act IV, the Church, the very Act we find ourselves in and in which the narrative of the Cathedral is located? Pannenberg is quick to assert that there is no new revelation as such in the history after Christ rather “The history after Christ

100 Pannenberg “Dogmatic Theses”, 139
101 Wells has Act I as creation, Act II as the history of Israel, Act III as the life and ministry of Jesus, Act IV as the history of the Church and Act V as the Eschaton itself. There is considerable debate amongst scholars as to whether the Eschaton occurs in history or outwith it. See for e.g. Richard Bauckham “Time and Eternity” in God will be all in all: The eschatology of Jurgen Moltmann, ed. Richard Bauckham (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 181. I think Bauckham is correct in that it must be a both/and scenario, thus making Act V perhaps the prologue to a new drama. See Rodney Holder Longing, Waiting, Believing (Abingdon: BRF, 2014), 104-107
102 Pannenberg “Dogmatic Theses”, 141f.
bears his mark. Its special motifs seem to become noticeable for the first time…”

Thus do the events that occur within Act IV (the Church) bear a particular emphasis, are of a specifically eschatological and Christological hue. What is of particular significance for my own project is Pannenberg’s telling warning that “the church is always tempted to play down the still-impending future of the eschatological life.”

The Church is therefore often tempted to neglect or ignore its eschatological driver, but, as I will hopefully show in my project, this eschatological motif that resides in the Church cannot be suppressed – it will out! I interpret Pannenberg therefore as making both Christological and eschatological points; God acts within history, yet these actions must be interpreted through the hermeneutical lens of the end point, the telos that is anticipated and meets and encounters us in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is not that we are to try to understand history Christologically, rather eschatologically, but through the perspective of the Resurrection of Jesus in which the end flashes back from future to past, a prolepsis.

In terms of Providence:

God remains active in the events of history after Christ (events that say something about him as God), but the prolepsis of revelation in the eschatological destiny of Jesus means that there will be no distinctively new disclosure of God that will surpass the Christ event.

In asserting that the Church may neglect the eschatological driver within it, another note of caution concerning the Church must be raised. Pannenberg is quite clear that the Church is not the Kingdom, nor is the Church even a present aspect of the Kingdom that awaits future fulfilment. The Church, as with our interpretations of history, must always have a provisional tag attached to it. Yes, Pannenberg says, “the

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103 Ibid., 144
104 Ibid., 142
105 Is this perhaps another reason why we tend to get tied in theological knots over any supposed delay to the Parousia?
106 Tupper The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg, 93
Kingdom of God will manifest itself through the Church” (hence my eschatological shards) but “this is quite different from attributing to the Church in its established structures the dignity of being the Kingdom.”\(^{107}\) Thus we must assume that there have been times in its history when the Church has strayed from truly manifesting the Kingdom and it is to the glory of God and due to God’s faithful presence that nevertheless even in such times, the Kingdom still breaks in to the Church’s life.\(^{108}\)

But how are we to retain history’s unity while not forfeiting its contingency?\(^ {109}\) Here Pannenberg distinguishes between universal history (\textit{universal geschichte}) and the history of the transmission of traditions (\textit{uberlieferungsgeschichte}). Events in themselves only gain significance as they stand against the horizon of universal history, “each event in history achieves its significance only in relation to other events with which it is interwoven.”\(^ {110}\) The danger the historian falls into is to interpret the event without that eschatological sketch of the whole. For Pannenberg any understanding of history must be provisional, for we have not yet reached the final scene in the drama in which the author of the play (God) ties up all the plot intricacies and makes clear the whole drama. This in itself points to an eschatological paradigm; to coin the journalist Ralph Carpenter’s colloquialism “the show ain’t over ‘til the fat lady sings”. Thus until the last day history must remain “a hermeneutical process involving the ceaseless revision of the transmitted tradition in the light of new experiences and new

\(^{107}\) Wolfhart Pannenberg \textit{Theology and the Kingdom of God} transl. Richard Neuhaus (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 5\textsuperscript{th} edition, 1977), 77
\(^{108}\) We shall examine this claim in more detail in Chapter Four.
\(^{109}\) I offer a critique of Pannenberg in Chapter Five, in which the critics of my position are allowed to find voice.
\(^{110}\) Ibid., 97
There is a universal historical horizon and this end will determine and interpret how God is present in particular individual events in history, even the Christ event itself. Of course, this must mean that my own eschatological interpretation of the Cathedral’s narrative is in itself merely provisional, subject to revision and re-interpretation by later scholars or the end itself. I too must acknowledge that I am also a player in the drama and subject to the same revision process provided by the eschatological telos.

This provisional nature of historical interpretation to which Pannenberg alerts us, combined with an insistence that events must be understood only in relation to the eschatological culmination of the whole, offsets the concern which Quash raised concerning placing structural frameworks on the historical narrative. And Quash, for all his caution on teleological interpretations of history, recognises that there may in fact be an end that interprets the whole after all:

…there is an unframeability about history from the perspective of human experience: we cannot see into the future, nor exhaustively into the past. But it needs to be borne in mind that these are ‘subjective’ or ‘existential’ unframeabilities. They do not deny that history might in fact have an ‘end’, or that there might be a ‘final source of meaning’ in the world.112

This “final source of meaning” is of course provided by God and not by us; God retains sovereignty. Providence, God’s actions within history, can only be viewed therefore from the future backwards. It is the end that gives meaning to the rest of the tale.

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111 Wolfhart Pannenberg Basic Questions in Theology (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1970; reprinted 2008) Foreword, xviii
112 Quash, Theology and the Drama of History, 169 Italics mine. I would agree completely that it is not we, but rather God who provides history with a framework and God does so eschatologically.
The Divine agency

The danger in an eschatologically motivated and historically grounded project such as my own is this: do these shards or hints of the kingdom (to which I have referred) have their origin in a congregation alone in response to our faith in God? Or is it God who is active in the tension between the world as it is and the Kingdom as it will be and if God is active, in what way? Or are we left simply with an absentee God who sets this whole eschatological play in motion and then stands back and lets the players (i.e. ourselves) stand or fall alone and unaided?

For Pannenberg, as we have observed, God acts within history according to God’s eschatological telos. But, how far does history act upon God? Does God retain an immutable quality or are we starting down the road of stating that God is subject to change due to history’s impact upon God? For Pannenberg this tension between the eternal God and the God who acts within time is answered eschatologically. The immanent and economic Trinity find unity in the eschatological telos.

Changelessness in God is not an indicator for Pannenberg of immobility (since God is a living God) rather what points to God’s immutability is God’s faithfulness: “God was present in every past moment as the one who he is in his futurity. He was in the past the same one whom he will manifest himself to be in the future.”113 It is vital to grasp Pannenberg’s understanding of time; it is not that God relates to different times in different ways, nor that God is changed from before to after an event, rather all points in history are met in God at the one eschatological point. As Christiaan Mostert succinctly puts it describing Pannenberg’s view “all events affecting God are present to God all at once.”114 There is constancy to God’s presence and faithfulness to God’s action. God does not travel in or through time with us as a fellow traveller,

113 Ibid., 63
but rather from the future point relates to us and all times in the same way; God is the goal. As Pannenberg puts it “God has been the future of all past events.”\textsuperscript{115}

Moltmann has a somewhat similar approach as Pannenberg in respect of God’s relation to time. He distinguishes between aeonic time (heaven) and transitory time (earth) yet these two times do meet: “Earthly creation exists within the context of passing time, but this earthly time, for its part, belongs within the context of aeonic time of the invisible world continually touching it and being touched by it.”\textsuperscript{116}

These are my intersection points, the points at which the Kingdom metanarrative touches the Cathedral story, as a tangent touches a circle. God stands at the end of history and is only seen fully as God at this telos point. It is not that God is present in some points but not in others, nor that God is more active in some points of time than others, God is present in every point, every event, the question is whether we, the cast of the play, can discern this or not.

Thus in considering my Cathedral narrative, it would be correct to assert that God acts within history, but in a particular way. God acts according to God’s own eschatological driver; it is this that provides history with its universal horizon. My shards of the Kingdom I would claim originate not in us slavishly acting upon a particular template that God has provided us with from the beginning (as if God were thereafter absent from the drama entirely) but rather in how we improvise the script that God has given us (and I shall come to the issue of improvisation momentarily). This improvisation must involve both the actions of the players on the stage (ourselves) alongside the guidance and helpful coaxing from the director (the Holy Spirit) according to the scriptwriter’s (God the Father’s) intentions.

\textsuperscript{115} Pannenberg \textit{Theology and the Kingdom of God}, 62

\textsuperscript{116} Moltmann \textit{The coming of God}, loc.4029
It would be appropriate here to introduce a little of Hans Urs Von Balthasar’s thinking in his five volume *Theo Drama*, for Von Balthasar also provides a useful theological backdrop to the stage in my drama. Von Balthasar in particular seeks to represent the conventional model of the Trinity in more dramatic terms. In order to do this he presents two triads: the triad of dramatic creativity on the one hand and the triad of dramatic realization on the other. For my purposes it is the first of these triads which is of significance. In this triad model God the Father is pictured as the author “from whom everything comes and who accepts responsibility for it all; he is prior to the play and above it.” But that is not to say that the author simply presents us with the script, stands aside and evermore afterwards is uninvolved, for in his aspect of the triad as actor, he is the principal player upon the stage. Thus as actor does God give “the Author’s word a real presence in the form of action.” What is unique about the author-actor is that the role given coincides with the person himself in Jesus, the God-man. The other players, namely ourselves, are also given roles by the author, yet we do not always play these roles as the author intended. The third member of the triad is the director of the play, “the indispensable Person who brings the Author’s text into the actuality of the performance, in response to the manifold, fortuitous needs of the moment and the changing potential of the troupe of actors.” What Von Balthasar very helpfully does therefore is not only understand the Trinity according to a dramatic model but gives a very strong place to the whole issue of pneumatology, which is a key underlying theological principle of my whole approach to divine agency. It is the director’s task to bring the play to life, literally. To infuse the current creative order with that eschatological telos, of which I have

118 Ibid., 532
119 I shall present my evidence in support of this in Chapter Four
120 Ibid., 533
spoken; to ensure that the four earlier Acts are fully in tune and spirit with the key, final Act, the Eschaton. Von Balthasar thus states:

> The Father entrusts his play to him (the Director) to be translated into real life…the Son entrusts himself to the Spirit’s guidance, and, above all, the Church must entrust herself to him if her mission to proclaim the word, administer the sacraments and shepherd souls is to succeed. 121

The Holy Spirit as director of the play must also jog along and interact with the supporting cast (ourselves) to bring the play to the fullness of perfection. As the mysterious Doctor Gortler states in another of Priestley’s time plays *I Have been here before* “We must play our parts until the drama is perfect”122. So how does the Spirit-director seek to ensure that we, the players, act our parts to perfection?

Here it would be helpful to return to that rather tricky passage in I Cor.15 when Paul speaks of the resurrection body: “it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body”123. Wright points out that the English translation does not really allow for the more nuanced interpretation of the original Greek124, and that is a pity. For what Paul is really comparing is a body animated by the *psyche* (our natural desires) compared to one in which the animating principle is the *pneuma*, the Spirit. The natural body (our current state) is one determined by our selfish desires and wishes; the spiritual (our state in the new creation) is one in which our collusion with the Holy Spirit will be paramount. And yet, if there is a prolepsis, if the future indeed reaches out to influence the past and present, then, for the believer, even in our current state the Spirit is capable of influencing our actions. Therefore, the spiritual body promised in the new creation is anticipated where the Christian (or a group of Christians, a congregation) speak and act out their parts in the drama in the way

121 Ibid., 534
122 J.B. Priestley *I have been here before* (1937) Act III
123 I Cor.15:44
124 Wright *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 348
which the Spirit (the drama’s director) would wish and desire. We improvise God’s script not just as we wish, but as God lures and desires.

We find a clear suggestion of this pneumatological influence leading us to act and behave as if the new creation had already arrived in many of Paul’s letters. For example, in Colossians we read:

Since then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above... set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God... Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on your new self, which is being renewed in knowledge of the image of its Creator.¹²⁵

Of course, we have not yet been raised with Christ in the body and this has led some scholars to thinking that Paul has a realized eschatology. But what Paul in fact is doing is suggesting that if the pneuma or Spirit, rather than the psyche, is the animating principle within us and our community of faith, then we might expect that we would live, act and behave as if we were already living in the new creation. Here we see for the first time the key relationship between the shards of the Kingdom that I have identified and the presence of the Holy Spirit of the living God. Wright then helpfully suggests that Resurrection is a metonym, not only does it point to a concrete future reality, but also a present state described metaphorically. The Resurrection of Jesus becomes not just a pointer to future reality for the believer, but a way of understanding how the believer must live in the here and now. Wright says: “the present life of Christians is already, metaphorically, one of resurrection, not now referring, as in second-Temple Judaism, to the restoration of ethnic Israel, but rather to forgiveness of sins and a new pattern of behaviour.”¹²⁶ This new pattern of behaviour is determined however not by Laws given by God and expected to be

¹²⁵ Col.3: 1 – 11 is the important passage. I have highlighted only the key sentences here.
¹²⁶ Wright The Resurrection of the Son of God, 240
obeyed by the people (as in Judaism), but rather through the living presence of the
Spirit who helps us to improvise the script of the new creation yet to come.

Sam Wells offers help in understanding the whole notion of improvisation
within the script that the author has given us. Wells defines improvisation of the
script as “how a text and a tradition are realized by a community in new
circumstances.”\(^{127}\) Wells’ concern is that a congregation is not stuck slavishly
performing again and again the same drama, but rather the script allows for
improvisation, for being able to take key themes from the previous parts of the play
and perform these themes in new and original ways. Thus the players have:

…Permission to improvise – as saints. They have no need to make everything
come right, nor have they need to correct perceived shortcomings in any of
the previous acts. They simply use the resources of the first three acts, and
what they anticipate of the final act, and faithfully play with the
circumstances in which they find themselves.\(^{128}\)

Gerald Loughlin too echoes this idea of entering the drama and having to improvise
the Script:

…when a person enters the scriptural story he or she does so by entering the
Church’s performance of that story: he or she is baptised into a biblical and
ecclesial drama. It is not so much being written into a book as taking part in a
play, a play that has to be improvised on the spot.\(^{129}\)

Wells for one, I feel, is in danger at times of pushing improvisation at the expense of
being true to the author’s script; he clearly wants to avoid a slavish obedience: “I
question the assumption that the Bible is a script that the Church performs and
suggest instead that it is more like a training manual that forms what Christians take
for granted.”\(^{130}\) Where I want to be a little more cautious than either Wells or
Loughlin in this notion of improvisation is that it should not be based simply upon

\(^{127}\) Sam Wells, *Improvisation*, 66
\(^{128}\) Ibid., 67
\(^{129}\) Gerald Loughlin, *Telling God’s Story* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 20
\(^{130}\) Sam Wells, *Improvisation*, 214
the whims of the players themselves, but is in accordance with the direction of the
Spirit, the director of the play. Yes, the script of the metanarrative may (some might
say must) be improvised according to new circumstances that present themselves to
the players.\textsuperscript{131} However the outcome of the play cannot be lost or thwarted by the
players behave or whatever lines they speak. The limit to human freedom in this
eschatological orientated model of Providence is that the nature of the play, or its
denouement, simply cannot be changed\textsuperscript{132}. The Kingdom will triumph in the end,
whatever we do or fail to do\textsuperscript{133}. God is ultimately sovereign. And I shall produce
some evidence to back this (what I think is a very hopeful and encouraging) claim in
Chapters Four and Five. The direction of the play by the director is therefore crucial.

This is echoed by Wright who states “it is a call, not to specific acts of
behaviour, but to a type of \textit{character}… it is a call to see oneself as having a role to
play within a \textit{story} – and a story where, to join up with the first point, there is one
supreme Character whose life is to be followed.”\textsuperscript{134} Wright directly links this new
type of behaviour with that presence of the Holy Spirit. For Wright, the Spirit
provides for us “a framework within which one may grasp the organic connection
between what we are called to do and become in the present and what we are
promised as full, genuine human life in the future.”\textsuperscript{135} This is done not by obeying
ethical rules; rather Wright says it is like learning a new language. I would put it
slightly differently: it is to learn and portray our part faithfully in God’s drama,
helped by the direction of the Holy Spirit, the play director. Thus as Paul puts it: “if

\textsuperscript{131} This is what Fackre meant by translatability into a congregational context.
\textsuperscript{132} I shall consider the charge of determinism that this model engenders in Chapter Five.
\textsuperscript{133} See for example Rob Bell \textit{Love Wins} (London: Collins, 2011)
\textsuperscript{134} Tom Wright \textit{Virtue Reborn} (London: SPCK, 2010), 6 Italics Wright’s. Note that this work was
originally published in the United States as N.T. Wright \textit{After you believe: why Christian character
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., 60
the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you”\textsuperscript{136} then we will be led to put to death within us all that opposes the Spirit’s rule. The Spirit is therefore “vital for the quest and practice of virtue”\textsuperscript{137} in that “we can draw down some of God’s future into our own present moment.”\textsuperscript{138}

One further dramatic idea may here further aid understanding. David F. Ford not only speaks of improvisation, but more significantly for my purposes, the whole concept of rehearsal. In his provocative and spiritual work \textit{The Drama of Living} Ford reminds us that much of what we do in life is a form of rehearsal: we rehearse what we are going to say at a meeting, we rehearse for an important examination, we even rehearse in our communication with friends and family. Thus Ford extends this idea of rehearsal into religion:

> A great deal of religion can be seen as preparation for life as a whole. It is made up of habits and practices that are meant to shape our days, weeks and years by drawing on wisdom that has accumulated over centuries and is constantly being rethought, reapplied, and improvised on.\textsuperscript{139}

Rehearsal, as any actor will tell us, is a particular form of improvisation. It is not completely free improvisation (as Wells at times seems to come close to); a rehearsal rather is when the script is interpreted by the body of the cast according to the director’s intention and the stage directions of the Script’s author. Thus is rehearsal a communal and interpretive exercise, but within set limits. There is within rehearsal collaboration between actors, director and author. And this is precisely what I am suggesting is what ought to occur in our ecclesial drama if we are being true to the eschatological driver, the narrative driver within our plot. This notion of rehearsal

\textsuperscript{136} Rom. 8:11 – see that entire section
\textsuperscript{137} Wright \textit{Virtue Reborn}, 83
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 58
\textsuperscript{139} David F. Ford \textit{The Drama of Living – becoming wise in the Spirit} (London: Canterbury Press, 2014), 91
will become significant in my next chapter when I consider the practices of Sabbath observance and the sacrament of Communion.

We have examined the part the Spirit plays in assisting us to act out our part in Act Four (the Church) as if we were in fact already in Act Five, the eschatological Act. But what of discernment; how are we to know if the Spirit is present in a particular action or (in the case of my own project) event? How can we be sure that the people involved in an era or incident were living according to the *pneuma*, not the *psyche*? How can we be sure that God is acting in that historical episode? A good clue is to be found in the story of Simeon and Anna in Luke 2: 25-38. That day in the Temple precincts, how, amidst the noise and bustle of a busy day, did Simeon and Anna know that this apparently ordinary human baby was to be the Messiah? Yes, they had been given the gift of spiritual discernment but this was a gift that had been honed by two things: patient waiting and an immersing in prayer and the *Scriptures*. So in detecting our shards within the Cathedral’s narrative we must be aware that these emerge, almost unexpectedly in the narrative; they cannot be forced by us but rather come from a patient waiting and have a direct correlation with aspects of the Kingdom which we see revealed within Holy Scripture. This is one reason why I am anxious to have the full breadth of the Scriptures considered in evidence of my eschatological driver. It would be tempting to focus, for example, on the Beatitudes or the Nazareth manifesto as the Kingdom template in order to give us a glimpse of the nature of the Kingdom, but the danger is that this understanding would be incomplete and skewed. We need the broad panorama of the Scriptural witness (with which Simeon and Anna were so familiar) if we are to have a better chance of discerning some of these shards within the narrative of the Cathedral that point to the reality of the coming Kingdom.
If we are, as David Ford puts it, to become “wise in the Spirit” then we must be open to the presence of the Spirit; it is not, Ford concludes, a matter of simply repeating our lines in the Script rather “as the jazz player is looking for gifted improvisation...so we are invited to perform appropriately to our moment in the drama of living.”¹⁴⁰ There must, of necessity, be openness to the Spirit’s prompting. I think we see this clearly in the characters of Simeon and Anna.

Patient waiting also implies (as I have suggested earlier in this chapter) that we must have our eye upon the long-term outcome of the play, not the immediate scene in which we find ourselves. As Paul stated, the prize is yet to come, in the meantime we must wait.¹⁴¹ As I suggested in my introduction in Chapter One, we often only glimpse God’s activity after God has passed by, not at the time. We need constantly, as Simeon and Anna did, to “wait upon the Lord.”¹⁴² This is why in order to have an historical discernment project, such as mine, one needs a very long period of time to focus upon. I was fortunate in that my congregation’s pedigree is one stretching back over a millennium.

**THE PRACTICES OF THE KINGDOM**

Having considered the theological scenery against which the Cathedral narrative is set, my final word in this chapter must concern practices. In understanding the nature of practices this will help us in locating the shards of the Kingdom of which I speak. In maintaining my dramatic construct, these practices are in a sense the stage directions to the cast, the practical outworking of the play that gives it shape and form. These practices are eschatological pointers; they reflect the nature of our drama with its eschatological driver and eschatological telos. We must

¹⁴⁰ David F. Ford _The Drama of Living_, 181
¹⁴¹ Phil.3:14
¹⁴² Isaiah 40:31
be very clear that we are not saying that these practices would necessarily be found in Act Five, the Eschaton itself (though we might conclude that in some transformed mode they might). Rather, given the script that the author has provided, the part the main actor (Jesus) has performed and the direction being given to the cast by the director (the Spirit) we can conclude that the practices to be identified point in some measure to the Kingdom both as it is now and as it is yet to come.

So what do I mean by practices? Alasdair MacIntyre provides the philosophical basis to an understanding of practices:

Any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions to the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended.143

I want to set MacIntyre’s fairly philosophical definition alongside one by Craig Dykstra, a missional theologian: “patterns of communal action that create openings in our lives where the grace, mercy and presence of God may be made known to us and, through us, to others.”144 We must unpack MacIntyre’s definition with support from Dykstra’s more missional approach. Firstly, MacIntyre highlights the communal nature of a practice; it is “socially established cooperative human activity”. From my point of view this points to the necessity of my eschatological practices being located within the community of faith. It is insufficient for a practice to be conducted by one individual in one era within our narrative; the practice must belong to the whole community of faith and be a repeating pattern, not a sole instance. Though, as we will observe in the next chapter, the practice may disappear

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143 Alasdair MacIntyre as quoted by Bryan Stone Evangelism after Christendom: The Theology and Practice of Christian Witness (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007), 30
for a while only to re-emerge again in another era. Further, in locating the practice communally we find an echo of that very fleshy, concrete Kingdom of God we encountered earlier, rather than the ethereal picture of disembodied spirits, so characteristic in Platonic thought, and dismissed by Wright as an eschatological aberration within the Christian message. There is also a sense in which the communality of the practice reveals a great deal about the nature of the community itself. As Moschella puts it “religious practices constitute the shared religious life of a community.” 145 James Hopewell adds strength to my own project by stressing that pastors will understand congregations by immersing themselves in their history and that these histories can be transformative of their futures: “By congregating, human beings are implicated in a plot, a corporate historicity that links us to a specific past, that thickens and unfolds a particular present, and that holds out a future open to transformation.” 146

Secondly, MacIntyre is keen to distinguish between external goods generated by a practice and internal goods. Bryan Stone, commenting upon MacIntyre in relation to the practice of evangelism, states that external goods “distort or subvert the practice…if they come to be that towards which we aim,” 147 In my eschatological context, a practice focused on external goods would be one in which the Church is saying that if you do this you will get to heaven. 148 Or indeed a practice which benefits the Church in a worldly sense, for e.g. gifts of land so prevalent to the Cathedral in the High Medieval period. 149 Whereas a practice focused on internal

145 Mary Clark Moschella Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2008), 46
146 James Hopewell Congregation: stories and structures (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1987), 160 as quoted in ibid. Moschella, 39
147 Stone Evangelism after Christendom, 31
148 Pre-Reformation we might think of the indulgences to which Luther took such exception.
149 There are many examples of this in the Medieval charters of the Cathedral.
goods is one in which the vision of the Kingdom is the determining factor, a practice in which what is yet to be rather than present reality is the goal. Indeed, as we shall observe, a practice determined by internal goods rather than external is one which is often counter-cultural and sits in opposition to our society then or now. Thus do practices with internal goods in the words of Dykstra “create openings in our lives where the grace, mercy and presence of God may be made known to us.” Such practices are not for our earthly benefit but are in some way intangible, yet challenging.

Thirdly, MacIntyre’s phrase “systematically extended” would also, I suggest, be a key Kingdom phrase, for it points to the constant desire of Jesus to include rather than exclude, to bring people into the family of the Kingdom, to be participants in these practices. This inclusivity we have touched on already in Isaiah and elsewhere is further evidenced in the prophetic pointers to the Messianic banquet in God’s consummated Kingdom. Thus, it might be argued in the project that instances in our history which has seen the Cathedral acting as an exclusive rather than inclusive agency are against the very tone of the Kingdom and its eschatological practices. Practices which draw people into the community of faith rather than exclude them would, in this understanding, be eschatological practices.

Having considered a definition of practices supplied by MacIntyre and Dykstra, I will now expand further and consider historical practices. In the context of my own project these practices are historical in nature for, as Dorothy C. Bass puts it

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150 We will find examples of this both in the place of women and children in the Cathedral narrative, also in the emphasis on reconciliation in a world so often beset by revenge.
152 See for example Joseph Stewart-Sicking “Christian practices in the congregation: the structure of vitality” in From Nomads to Pilgrims: stories from practicing congregations edt. Diana Butler Bass and Joseph Stewart-Sicking (Herndon,VA: The Alban Institute, 2006), 3
153 I shall have a discursus on the Messianic banquet in Chapter Three.
“Christian practices are things Christian people do together over time in response to and in the light of God’s active presence for the life of the world.”¹⁵⁴ Bass also recognises however that sometimes the Christian community will do these practices well and at other times will fail: “a community that has been doing this thing for centuries – not doing it as well as it should, to be sure, but doing it steadily, in conscious continuity with stories in the Bible and in frequent conversation about how to do it better.”¹⁵⁵ Here we ought then to introduce the usefulness (or otherwise) of traditions as forms of practices. Traditions are, in one sense, the repeating “patterns of communal living”¹⁵⁶ to which Dykstra alluded. The difficulty with traditions is that they can often be so embedded within the history and internalized within the congregation that their origins are shrouded in obscurity; they “cannot be severed from their past because the practices carry that history within themselves.”¹⁵⁷ These traditions express a group’s habitus which Pierre Bourdieu defines as “embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history.”¹⁵⁸ This is where the task of the researcher is to separate out traditions with a “t” from traditions with a “T” as Roy Terry puts it;¹⁵⁹ traditions “t” being those with an anthropological rather than divine origin. It is critical to discern those which are truly eschatological (pointing to the coming Kingdom) and those which merely arise out of historical circumstance. It is the sifting out of these two types of practices which has been one of the most challenging, yet enjoyable parts of my own project.

¹⁵⁴ Dorothy C. Bass edt. Practicing our faith, loc.552. Italics mine
¹⁵⁵ Ibid., loc.583
¹⁵⁶ Ibid., loc. 3795
¹⁵⁷ Benjamin T. Conner Practicing Witness, (Kindle edition) loc.557
¹⁵⁸ Pierre Bourdieu The Logic of Practice (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 56 as quoted in Moschella Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice, 52
¹⁵⁹ See Roy Terry “(Re) Discovering Tradition” in Butler Bass & Stewart-Sickering eds. From Nomads to Pilgrims,13
Let me push this idea of traditions further in considering specifically eschatological practices. Swinton and Mowat utilise Hauerwas’ notion of “faith as performance”\(^{160}\) (a helpful thought given my own dramatic construct) and ask the question how can we be sure we are performing the gospel faithfully in and through our traditions? The answer again relates to our telos: are the traditions and practices we are using simply to benefit the congregation (in terms of increased numbers, finance etc.) or do these practices reflect the goals of the Kingdom to which I have alluded in this Chapter? Are the practices congruent with the Kingdom motif? Swinton and Mowat’s definition is extremely helpful in this regard:

The important thing is that the practice bears faithful witness to the God from the practice emerges, and whom it reflects, and that it enables individuals and communities to participate faithfully in Christ’s redemptive mission. Thus the efficacy of the practice (the good to which it is aimed) is not defined pragmatically by its ability to fulfil particular human needs...but by whether it participates faithfully in the divine redemptive mission.\(^{161}\)

An “eschatological practice” (to use my phrase) is thus one which is congruent with the eschatological driver, informed by God’s Spirit and where we are invited into a story where the “future has been made present by the Spirit.”\(^{162}\) Even then, we should still recognise a further complexity, namely that the faith community itself will mould an eschatological practice according to its own context; this is the translatability aspect of the metanarrative to which Fackre referred. As Conner puts it “living members of the community of faith alter the tradition and leave their mark on the practices.”\(^{163}\) Extreme caution in relation to historical practices (or traditions) is always necessary. An eschatological practice therefore must be informed by an inaugurated eschatology, such as the kind highlighted by Wright: good traditions are

\(^{160}\) John Swinton and Harriet Mowat Practical Theology and Qualitative Research (London, SCM Press: 2013), 4

\(^{161}\) Ibid., 22 Italics mine.

\(^{162}\) Stone, Evangelism after Christendom, 226

ones in which the faith community is shaped by practices that reflect its coming
destiny in God rather than determined simply by the events of its past. I would also
assert the hopeful caveat that the end towards which the practice points is not down
to our efforts, or the practices of the Church, but rather to the gracious and sovereign
action of God in the past, present and future. Our practices simply reflect and echo
the Kingdom’s reality; it is God alone who inaugurates and brings these to fruition.

In this Chapter I have thus charted the theological scenery, backdrops, props
and stage directions and markers to my drama, the narrative of Brechin Cathedral.
We have examined the nature of the inaugurated eschatology I have employed (based
largely upon Wright), looked at the Biblical underpinning of this theology and
considered how this eschatology impacts upon my understandings of Providence and
the divine agency. Lastly, I have considered practices, particularly in how the
traditions I will unearth must be congruent with the eschatological driver in order for
the Christian witness of my congregation to be faithful to the gospel. It is time now
to turn from the technical side of the production to the play itself and begin to meet
some of the characters and their actions which will, I claim, show this fundamental
eschatological driver residing in our very midst.
CHAPTER THREE

Performing the Drama

“All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
one man in his time plays many parts.”

In this chapter we turn to the Drama itself, the Cathedral narrative; the story of my congregation from the time of the Culdees in the mid ninth century into the third Christian millennium. It is a narrative that lasts over a thousand years and the Round Tower, one of the oldest existing ecclesiastical structures in Angus, has observed in a local context much of the history of Scotland. As M.E. Leicester Addis poetically put it “old landmarks change – a shadow still is cast. From this old tower, touched with the light of years whose fadeless glory all the past endears.” It is within this chapter that I shall draw upon the evidential base of my project: not only the historical narrative of the Cathedral but also comments elucidating that narrative from the fifteen individuals I interviewed. In each of my eight sections, reflecting eight distinct eschatological practices, I shall first utilise the Biblical and theological

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1 William Shakespeare “As you Like It”, Act II Scene 7, from the monologue of Jacques
2 We know that the Round Tower was extant in 1012, for Hector Boece records that when the Danes destroyed the city of Brechin by a great fire, only the stone Tower was left unscathed. It probably dates from circa 950, though the Pictish Church may have had a wooden lookout tower on the same site before this.
3 M.E. Leicester Addis Scottish Cathedrals and Abbeys (London: Elliot Stock, 1901), 39
4 For the sake of accuracy sixteen interviews were carried out. One person (Person Z) was reluctant to be recorded and so I rely on notes taken. Another person’s take on the interview was very different from all the others, so much so that I decided not to use it in the study. For details of the type of questions used, the interviewees selected, the informed consent forms etc. see Appendix 2. It should be noted that the nature of the interviews were fairly free-flowing because each person’s experiences of the Cathedral differed, thus secondary questions varied in some degree from person to person.
5 It should be noted that these practices emerged in the course of my research from both the historical documents and the interviews I conducted. In commencing the project I had no notion of what exactly would be unearthed!
scenery and props from the previous chapter to explain why these particular practices are eschatological in tone and point towards the coming Kingdom. Then I shall present the evidence from history and contemporary interviews which underpin my claim that through the eschatological driver shards of the Kingdom are embedded within the Cathedral’s story. Thus will I reveal why these eight practices are congruent with the eschatological motif of my project.

The eight sections are as follows:

1. **The care and education of young people**

2. **A counter-cultural motif that reflects a bias towards women**

3. **Charity towards the stranger**

4. **Care for the whole person, including healthcare and the alleviation of poverty**

5. **Forgiveness and conflict resolution within the faith community**

6. **The sanctification of the Sabbath**

7. **The “hidden work” of the Kingdom**

8. **The diversity of the Kingdom, including ecumenical co-operation**

Clearly, given the nature of my project to unearth and identify these shards of the Kingdom, I have not presented this as a continuous historical drama, but rather in terms of eschatological themes. Should the reader wish a more consecutive narrative approach, I refer you to the Timeline in the Appendix 1.

**1. THE CARE AND EDUCATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE.**

As we will observe with many of the eschatological practices I will outline, some of them are decidedly counter-cultural in tone, including the first concerning
the care and education of the young. Why should the child be central to the coming
kingdom? After all in the ancient world children were often to be seen rather than
heard and had sometimes no more rights than the slaves of the household.\textsuperscript{6} This
focus on the child is part of the transformative work that the coming Kingdom has
upon the present age, a clear indication of an inaugurated eschatological motif. As
Wright suggests the significance of an inaugurated eschatology is that “the main
reversal is promised, not in the age to come, but within the present age itself.”\textsuperscript{7}

So we must reflect especially upon the text in Matthew 18:1-3:

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who, then, is the greatest in the
kingdom of heaven?”\textsuperscript{8} He called a little child to him, and placed the child among
them.\textsuperscript{3} And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little
children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”\textsuperscript{8}

Jesus himself is asked who will be central in that coming Kingdom. His
answer is clear and unambiguous: the child, the young person. It is not the fully
grown adult with his or her hang-ups, world-weariness and firm opinions but the
open and receptive child that most fully characterises the nature of the coming
Kingdom. We see this too in the Old Testament: “From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise.”\textsuperscript{9} And this phrase is echoed by Jesus himself when
the Temple authorities complain of the exuberance of the young people surrounding
Jesus in his entry to Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{6} See for example Rodney Holder’s comments on Galatians 4:1-11 in Longing, Waiting, Believing
(Abingdon: Bible Reading Fellowship, 2014), 182
\textsuperscript{7} N.T. Wright The Resurrection of the Son of God (London: SPCK, 2003), 408
\textsuperscript{8} Matt. 18:1-3, italics mine.
\textsuperscript{9} Ps.8:2
\textsuperscript{10} Matt.21:16
Many of the healing miracles by Jesus in the Gospel narratives also feature young people. We might think of the widow of Nain’s son, Jairus’ daughter or the daughter of the Syrian-Phoenician woman. This motif also extends backwards into the Old Testament with the case of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath’s son as well as forwards into the ministry of Paul and his concern for Eutychus. Each of these stories indicates the value and importance of the young person within God’s Kingdom.

We do well also to remind ourselves of the nature of the Incarnation; how did our principal player, the author-actor, enter the drama? Not as a fully grown human being but a tiny, frail child. An event heralded by the angelic chorus itself. It would seem that in God’s scheme of things the child or young person has a very central place. The Church must grasp the implications of this if it is to fully be in tune with the Kingdom. This is one of the most illuminating of all our eschatological shards, one that gives me hope for the Church’s future.

In what ways therefore do we find this focus upon the child reflected in the Cathedral’s narrative? We need to go back to Bishop John Crannoch (or Crannog) during the Medieval period of the Cathedral to first find clear evidence of a concern for the education and care of young people. According to Dr Dunlop Crannoch had

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11 I shall argue in section 4 below that healings themselves are indicative of a Kingdom that breaks in eschatologically to our present age.
12 Luke 7: 11-15
13 Luke 8: 49-56
14 Mark 7: 24-30. The story is in itself counter-cultural at two levels; firstly because the child is central and second because the mother is a non-Jew.
15 1 Kings 17: 17-24
16 Acts 20: 7 - 12
17 Luke 2:14
18 See Annie Dunlop “John Crannoch: Bishop of Brechin1426-54” in The Society of Friends of Brechin Cathedral, Book of the Society vol.6 (1953). Dr Dunlop gives Crannoch’s end date as 1454, though it seems likely that he died of plague in the late autumn of 1453 while on return from Rome. Also valuable information on John Crannoch is to be found in Cosmo Innes Registrum Episcopatus Brechinensis vol.1, (Aberdeen, 1856)74-78; this work while now out of print is available through the Angus Library Service or the Angus Archives at Restenneth.
three main objectives: a proper order and seemliness in worship, to enhance the Cathedral’s prestige and finally to provide an educated clergy. He sought to fulfil all three of these aims by founding a College in 1433, the first and only “Sang Schule” or Choir School in Scotland. Endowed by the Earl of Atholl at forty pounds Scots per annum it was to provide for four priests and six boys to not only sing masses for the Earl and his family within the Cathedral’s daily worship, but also so the boys might learn both music and grammar. To this end two chaplains were appointed whose duties included teaching in the given topics. The boys were given a strict code of behaviour, a hair-cut and a coat of purple and white, to distinguish them from other young folk in the town. In addition, they were always to be accompanied in public by one of the chaplains, presumably to avoid the rascals getting into mischief!19 Despite the coming Reformation, this College was to continue in various guises over several centuries until finally metamorphosing into Brechin Public School in the late nineteenth century20. Even today the area of the old College is still sometimes called The College Yards.

Whether John Crannoch had eschatological intentions linked to the coming Kingdom as his raison d’etre for setting up the College or his motives were more worldly is perhaps open to debate. Nevertheless, my contention is that this care and education of the young, seen in Crannoch’s action, is a Kingdom practice and would break through time and again in the following centuries of the Cathedral’s narrative,

19 One medieval document of the late 1490s mentions a raid by the boys on the Bishop’s orchard, a very famous garden close to the Cathedral! See R.G. Cant “Cathedral Life in Medieval Scotland” in The Society of Friends of Brechin Cathedral, Book of the Society vol.2 (1949)
20 At the time of the Reformation of 1560 it is recorded that there may have been thirty two clergy in the Cathedral with a “Sang Schule” of as many as forty or fifty scholars. See D.H. Edwards A Pocket History and Guide to Brechin (Brechin: Black & Johnston, 1872), 94f. Largely as a result of urbanisation, the growth of industry and the Kirk Disruption of 1843, the system of parish schools began to break down. In 1872 the Education Act (Scotland) handed responsibility for children’s education over to the State. This was resisted by the Kirk Session of the time in a petition. See Kirk Session Minutes of Brechin Cathedral, 4 March, 1872.
whatever the motives or intentions of the players on the stage at the time. What is also interesting is that this care and education for young people manifests itself in different ways. Thus we find in December of 1620 that a coat is given to Alexander Clerk, a poor boy who was naked, that he might be able to attend the parish school.\footnote{Kirk Session Minutes of Brechin Cathedral, 13 December, 1620} In the winter of the following year, the Session orders that “ten marks out of the box”\footnote{Ibid. 4 December, 1621} be awarded to John Miller, a boy scholar of the parish that he might be enabled to continue his studies at St. Andrew’s University. The concern for the young and their education did not however extend to a charitable view of disruption of public worship! In 1629, the Session ordered a ten shilling fine imposed on parents of “mislearned bairns and tuellieing tykes” who were “perturbing, playing or running up and down during Tuesday prayers.”\footnote{Ibid. 20 October, 1629} Even during the period of Cromwellian invasion (1651-59), with soldiers garrisoned within the city, the Session still found opportunity to care for the young and to assist in their learning. 10 shillings is given to a poor boy to help him buy a Bible\footnote{Ibid. 27 October 1652} and a further 12 shillings to John Cramond, a young lad who wished to purchase a book of psalms.\footnote{Ibid. 9 February 1652} Families too were included in this passion to ensure people could read – and, of course, understand the Reformed faith. Any family in the town who could read were given a copy of the Shorter Catechism.\footnote{Ibid. 18 November 1657} This in fact reflects an earlier trend in both the Pictish and Celtic Church whereby monks went into people’s homes to teach the faith\footnote{George G. Hunter III The Celtic way of Evangelism – How Christianity can reach the West...again 10th Anniversary edt. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010, Kindle edition), loc.1695}. In Brechin this was to have an interesting twist: according to Culdee practice the bishop himself often carried out this teaching function, for we know that uniquely
in the Cathedral chapter the bishop had a seat on the chapter and served as parish priest for the town, as well as his more diocesan responsibilities. The bishop was a pastor and teacher as much as an administrator in the Culdee model. We certainly know from both Metrical and Prose Rules of the Culdees that instruction of the young was considered one of the tasks of the monks, and we may suppose that even after the re-organisation of the Medieval Church in Scotland according to the Roman rite by Queen Margaret, this trend was to continue.

But it was not just the improvement of young minds that was sought; their material comfort was also a concern. Thus we find the Session giving consideration in 1618 to the purchase of a house to lodge “poor young ones” that they might be clothed and properly fed. This matter seems to have reached fruition in May 1627 when the College and yard house is purchased from John Muirton for “eight score and nine marks” and in later centuries we find the Session supporting a number of almhouses in the vicinity.

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28 Edward I, the hammer of the Scots, was also partly responsible for this idiosyncrasy for he introduced to Brechin – uniquely in Scotland – the liturgy and practices of Sarum or Salisbury in the late summer of 1303 while besieging the nearby Castle. In this liturgy the bishop was a member of the chapter of the Cathedral, and not just titular head of the Cathedral with the Dean holding the real power. Earlier, the Culdees operated a College or fraternity system of governance. See David Adams Brechin: the Ancient City (1990, unpublished, available a Brechin Library) also Andrew Jervise Memorials of Angus and Mearns (Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1861)

29 See William Reeves The Culdees of the British Islands, with an appendix of evidences (Small paper reprint, Llanerch Publications, 1994), 82-97

30 Margaret of Wessex (c.1045-93), granddaughter to Edmund Ironside of England, was to marry Malcolm III of Scotland around 1070. She was to be a very saintly figure and strove to bring the Celtic-Pictish Church of Scotland into line with continental Europe in its religious practices.

31 The Pictish Liturgy of the seventh and eighth century was still being practised in Brechin as late as 1348, despite the best efforts of the Royal court to eradicate it. See Innes Registrum Episcopatus Brechinensis.

32 Kirk Session Minutes of Brechin Cathedral, 13 Oct 1618

33 Ibid. 15 May 1627

34 According to David Adams Brechin, the Ancient City (1990, unpublished work) what is now the Dalhousie Bar was in the 12th century the site of an almshouse of the Knights Templar.
External wars and troubles were then to intervene during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries before we see this practice of care and education for the young re-emerging in a new form. This time two of the ministers were to be the main drivers. Already in 1708, the records state that poor children should be taught to read and write and the monies for their education to be taken out of the poor fund. But this was now to be put on a more structured footing. Rev. John Johnston (1710-1733) on his death left a large legacy to set up a school outside Brechin at Pitpouacks (near Pittendreich) for the rural children. In the winter of 1796 we find the two schoolmasters of this school, Messrs Grant and Murray, being paid £2 sterling yearly for teaching the children of the parish, also “that parents of children who cannot pay school dues for them should be at liberty to send their children to either teacher as they please;” an enlightened view of preference in education from an earlier age. Later, further legacies enabled the Session to set up yet another rural school at Drums. These schools, although often falling into disrepair and being a financial drain upon Cathedral resources, were to continue until the Education Act of Scotland in 1872 when the provision of education finally passed into State hands. By this stage in the Cathedral’s life the national Kirk’s Victorian emphasis upon Sunday School had taken over as the main means of providing Christian education for the young, thus continuing the earlier trends.

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35 Ibid., 7 Jan 1708
36 Kirk Session Minutes of Brechin Cathedral, 16 December 1796
37 Due to population changes and after a petition was received from the residents of Little Brechin, the school at Pitpouacks was later to be translated to Little Brechin on 28th August 1837. There were often heated exchanges at the Session over the appointment of schoolmasters. Several former ministers were to make donations or legacies, either for the upkeep of the school or to augment the salary of the schoolmaster.
Further in 1760, the then minister of the first charge\textsuperscript{38} Rev. David Blair began a Sabbath evening school, again this was the first of its kind in Scotland. Unfortunately the extant records do not tell us how this evening school was run or administered, but given that Brechin was in this period emerging as a weaving town, it seems that its function was principally to educate the weavers and their children. Education comprised not only of Bible knowledge but (as with the Medieval College) also in the rudiments of grammar.\textsuperscript{39}

It was not just the ministers though who were engaged with the idea of care and education of the young. In 1879 a bursary from the will of the late Session Clerk, George Alexander, provided the princely sum of £140 annually to a boy “not in affluent circumstances but who shows promise educationally.”\textsuperscript{40} This bursary was paid for four years and could be extended for another four if the young lad proceeded to university. The bursary it appears continued to be paid until the outbreak of World War I in 1914 and we often glean interesting snippets of information about the background and family circumstances of the recipients of the award. Unfortunately by the early twentieth century, the Session records show that the Kirk at Brechin was becoming increasingly concerned with inward matters of fabric and finance perhaps to the exclusion of outward matters, such as education of the young\textsuperscript{41}. The focus on the education and care of the young person virtually disappears as a topic in the

\textsuperscript{38} Brechin Cathedral was to be a collegiate charge with two ministers from about the time of the Scottish Reformation in 1560s until Rev. James Anderson’s induction in 1942, by which time the Church of Scotland had come into being in its modern form from the union of 1929.
\textsuperscript{39} David D. Black The History of Brechin to 1864 (Brechin: Pinkfoot Press, 2009), 152f.
\textsuperscript{40} Kirk Session minutes of Brechin Cathedral, 10 September, 1879
\textsuperscript{41} The restoration of the Cathedral to its medieval state in 1902 under Honeyman the architect and the sheer cost of this building project was to dominate the Kirk Session’s agenda for several decades, really until the outbreak of World War II. Other matters, such as education were to vanish from the minutes.
Session minutes until the 1980s when concern for a dwindling Sunday School pushes the issue back on to the agenda.\textsuperscript{42}

The education of the young and the desire for a school in every parish was one of the key hallmarks of the Scottish Reformation and this trend in Brechin seems particularly strong and continuous over a long period of several centuries, even prior to the coming of the Reformed Church. This passion for the education of the young was also, interestingly, reflected in several of my interviews. Person T commenting on the School assemblies held in the Cathedral stated that “the Cathedral fully embraces the children”\textsuperscript{43} and that they did not have to modify their behaviour but, if anything, were more raucous and felt free to be themselves. Although for the parents of the children religion and spirituality had a low priority (with less than 10% of parents of primary children attending church\textsuperscript{44}) the children themselves seem to enjoy the experience; they enjoyed the discussions engendered by visits to the Cathedral and visits to the school by the chaplaincy team.

Person Q pointed out that the ministers at the Cathedral had often been in the past heavily involved in the Boys’ Brigade and had taken an active part in the boys’ Christian education. Sadly, the Boys’ Brigade was to finally fall away, partly, according to Person Q, because of snobbery by some of the Cathedral authorities of the day to “boys at the bottom of the toon”.\textsuperscript{45} Person G agreed that “concern for the education of the young people of Brechin”\textsuperscript{46} had always been at the centre of the Cathedral’s thinking and recalled personal schooldays of hearing sermons at Assemblies, including a memorable one at the end of World War II. Although not

\textsuperscript{42} Criticism of falling Sunday School numbers was to be one of the main issues in the time of Rev. Dr. Robin MacKenzie, though the trend begins before Robin’s time.
\textsuperscript{43} Recording 14, 27.21
\textsuperscript{44} Figure supplied by the local Primary Maison Dieu
\textsuperscript{45} Recording 11, 37.06
\textsuperscript{46} Recording 6, 8:14
specific to young people, Person A pointed to the Bible studies of the 1980s and how they had helped people in “Kingdom building”. Finally, Person H said that, although in bygone days children were more often seen rather than heard, nevertheless the Cathedral minister had always gone out of his way to approach and engage with the children.

With this vast array of historical evidence backed by contemporary recollections, it seems very clear that the care and education of the young is indeed in the lifeblood of the Cathedral. This extends to today, both with Messy Church as a craft-based activity with our fellow Church at Gardner Memorial and more recently the Cathedral has appointed a Drama worker to work with the children in the schools, dramatizing and then performing for the community many of the Biblical narratives and stories.

My contention is therefore that within the Biblical narrative we find the very counter-cultural and transformative work of the Kingdom in stressing the position of care for the young person in society. This aspect of the eschatological motif is also embedded, as we have seen, very obviously in the Cathedral’s narrative itself. This is a point of contact where Kingdom metanarrative and Cathedral narrative most obviously intersect and is clear evidence of my eschatological shards being unearthed and my eschatological driver at work.

2. THE ROLE AND PLACE OF WOMEN

As with the place of the child in society, again with the role of women we observe the very counter-cultural dimension of the Kingdom. We must turn to Jesus

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47 Recording 4, 48:19
48 To date all the ministers or bishops of the Cathedral have been male.
49 Messy Church is a national craft-based Children’s ministry founded by Lucy Moore of the Bible Reading Fellowship. It mixes craft, story and song round a Biblical theme. Increasingly new ventures include Messy Sport and Messy Science. See www.brf.org.uk for further information.
to provide us with an answer as to the role of women within the Kingdom. In this case, the positive attitude Jesus has time and again to women. Indeed, Frend indicates that Jesus’ approach to women was “revolutionary”. I point to the woman caught in adultery who Jesus sought to defend, the Samaritan woman at the well in the heat of the day whom Jesus alone befriends, the Canaanite woman who challenges Jesus’ own assumption and even the woman with the haemorrhage whom Jesus alone managed to heal. Perhaps supremely, there is the role of the women as witnesses to the risen Christ. As we noted in Chapter Two, Wright’s contention is that it is precisely because the women (who in Judaism were not regarded as bona fide witnesses) were first to encounter the risen Jesus that this story strikes us as peculiarly historical. It is almost an ironic plot twist in God’s metanarrative that in manifesting the eschatological Kingdom in Jesus’ resurrection, God should choose to use women (who would have an equal place within the Kingdom, unlike in the society of the time) as the principal players upon the stage in that central, defining part of the biblical drama.

We must also think back to the counter-cultural theme of the Kingdom which I pointed to in Chapter Two. In highlighting the nature of the redeemed faith community following the impact of the Resurrection, Paul reminded us that in Christ “there is neither…slave nor free, male nor female for you are all one in Christ Jesus”; in other words, in the Church as the community of the Resurrection the old distinctions based upon sex or class should no longer hold sway. Might we at least

51 John 8:1-11
52 John 4:1-26
53 Matthew 15:21-28
54 Luke 8:43-48
55 See N.T. Wright The Resurrection of the Son of God, 607f.
56 See Chapter 2,12
57 Gal.3:28
see an inkling of this eschatological dimension of the community within the Cathedral’s narrative?

It is certainly the case that women had a more central role within the early Church than in the surrounding culture of the day. As Diarmaid MacCulloch puts it “there are plenty of signs that Christians began by giving women a newly active role and official functions in Church life.”58 Paul, while at times having a slightly ambivalent approach to the role of women in the Church, records Phoebe as a deacon, Priscilla as a “fellow worker”, Tryphena and Tryphosa “women who worked hard in the Lord” and even Junia a relative of Paul and a fellow “apostle”.59 Interestingly, MacCulloch suggests that with the waning of the eschatological expectation of Christ’s imminent return the place of women began to revert “to a more conventional subordination to male authority.”60 If this is true, then there is a direct link between eschatological expectation and a transformative role for women in the coming Kingdom which would support my case.

My view that eschatological practices ebb and flow throughout history (as we will see from the Cathedral narrative presently) also finds support by Patrick Collinson’s comment that at the time of the Reformation it was through women that “the Reformation established itself in the households of supposedly male-dominated society.”61 In other words, while women had a central place in the early days of the Church this had indeed ebbed in the Medieval period only to have a resurgence again at the time of the Reformation.

58 Diarmaid MacCulloch A History of Christianity (London: Allen Lane, 2009), 116
59 See Romans 16. There is however dispute amongst scholars as to whether Junia should be Junias and thus a male. MacCulloch’s view is that later copyists were so appalled by the thought of a female apostle that they changed the form of the name to the masculine.
60 MacCulloch, 116ff.
Before we turn to the evidence of this section, I must first put this in context: during the mid-seventeenth century, the north east of Scotland was wracked by a whole series of witch trials. According to both the Kirk Session minutes and the Burgh records at least four women of the town or nearby villages were brought before the Session on charges of witchcraft; namely Elspit Gray of Balwyllo, Marat Marchant of Menmuir, Marion Marnow of Brechin and most famously Jonat Coupar of Brechin. Coupar in particular “before she was execute” admitted in 1650 that she had renounced her baptism and taken the name Nikkie Clerk and that it was “about fur year since she was acquainted with the Divell” (sic). She also made complicit in the charge two others, Catherine Skair and Catherine Walker, whom she claimed had led her the way of the devil, as she had saw these lasses consort with the devil at the “watter syd the wast mill” (sic). 63 Whatever the reality of these circumstances (and certainly nine witnesses appeared against Jonat) the crucial point for my project is to show that this was a period in which women were often seen as witches and that, as Edwards puts it “any singularity in word or look exhibited by an old crone was sufficient to brand her a witch and subject her to the most inhuman treatment.” 64 We should note that this textual evidence is backed by archaeological finds; both in the late 1860s and early 1970s, when work was being done on Witchden Road, ashes and bones were found in the hollow next to the old gas works. In one case chains and manacles were attached to the ankle bone of a female skeleton. 65

62 Taken from the Cathedral’s prison and executed on 2nd March, 1619 as “a witch that was burnt”; Kirk Session minutes of Brechin Cathedral.
63 See William Sievwright Brechin in olden and modern times (Brechin, 1902) Also D.H. Edwards A pocket history and guide to Brechin (Brechin: Black & Johnston, 1872), 117f & 181f. Both authors quote directly from the Burgh records of the time.
64 Ibid. Edwards, 119
65 See Adams Brechin: the Ancient City
Given all of this, we would therefore not expect to find in the Cathedral’s narrative a bias towards the rights of women, yet that is exactly what we do discover! This practice runs so counter culturally to the times in which it is set that, I would claim, we see here again the Kingdom breaking through, no matter what events conspire against it. We will see an upholding of some of the basic rights of women in what was otherwise a very rigidly controlled patriarchal society. So to the evidence!

In the spring of 1616, a worthy matron appears before the Session, but it is her husband who is under scrutiny. Margaret Hepburn,\textsuperscript{66} spouse to Henry Stirling, a notable merchant, complains that the skinflint had been meagre with the housekeeping money!\textsuperscript{67} The Session chose to side with the wife, instructing the miserly husband to give his wife 6 shillings and 8 pence weekly for housekeeping. This was considered a satisfactory sum by the (all male!) Session. Domestic abuse too was much frowned upon and in 1686 Alexander Neish is summoned to appear before the Session for “striking and abusing his wife” in a drunken state.\textsuperscript{68} He was fined £4 Scots and warned the amount would be doubled in the case of any second offence.

In the June of 1615 we have an interesting case involving two women. Elspit Traill, a maid, brings accusation against her mistress, Helen Lownie, for “slanderous lies in accusing her of being a thief.”\textsuperscript{69} Once more much against our cultural expectations, the Session chose to side not with the mistress, a woman of means in the town, but with the maid. The minute records that the worthy matron who brought the false charge was censured, though regrettably we are not told what form this

\textsuperscript{66} It is very interesting that the woman’s maiden name is almost always given, not just her married name. Again perhaps seeing the woman as having an identity in her own right and not being defined by marriage?
\textsuperscript{67} Kirk Session minutes of Brechin Cathedral 5 March 1616
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid 11 February 1686
\textsuperscript{69} Kirk Session minutes of Brechin Cathedral 13 June 1615
took. Here it is not simply a woman’s rights being upheld in a male dominated society, but the rights of a servant being set before those of her mistress. Shades of Paul’s plea on behalf of the slave Onesimus? This episode reflects Paul’s vision of an eschatological orientated community in which, not only do barriers of sexuality collapse, but also those of class and status.\textsuperscript{70}

And yet the Elders were not apparently always consistent in their approach. Thus in the case of Margaret Mortimer, who seeks permission to take up the trade of stabling following her husband’s death, the Session on this occasion do not consider this a fit profession for a woman and refuse\textsuperscript{71}; Margaret is ordered to take up service. Similarly, because the Session were always afraid of scandal relating to single women on their own, Agnes Meldrum is not allowed to continue to live alone after her mother’s death. She must move in with relatives.\textsuperscript{72} Of course, while this may seem to our modern sensibilities to run counter to my argument of bias to the rights of women, one could equally argue that it was out of genuine Christian pastoral concern for a single woman (not to say her reputation) that the Session acted as they did in both the above cases. A single woman living on her own in the seventeenth century was open to accusation either of being a witch (if elderly) or a prostitute (if young). My argument, I claim, still holds even in these apparently contradictory cases.

We even find in a couple of cases of pastoral censure that the Session came down harder on the man involved than the woman. We have already mentioned the witch trials; in October 1619, David Finlason, a smith, makes accusation against Bessie Logan for witchcraft. The case continued for some weeks until Finlason

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\textsuperscript{70} Gal. 3:28  
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid. 16 April 1616  
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid. 9 April 1617
admitted that he had invented the whole tale. He was incarcerated in the Cathedral prison for his lies and a fine upon him given to poor Bessie in recompense.\textsuperscript{73} So too in the case of Margaret Fettes and John Humble who were caught in an illicit, unmarried union. However, the more severe penalty fell upon Humble for he had forcibly prevented Margaret going to the Cathedral authorities to have the child of their carnal union baptised and the child had subsequently died. Margaret had her head shaved for her adultery, Humble was “doukit in the pool at the Nether cross” and “put in ward on bread and water ‘til he repent”.\textsuperscript{74} He was to remain in the Cathedral’s cell until 23\textsuperscript{rd} February 1619 following signs of repentance.

Four other incidents concerning women from the seventeenth century are deserving of a mention. First the case of Christian Campbell\textsuperscript{75}; she too had had a child out of wedlock to Matthew Mathers of Dundee. But Mathers was a convicted felon and had been executed at Dundee earlier in the year thus leaving the young mother and her bairn in a destitute situation. It is the then bishop himself, David Lindsay, who agrees to baptise the child and help the mother. The Session however will not agree to help her indefinitely but only as a “one off” payment of charity. They do not want her on the parish roll of the poor. Second, in the November of that same year, again the bishop intervenes to help a poor woman buy a plaid (shawl) that she may attend Church.\textsuperscript{76} Third, several years later, in 1634, we find one Rachel Davidson, an acknowledged adulteress, pleading with the Session that her wronged husband, the notary Thomas Shewan might take her back.\textsuperscript{77} Again, perhaps much to our surprise, this all male group of elders are minded to hear her plea and encourage

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid 19 Oct 1619
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid. 1 Dec 1618 Humble was later banished from “the city and its environs” for the attempted murder of James Innes in October 1619. There is no further record of Margaret Fettes.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid. 24 May 1620
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid. 15 Nov 1620
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid 22 April 1634
the couple to be united. Unfortunately the minute does not record Shewan’s response to his estranged wife. Finally, in the summer of 1686, one Janet Fenton appears before the Session as the representative of a group of women who present a petition opposing the Hammerman’s bill of 9th June. It is unclear exactly the nature of the women’s grievance, but seems to have related to working practices, particularly relating to the apprentices to the trade. Nor is it certain if the petition had any impact. No matter, the important point is that a group of women (presumably wives or sweethearts of the Hammermen trade) were permitted to approach and address the Session in such a way. A clear stand for women’s democratic rights long before women’s suffrage came in the early twentieth century.

Despite the, at times, contradictory historical evidence, I would contend that the weight of the evidence points at the very least to a compassion for, and at times bias to, the role of the woman in the very male dominated society of the day. But was this just unique to the seventeenth century? It certainly disappears for several decades yet re-appears suddenly in the case of James Ramsay in September of 1795. Here we have another case of quite serious domestic abuse. Ramsay stands accused by Agnes Stewart of being the father of her illegitimate daughter. Ramsay appears at the manse of the minister Rev. John Bisset with both Agnes and baby. Ramsay vigorously denies having “intimate relations” with Agnes and an argument ensues during which Ramsay loses his temper, striking Agnes and “throwing the child upon the kitchen floor to the danger of her life.” So serious is the Session’s view Ramsay’s treatment of Agnes and child that legal proceedings are started against him. The Sheriff Depute at Forfar rules he be expected to maintain both mother and child for a period of at least seven years. Despite the fact that the child was

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78 Ibid. 10 June 1686
79 Ibid. 17 September 1795
conceived out of wedlock no blame is attached to Agnes nor is any censure placed against her. Later records indicate sadly that Ramsay absconds and that he was never brought to justice.

Again there is another gap of several decades until winter of 1833 when Dr. Sherriffs stands accused of being the father of a child to Elizabeth Easton, former servant. We find, interestingly, that because of Sherriffs position in society the Session on this occasion hesitate to proceed. However, conscience must have got the better of him (or maybe even some pressure was brought to bear) for by the summer he has confessed. Again, the Session side with the former maid and Dr. Sherriff is censured. By now however ecclesiastical discipline for such offences was much less common and was usual only verbal in nature. Thereafter it is not until the 1970s that the role and place of women in the Cathedral again comes under scrutiny as the Church of Scotland moved towards the ordination of women elders.

Two of my respondents in interview were to mention (quite spontaneously) the positive attitude they felt the Cathedral shows towards women. Person J stated that she had joined the Cathedral partly for family reasons but partly because some of the Session of her younger day had a positive “and enlightened” attitude to women. So too Person H stated that although the Cathedral had taken a while to agree to ordain women elders (largely because, she stated, of the opposition of the then

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80 Ibid. 25 February 1833
81 Ibid. 26 Aug 1833
82 This is particularly noticeable following the destruction of the “cutty stool” in May 1764. Cumberland William Blair, son of Rev. David Blair, and a group of his young friends broke in to the Cathedral one night and destroyed the stool of repentance. On investigation, Blair jr. argued that it was “unchristian” to have such an article in a “place where the gospel is preached.” It is of significance that no action was taken by the Session against the young men and the stool was never replaced. See Kirk Session minutes of Brechin Cathedral 4 May 1764 and 15 Jan 1765.
83 The first woman to be ordained as an elder in the Church of Scotland was in June 1966. Women ministerial ordination followed in 1968.
84 Recording 8, 58.12
Session Clerk) it was, she felt, one of the greatest and most positive changes to the Cathedral’s life in her long lifetime.\textsuperscript{85} It also might be remarked that the current Session are more predominantly female than male.\textsuperscript{86} Notably, Person X, one of our oldest members also was to mention in passing the positive role brought by women elders, even though her own late husband had been against!\textsuperscript{87}

Again therefore, I conclude that while not always manifesting itself in every era of history, this eschatological shard of a bias to the role of women is buried deep in the Cathedral’s soil. Sometimes emerging quite unexpectedly (as in the case of Margaret Hepburn with her miserly husband) and sometimes just quietly simmering away, awaiting its opportunity (as with ordination of female elders). This sporadic appearing and disappearing, ebbing and flowing of an eschatological practice I was often to find a common trait within my research. And we shall touch on this again in Chapter Five when considering the issue of secularisation.

3. CHARITY TOWARDS THE STRANGER.

For me as the researcher the extent of this practice was the one I found most surprising. For we find in the Cathedral records an extraordinary awareness of the needs of others, not just locally but often much further afield. It is a salutary lesson in these days of 24 hour news bulletins that our forebears were not as ill-informed as to worldly events as we might suppose. Indeed, there is an argument that they were perhaps more eager to dispense Christian charity, given the sheer number of collections organised either by the Kirk Session or at the request of the General Assembly.

\textsuperscript{85} Recording 7,1.01.42
\textsuperscript{86} We have 14 male elders and 21 female according to the Church Statistical Return 2015.
\textsuperscript{87} Recording 1, 15.14
Why then is charity towards the stranger an eschatological practice that draws us to the Kingdom? We must first start with the sense of God’s justice for the alien that we find embedded in the Old Testament. God cares for the stranger.\textsuperscript{88} God reminds the people of Israel that just as they were strangers enslaved in Egypt, so must they care for the stranger in their own midst.\textsuperscript{89} God even reminds the people of Israel that the land is not theirs but God’s, so they themselves are still strangers upon it. Thus must the land not be sold permanently, but allow for the time of Jubilee and redemption, itself an echo of the renewal of creation in the Eschaton.\textsuperscript{90} Moltmann in particular makes the point that the Year of Jubilee, in which there is restoration both for the land, the captive and the alien, echoes “the goal of creation” or telos of history\textsuperscript{91} in which all things will be restored to God and “nature will blossom again as it did in paradise and peace will dwell in the fields.”\textsuperscript{92} There is little evidence that the Year of Jubilee was ever fully applied or practised by the people of Israel and so over time became increasingly for the prophets a picture of God’s coming Kingdom rather than a present socio-economic reality.

Agricultural practice demanded that profit take second place to the opportunity for the stranger to glean the fields after harvest,\textsuperscript{93} an opportunity of which Ruth was to take advantage.\textsuperscript{94} Solomon in dedicating the Temple asks God to hear the prayers of the righteous stranger.\textsuperscript{95} The prophets were quick to condemn those who failed to show hospitality to the stranger.\textsuperscript{96} Interestingly in the semi-eschatological theme of

\textsuperscript{88} Psalm 146:9  
\textsuperscript{89} Exodus 22:21, 23:9; Lev. 19:33-34; Deut.10:17-19  
\textsuperscript{90} Lev. 25:23  
\textsuperscript{91} Jurgen Moltmann \textit{The Coming of God} transl. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), Kindle edition loc.2049  
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid. loc.2135  
\textsuperscript{93} Lev.19:10  
\textsuperscript{94} Ruth 2  
\textsuperscript{95} 1 Kings 8:41-43  
\textsuperscript{96} Mal. 3:5
the Year of the Lord’s favour that we find in Isaiah 61, the stranger is given a role, albeit a subservient one to the people of Israel.97

In the New Testament Jesus urges his followers to be kind to the stranger in their midst for in the highly eschatological parable of the sheep and goats, Jesus asserts that “whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”98 This sense of the stranger standing in the guise of Christ was a major theme of the Celtic Church; in the Celtic rune of hospitality for example we read:

I saw a stranger yestreen;
I put food in the eating place, drink in the drinking place, music in the listening place;
And in the sacred Triune name He blessed myself and my house, my cattle and my dear ones;
As the lark says in her song often, often, often goes the Christ in the stranger’s guise.99

This well reflects the text in Hebrews: “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by doing so some people have entertained angels without knowing it.”100 This text alludes to Abraham’s encounter in the Old Testament narrative.101 Therefore both in the scriptural narrative and in the practice and liturgy of certainly the Celtic form of the Church the stranger actually stands in the stead of the Christ.

All of this suggests that charity towards strangers is certainly *scriptural* but is it necessarily *eschatological* in orientation? After all, there are other elements within the scriptural narrative where the stranger is viewed as the enemy rather than the

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97 Isaiah 61:5. The text from the earlier part of this prophecy was of course central to Jesus’ sermon at Nazareth when he gave an indication of the nature of the Kingdom that was breaking in. See Luke 4:18f.
98 Matthew 25:40
99 From the Iona Community worship resources, see, for example Ron Ferguson *Chasing the Wild Goose: the Iona Community* (Glasgow: Collins, 1988) and *A wee Worship Book* (Iona Community, 1988). The poem is widely seen as of more ancient origin.
100 Heb. 13:2
101 Genesis 18: 1-15
friend.\textsuperscript{102} I would counter this by saying that in this instance we have a clear case of that living of the new life of the coming Kingdom \textit{already in the now} as urged by Paul.\textsuperscript{103} I will argue in my final section in this chapter that the Kingdom is to be an inclusive, all-encompassing entity which reflects multi-coloured diversity, not monochrome uniformity. Charity towards the stranger is therefore a harbinger of that eschatological trend. It is one of Tom Wright’s “signposts in the fog” of the current world\textsuperscript{104}. When we welcome the stranger and provide for his or her needs we are thus living counter-culturally, as people of the Kingdom, looking to that day when all shall be strangers no longer but friends within God’s family of nations.

What of this eschatological practice within the Cathedral narrative? By the 1620s the position of the Huguenots in France had become seriously threatened, thus we find the Minister of the Cathedral proposing a collection “for the distressed Kirk of France persecuted by its own prince, desiring support from the Reformed Kirks in this isle of Britain.”\textsuperscript{105} Again in 1689, in the midst of Brechin’s own troubles with Highland troops scavenging the countryside, £16.8s was collected for “persecuted Frenches and banished Irish Protestants”\textsuperscript{106}. This practice of helping overseas churches was to be continued many years later with the emergence of the Church in the United States, although it was still colonies at the time! Thus we find £26 sterling raised for the building of the Scots Presbyterian Church in the city of New York in July of 1725.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{102} For example Isa.1:7
\textsuperscript{103} Col.3:5-14
\textsuperscript{104} See Chapter One; Interview with Rt. Rev. Prof. Tom Wright at St.Andrew’s University, 9\textsuperscript{th} October, 2013.
\textsuperscript{105} Kirk Session Minutes of Brechin Cathedral, 27 Feb 1622
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid 13 June 1689
\textsuperscript{107} Over two centuries later in the 1960s, the New York Scots Presbyterian Church contacted all the churches who had initially supported them and the Cathedral sent a stone, dating from Medieval times, that had been left over in the 1902 restoration. See Recording 4 with Person A; 36.17
It was not only strangers abroad but Scots too to whom charity was extended. In 1624 the town of Dunfermline had been “unhappily almost wholly burnt with unquenchable fire by reason of an extraordinary wind.” A collection was held not only in the town of Brechin but throughout the landward areas also. Glasgow too was afflicted by fire some years later and again the Cathedral responded by collecting £93.6s.8d Scots. More money was raised for Glasgow following another fire in 1678. Closer to home Aberbrothock (now Arbroath) was given £21 Scots after the pier had been washed away in a great storm. Dundee too lost its harbour in similar fashion and was helped to the enormous sum of £106.8s.10d. A special collection was taken at the Kirk doors for “the relief of the great famine and distress presently in Orkney, Shetland and Caithness.”

But it was not just to communities, individuals too were the recipients of charity for the stranger. Alexander Lindsay “an honest blind man born in Forfar” is given the princely sum of £10 Scots from the poor box and £4.4s given to four shipwrecked men from Shetland that they might find passage home. David Leitch, Minister at Dundrennan, was given special assistance after his home had been “burnt under the cloud of night by a Jesuit.” One of my own favourite stories concerns that of two merchants from Barrowstounness who had been trading in the Levant

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108 Kirk Session Minutes of Brechin Cathedral, 20 June 1624
109 From June 1624-May 1708 there were in fact two Kirk Sessions of the Cathedral, one town and one landward. This was done because of the sheer scale of business coming before them.
110 Kirk Session Minutes of Brechin Cathedral, 15 Sept 1652
111 Ibid. 16 March, 1679
112 Ibid. 11 Oct 1654
113 Ibid. 20 June, 1670
114 Ibid. 5 Aug, 1634
115 Ibid. 16 June 1621 This case is of interest because normally those requiring charity from a neighbouring parish or community would be returned to that community to seek it there. Clearly Alexander Lindsay’s circumstances were highly unusual given that he did receive money and the favourable amount that was given.
116 Ibid., 27 Nov 1627
117 Ibid. 6 May, 1634
when captured by “the infidel Turk”. £13 was contributed towards the ransom and some months later one of them wrote to churches that had helped in order to thank them; unfortunately the fate of the other merchant is unknown.118 A few years later, a further collection was taken up (this time by order of Privy Council, so I suppose it was hardly spontaneous) for prisoners held in Algiers.119 Some prisoners of Pittenweem in Fife were also “in a miserable condition and bondage under the Turk since last July” and were given £29.6s.4d Scots for their ransom in 1680.120 It was not just Scots abroad who were supported. One Francisco Polanus, a Grecian, along with his family were in captivity by the Turks. £16.2s Scots were raised by the congregation in order to ransom them.121

By the early part of the eighteenth century it was soldiers who were often the focus of the Session’s discussions, usually for being drunk. But midst this military trouble is a lovely story of two German palatines; they had fallen in love with local women but were unable to satisfy the constraints of Church discipline of the time regarding the reading of the “banns”122. The minute records that “because they were strangers, the Session compassionately permits them to marry the women and discharges them fully from the discipline of the Kirk.”123 It was the very fact that these two soldiers of German extraction were strangers that resulted in compassion

118 Ibid 29 March, 1676
119 Ibid. 27 Feb, 1678
120 Ibid. 31 March, 1680
121 Ibid. 30 March, 1682. We may suppose given his name and country of origin that Polanus was not of the Church in Scotland but probably Greek Orthodox or Roman Catholic. This makes Brechin’s support for him even more interesting.
122 The banns was a procedure whereby the intention to marry was read out in your parish Church for three consecutive Sundays, giving anyone the opportunity to lodge objection. In the case of our German soldiers they did not have the correct paperwork and had to be granted dispensation. If you were wealthy (and in a hurry) the number of Sundays could be reduced on payment of a fee. The need for banns in Scotland was removed in 1978 by the Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977 and a reciprocal ecclesiastical Act by the General Assembly.
123 Kirk Session Minutes of Brechin Cathedral, 7 Oct, 1710
being shown to them. Their marriages appear to have both been solemnized on 25\textsuperscript{th} October, 1710.

By the early eighteenth century, the outbreak of the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745 meant that discipline of moral lapses rather than charitable giving features more heavily in the records. By the time things became more settled in the 1780s it tended to be more local causes, such as support for hospitals or asylums (where Brechin people were often resident), that benefited from special collections.\textsuperscript{124}

This was also frequently a time of famine and difficult economic circumstances and the Cathedral concentrated its funds on assisting locals rather than strangers. It is interesting that this pattern re-appears in the modern era with our support for the Angus Foodbank\textsuperscript{125}, again in a time of economic austerity. Many of those helped in today’s context are neither members of the Church nor even necessarily professing Christian, thus reflecting anew the concern for the stranger in our midst.

By the late Georgian and early Victorian eras, charitable giving re-emerges, this time in the guise of donations to set-piece organisations rather than responding to specific individual cases. Thus we find a collection made for Missionary Societies in both England and Scotland that the gospel might be preached in “the unenlightened parts of the world”\textsuperscript{126}. Further, the Missionary Society of Edinburgh benefitted from charitable giving,\textsuperscript{127} as did the British foreign Bible Society\textsuperscript{128} and (interestingly given my earlier evidence about the bias to women) the Female Charitable

\begin{footnotes}
\item[124] Ibid. 14 March 1790
\item[125] Over £300 was raised by the Cathedral’s Christmas Appeal in 2013 for the Angus Foodbank.
\item[126] Kirk Session Minutes of Brechin Cathedral, 9 August, 1796
\item[127] Ibid. 15 May 1803
\item[128] Ibid. 15 June 1806
\end{footnotes}
Society.\textsuperscript{129} By the mid nineteenth century\textsuperscript{130} this charitable giving to specific causes had metamorphosed into extremely organised and structured annual appeal days. So that at the end of the financial year, a list is given for the year past, for example:

Collections for the schemes of the Church-

Home mission £7.3s.6d, Education £9, Foreign Mission £6.10s, Colonial Mission £3.13s.6d, Jewish Mission £4.2s.2d, Normal Schools £4.13s\textsuperscript{131}

While this is still clearly commendable and is still in keeping with the theme of charity towards the stranger, I cannot help but think its rather official nature had resulted in a loss of the spontaneity of the personal, pastoral touch.

Very interestingly, only one of my fourteen respondents mentioned either charitable giving or care for the stranger in any of the interviews I conducted. Person C reflected the Celtic tone (I outlined above) describing welcoming strangers in our midst as “an encounter with the holy.”\textsuperscript{132} Maybe, as I have stated, that this is so much part of Church procedure now that we take it for granted.

4. CARE FOR THE WHOLE INDIVIDUAL – HEALTHCARE AND THE ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY

We noted in Chapter Two in our consideration of the bodily resurrection of Jesus that matter matters; the physical is important in the eschatological telos. One of the curious (and hopeful) things about God’s eschatological project is that while God is Spirit, God is yet concerned for the material universe and it is in its very physical form that God will transform it and redeem it: Creation will be changed. Jesus is resurrected not as a dis-embodied spirit pointing to an ethereal heaven, but rather in a

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid. 3 Oct 1810

\textsuperscript{130} One of my “aside” observations is that the Church of Scotland became increasingly controlled by General Assembly concerns and regulations following the Disruption of 1843. A pattern that I would argue has continued into the present time where charitable giving to causes often originates from suggestions by Church Headquarters rather than spontaneously within the congregation itself.

\textsuperscript{131} Kirk Session Minutes of Brechin Cathedral 24 March 1851

\textsuperscript{132} Recording 5, 58.17
transformed and glorified body pointing to a new physical creation that has none of the drawbacks or limits of the current one. The new creation is to be free of pain, death and entropy.\textsuperscript{133}

In Chapter Two I stated that in the ministry of Jesus, the Kingdom of God in a very real sense arrives and breaks through. Not only in Jesus’ proclamation but also in his actions. We see this perhaps most clearly in Jesus’ treatment of the sick and poor. The healing miracles are in fact clear evidence of the care of God for God’s creation and God’s desire that this creation be renewed and transformed. As Richard Bauckham comments:

\begin{quote}
The activities of Jesus were small-scale anticipations of the Kingdom that heralded its universal coming in the future. What is notable about them, for our purposes, is the way that their holistic character points to the coming of the Kingdom in all creation. Jesus brought wholeness to the lives of people he healed and delivered: reconciling them to God, driving the power of evil from their lives, healing diseased bodies, making good crippling disabilities and restoring social relationships to those isolated by their misfortune. Jesus does not isolate their relationship with God from their bodily and social existence.\textsuperscript{134}
\end{quote}

My contention in this section of the paper is that these “small-scale anticipations of the Kingdom” heralded in Jesus’ ministry are carried forward into the life of the Church. This is the eschatological deposit account of which C.H. Dodd spoke\textsuperscript{135} being shown still to be open and ready to be drawn upon in the fields of healthcare and alleviation of poverty. Thus the early apostles (still, I would argue, believing that Jesus was due to return soon) as part of an eschatologically driven community not

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\textsuperscript{133} Biblically we might reflect on Rev. 21:1-5; Scientifically Prof Brian Cox of the University of Manchester has made some interesting comments as a physicist on what the nature of a universe might be like without the constraints of entropy. See for example Brian Cox & Andrew Cohen \textit{The Wonders of the Universe} (London: BBC/Harper Collins, 2009), 216-19. Cox is of the view that a physical universe could theoretically exist without entropy but the nature of time would have to be very different, decay and death would not be possible. See too Roy E. Peacock \textit{A Brief History of Eternity} (Eastbourne: Monarch, 1989), 118-121, who looks at the question from a specifically Christian perspective.

\textsuperscript{134} Richard Bauckham, \textit{Bible and Ecology} (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2010), 167

\textsuperscript{135} See Chapter Two
only heal the sick but make provision for the poor.\textsuperscript{136} Paul too makes it part of his ministry to raise funds for the believers in Judaea.\textsuperscript{137} Paul also has an important ministry of healing, often of Gentiles.\textsuperscript{138} Thus we find that the apostles, including Paul, not only proclaim the Kingdom’s arrival in Jesus’ Resurrection but also manifest the signs of that Kingdom in the care of the poor and alleviation of the misery of the sick. One might finally remark that this concern by God for our bodily and social life is a clear marker of a faith with a truly Incarnational centre, a faith with God become human as its core. Matter, as I say, matters to God.

We might expect therefore that at least one of our eschatological shards within the Cathedral narrative would point to a concern with existing creation alongside a desire for the healing and transformation of it. There is perhaps little ecological concern in the Cathedral story\textsuperscript{139} but where we do see a reflection (even a prolepsis) of this longing for new creation is in the desire for the wholeness of the individual, body, mind and soul.

In the first volume of the Cathedral minutes dating from 1615, following the secure establishment of the Reformation, there are several Acts and ordinances. Amongst these are regulations concerning collections for the poor. Collections were to be taken on both Sundays and Tuesdays in both town and landward Sessions. The regulation records: “they (the Session) crave support to the poor of whom they find whether stranger or other.” Alms are to be distributed to the needy “without all

\textsuperscript{136} Acts 2:45, 5:15, 6:1-7,
\textsuperscript{137} Acts 16:1-4
\textsuperscript{139} Trees around the graveyard do seem to occupy a great deal of the Session’s time at various stages. The wood was sometimes sold to supplement the poor fund but the graveyard was almost always replanted, either showing great ecological awareness or a sensible long term investment! See for example Kirk Session minutes of Brechin Cathedral, 28 Feb 1766
partiality and respect of persons.” Further, in 1617, in an attempt to regulate beggars prior to an anticipated royal visit by James VI, pewter badges were made so that local beggars be known “by their mark.” This concern to alleviate the misery of the poor was to continue well into the twentieth century. In some cases it was linked to a desire for healing for a particular individual. Thus a special collection was held for one James Hog, a flesher (now butcher) who had broken his thigh bone. Also for James Adam, a cadger (or carrier) that he might obtain a new horse. Thus is the Session concerned not only with the spiritual well-being of its flock but also their physical welfare and economic success. We even find provision being made for the poor in death; the Session in 1798 agreed to pay for a coffin for the dead daughter of Alexander Collie of Pittendreich, who has not the means to bury her. Matter indeed matters.

In 1622 we have what appears to be a case of plague of some sort and collections for the poor were extended to those “bedfast with the lingering disease.” Yet sometimes the plague was to become too infectious and dangerous for even the Church authorities to respond with charity. Thus between April and November 1647 there were no Session meetings or collections because of the sickness. It is recorded on the Plague memorial stone within the Cathedral that six hundred souls perished in the plague of 1647 and if this is even an approximation it would be two thirds of the then population. Yet individual misfortune in health

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140 Kirk Session minutes of Brechin Cathedral, May 1615. Note again the reference to the stranger in the midst. Though it must be noted that one of the regulations stated that strangers were neither to be housed nor given employment without a testimonial from the minister or magistrate of their home parish.
141 Ibid. 9 April 1617
142 Ibid. 10 June 1617
143 Ibid. 8 April 1798
144 Ibid. 19 Nov 1622
145 We shall return to the implications of these darker episodes in the Cathedral narrative in Chapter Four.
was also dealt with. A barrow was bought for John Robertson that he might be carried since infirmity meant he was no longer able to walk. And 40s Scots was given to a young lad (on petition by his father, Thomas Jack) after his head had been scalded in an accident at work.

By the 1640s, the nation itself was convulsed by both civil war and religious unrest. Yet, even though its ministers were frequently away in Edinburgh consulting over what to do with a recalcitrant King Charles, the Cathedral was still aware of the needs of those affected by these events. Thus we find that 27s.4d Scots was given to Jonat Allan, a poor woman with five children, whose husband David Millar was away on a military expedition. And in 1685 Ambrose Bursie’s home was destroyed by fire resulting in £26 Scots being raised to help.

During the early eighteenth century the concern for the health and well-being of the individual disappears somewhat but then re-emerges with renewed vigour in the late 1790s and early 1800s. A special collection is taken for Alex Low, a Brechin citizen, who is “out of his judgement” in the Lunatic asylum in Montrose. So also is a collection made in the case of Ann Straton, wife of John McFadzen who was also admitted to the Asylum. But it is the case of Marjory Mudie, wife of James Mitchell, a carter in Brechin that is most enlightening and deserves quoting verbatim:

It was moved that a collection be made at the Church door for Marjory Mudie, wife of James Mitchell, carter in Brechin, who has been for some time in the Lunatic Hospital at Montrose, and is not yet recovered. The

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146 Kirk Session minutes of Brechin Cathedral, 24 May 1620
147 Ibid. 12 March 1616
148 Ibid. 10 Nov 1646
149 Ibid. 3 Dec 1685
150 Note again this ebb and flow which is a characteristic of many of these eschatological practices.
151 Ibid. 8 October, 1790
152 Ibid. 4 September, 1791
Session were very sensible that she is a great object of charity and are willing to give her all the relief in their power; to render their assistance more effected they propose that her husband, who is a member of the Episcopal congregation in Brechin, should apply to the managers of the Chapel in order that they may appoint a collection to be made for his wife…and the Session will readily appoint a collection to be made at the Church (Cathedral) door for the same purpose.

Here indeed do we find the no partiality clause of the Reformation regulations for the poor being lived out. For this family clearly have Episcopal Church connections, in an age when only forty years previously the Episcopalian Jacobites were outlawed, yet the Session is more than keen to assist in the recuperation of this poor, sick woman. Further minutes show that the Session not only paid her care in Montrose Asylum but also sent clothes to provide for her.153

The compassion of the Session to the sick also shines through in the case of James Shepherd, a young man who was “furiously mad.”154 At first young James is committed to Montrose Asylum, but his uncle (James senior) believes that he can care for him at home. Unfortunately, during his time back in Brechin young James commits an unspecified act of serious violence and ends up in prison. The Kirk Session petitioned the magistrates for his release and James junior is duly returned to the Asylum in Montrose. The Session not only raised cash for worthy individuals, there was a genuine interest in their welfare.

At the turn of the century we see an ingenious experiment in free medical care for the poor. One Dr Ogilvie, a surgeon, had arrived in Brechin and makes an offer to the Session that he is willing to give free consultation over health issues to the poor, “the Session paying for such medicines as were sent to the poor confined at

153 Ibid. 13 November, 1792
154 Ibid. 14 May, 1793. Also Ibid. 5 June 1796 which concludes James Shepherd’s story.
in other words, the cost of the prescribed medicine to be met by the Session. Initially this offer from Dr Ogilvie is for six months, later extended to a year. However we find in 1813, ten years later, that it is still going strong when Dr Ogilvie presents his account for the medicines. The minute records that “thanks were expressed in most polite terms for his gratuitous attention to the cause of the poor during so long a period…giving attention to the poor without demanding any remuneration.” Thus in the early nineteenth century, one hundred and fifty years in advance of the British National Health Service, we find a precursor of this great institution happening in Brechin. It only comes to an end with the death of Dr Ogilvie himself.

It was not just the healthcare of the poor the Session were concerned with but their diet and material comfort also. The 1740s were difficult times, partly because of the Jacobite rebellions and partly because of hard, long cold winters that caused the price of food to rise. Thus at Christmas 1740 the Session:

…taking under their serious consideration the very straitening circumstances of the poor in this place through the scarcity and the high prices of victual and the stormings and inclemency of the season, and at the same time their utter inability to supply them the necessities as demand, the weekly collections being very inconsiderable, their funds being a great deal exhausted already and what remaining not answering to the present… a voluntary contribution may be made at the Church door on Sunday 4th January for supplying the necessities of the poor.

Thus in January 1741 the Moderator buys forty or more bolls of meal at £8 per boll. In the cold winters some fifty years later, during the hard times of the Napoleonic wars, the Session approach the Heritors of the parish so that from the sale of some trees in the Kirk yard the proceeds might be “applied for buying meal

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155 Ibid. 29 December, 1799
156 Ibid. 10 February, 1813
157 It was the 1715 rather than 1745 rebellion that had most impact upon the community of Brechin.
158 Kirk Session minutes of Brechin Cathedral, 24 December 1740
159 Meal, an oatmeal based foodstuff, was the principal basic food commodity in this era.
for the benefit of the poor of the parish."¹⁶⁰ We also find a century or so later that coal was provided for the poor, often due to the generosity of local gentry.¹⁶¹ In order to regulate charitable distributions to the poor a Poor Roll was drawn up in 1751¹⁶² and by the end of that year the poor were distributed with alms on the first Wednesday of every month.¹⁶³ As with charity towards strangers, one wonders if by this regulation and re-ordering a more spontaneous pastoral approach was somehow lost.

Again, I must honestly state that virtually none of my respondents mentioned either the healthcare of the individual or the alleviation of poverty as being distinctly Church functions, though Person H and Person B were both involved at an earlier stage in their Church life in the disbursement of the Benevolent fund to the local elderly each Christmas. Perhaps it is because these functions of life have been taken over increasingly by the State in our own era that none of my respondents saw them as being part of the practices of the Church, eschatological or otherwise. This is a thought we shall return to in my concluding Chapter.

5. FORGIVENESS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

WITHIN THE FAITH COMMUNITY

Jesus made forgiveness central to his eschatologically Kingdom-driven ministry. In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus asks that we pray to God not only that we might be forgiven but that in turn we should forgive others.¹⁶⁴ Further, Jesus shows the forgiveness of others both practically, as in the case of the woman caught in

¹⁶⁰ Kirk Session minutes of Brechin Cathedral, 16 February 1796
¹⁶¹ Ibid., 20 January 1810. The Earl of Panmure was very generous in his charity regarding the purchase of coals. An annual donation of £20 was received from him from 28th December, 1846 for many years.
¹⁶² Ibid. 21 September, 1751
¹⁶³ Ibid. 25 December, 1751
¹⁶⁴ Matt.6:12
adultery, and stresses the practice in his teachings, most notably in his parables.  
Jesus indeed seems to suggest that forgiveness and reconciliation is a necessary prerequisite to entrance into the Kingdom.  
Paul too sees reconciliation as a mark of that new community that is inaugurated following the Resurrection of Jesus and with the goal of the Kingdom before it; as God has been reconciled to us in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, so we also ought to forgive one another.  
For Paul this ministry of reconciliation is a key aspect of the new creation that God has promised: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come…and he (God) has committed to us the message of reconciliation.”  
Reconciliation and forgiveness is part and parcel of this new eschatological creation. We cannot be sure that there will be no disputes in the new creation, only that reconciliation as a hallmark of that new creation will cause bridges to be built. If we would see God in the new creation then we must first be at peace with everyone.  

Within the Old Testament narrative this stress on reconciliation is particularly seen in what I would dare to call “kingdom moments” where forgiveness is achieved; notably in the reconciliation between Jacob and Esau and in the healing episode between Joseph and his estranged brothers. The cultic practices of sacrifice within the Temple (while alien to our modern minds) were very much geared too towards achieving reconciliation with God for sins committed and with neighbour for faults
occurred. Indeed, Wright argues that the cultic system acts almost as a bridge between the current world and the new creation yet to come: “the sacrificial system functioned as a regular pointer back to the great acts of redemption such as the exodus, and equally as a pointer forward to the great redemption still to come.” It is also of note that the prophets, in criticising the Temple practices of sacrifice, still view reconciliation with God as a mark of the redeemed people, even if the reconciliation is now achieved by God’s work rather than from the human side.

My overall contention therefore is that forgiveness, reconciliation and conflict resolution is absolutely central to the Kingdom. Where it is achieved we glimpse that Kingdom in a real tangible sense, the fog clears and we see at last the eternal city. Where forgiveness and reconciliation is not achieved (as we will note with the Robin McKenzie episode) there leaves a feeling amongst the faith community that somehow there has been a failure to uphold the gospel either by themselves or others. I would say that in this field of conflict resolution we see the cost, the cost the Kingdom bears upon us if we are truly to enter into it, not only in the future but in the here and now also. In the arena of forgiveness, the price to be paid for the future new creation impinges very directly upon the present and perhaps upon the past as well. Perhaps it is in this eschatological practice that we see truly the economics of the Kingdom, a Kingdom of cost to human pride and human will. Jesus himself is clear that there will be a cost to entering the Kingdom: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” It is with this practice of forgiveness that the real struggle between human psyche

173 See especially Leviticus chapters 4-7.
175 See for example Isa.1:18
176 Mark 10:34
desiring its way and the *pneuma* of God’s Spirit for control over us is most vividly revealed.\textsuperscript{177}

Forgiveness and conflict resolution appears many times in the narrative of the Cathedral, sometimes more successfully than others! In the next chapter I shall describe three historical incidents in three distinct time periods in which reconciliation clearly failed to happen – and what the outcomes of these failures were\textsuperscript{178}. But in this section of my paper let me deal firstly with the more positive side of things and then, through my respondents, explore a more recent episode in which reconciliation failed to be achieved.

Within the Reformed period of the Cathedral, reconciliation was seen as of vital importance for the health of the faith community. In 1616 for example two women, Margaret Keith and Marjorie Mitchell fall out after Keith accuses Mitchell of making “filthy ungodly speeches” about her.\textsuperscript{179} It is of interest that the Session decided not to take sides in the source of the disagreement, nor censure either party under discipline; instead they “order the said Marjorie to go to the (town) cross, sit down on her knees and crave the said Margaret her pardon.”\textsuperscript{180} The interest of the Cathedral authorities seemed to be in getting the two women to talk to each other rather than bandy about unhelpful accusations. The task of the bishop\textsuperscript{181} was often to

\textsuperscript{177} See my discussion on I Cor.15:42-57 in Chapter Two.
\textsuperscript{178} As we will see in Chapter Four, I will argue that even in the failure of reconciliation, the Kingdom still breaks through.
\textsuperscript{179} Kirk Session Minutes of Brechin Cathedral, 1 September, 1616
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{181} It should be noted that following the Reformation (which began in Scotland in 1560) there were still bishops, appointed now by the Crown. This situation continued in Brechin from 1562-1688. Some of these bishops were very active in the local community, acting as both Moderator of the Kirk Session and chair of the Town Council, e.g. Andrew Lamb (1607-19) while others, e.g. Robert Laurie (1672-77) were absenteeees, in Laurie’s case holding the see at Brechin while mainly acting as Dean of Edinburgh Cathedral. It was only with the monarchy of William and Mary that Presbyterianism in its fullest form was achieved in 1690. Several General Assemblies in the period 1560-1690 often debated the role and authority of the bishop. It was with the Covenanters in the 1640s that
talk sense into foolish heads and bring parties to a resolution.\textsuperscript{182} Thus we find, for example, in May 1617 that the Church Beadle, Paul Liddell has struck about the head one Hendrie during Thursday evening prayers.\textsuperscript{183} Despite the fact that this incident was clearly disruptive of worship, the Session forgive him and re-admit Liddell to his office after Bishop Andrew Lamb intervenes to bring about a reconciliation between the two men. So too in the June, three young lads, Andrew Owdnie, David Livingstone and David Donaldson had had a serious argument on a Sunday. Again, and thanks to the Bishop’s action, the three are reconciled and the only penance for disrupting the Lord’s Day is that they were “ordained to sit down on their knees and crave God’s pardon for abusing God’s day.”\textsuperscript{184}

During the seventeenth century, formal reconciliation of estranged parties before a celebration of Communion was to become an established practice that continued well into the following century. Thus the record states “It is appointed that the elders be diligent in their several quarters in reconciling neighbours amongst whom there is discord or variance before Communion.”\textsuperscript{185} We find that at the Session meeting prior to a celebration the names of those who were at variance were read out and what action to be taken to bring about conflict resolution decided.\textsuperscript{186} Sometimes this was left to particular elders or the town bailies, but the more serious cases were left to the bishop of the day. In 1657 (at the height of the Cromwellian occupation) the Landward Session issued a special Act that “whosoever shall not

\textsuperscript{182} Ibid. 18 April 1617
\textsuperscript{183} Ibid. 6 May 1617
\textsuperscript{184} Ibid. 10 June 1617
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid. 22 June 1657
\textsuperscript{186} David Boath Thoms, The Kirk of Brechin in the Seventeenth Century (Brechin: Society of Friends Publications, 1972) 77
come to the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper by refusing agreement with their neighbours...shall be debarred from the Communion till they declare evidences of their repentance, as the Session shall enjoin.”

It was as a result of this very Act that the Rev David Blair in March of 1741 suspends the Communion season due to a riot by the weavers. An extract from the minute bears witness to the reasons for suspending the sacrament, all due to a lack of reconciliation:

...that considering a mob has raged in this place some days past, in which not a few of whom better things might have been expected...and that a spirit of rancour and malice, clamour and evil speaking too visibly prevails in this place, they (the clergy) for their parts found themselves exceedingly straitened to proceed to the solemnization of that ordinance which supposes Christian love and charity amongst all that would worthily partake in it; that therefore they had called the Session to advise with them, whether it would not be much more expedient to delay setting about this work for some time until we see the Lord in his mercy bring us to a better frame and disposition of mind.

There were of course occasions when the dispute in question was with the bishop himself. Thus in 1667 one John Mill, merchant, is summoned to appear before Session. Mill had gone to hear “outed” ministers at Bridgend, that is to say clergy who had refused to remain within the Kirk after the restoration of Episcopacy under Charles II. Mill is quite unrepentant and makes some distinctly unflattering comments about Bishop Strachan’s assertion that he was merely building upon old foundations in restoring the Episcopal form of government. Things reached a head at a meeting in October, 1667 when Mill asserts:

He only wished that the Bishop might not strike at the root, and wished that he might not leave the old foundation, and upbraided the bishop in the face of the Session for saying that he attested the Lord...(stating) that the bishop had

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187 As quoted by D.B.Thoms, Ibid. Sadly the Landward Session records for this period are now lost, only the Town record remains.
188 Kirk Session minutes of Brechin Cathedral, 28 March 1741
189 An edict to this effect was read at Brechin cross on 29th January, 1662
decided to process (or prosecute) John Mill out of envy or a desire for revenge. The case was sent for trial before Presbytery and here something very interesting happens. There may have been within Presbytery elements sympathetic with Mill’s non-episcopal views, or maybe it was a genuine desire for conflict resolution; whatever Presbytery’s motives, they refuse to give Mill over to the civil magistrates for punishment. Instead an “accommodation” is reached whereby Mill promises not to hear further sermons by “outed” ministers and craves the bishop’s pardon for his intemperate comments. Yet the bishop too was required to show forbearance towards a lapsed sinner and pardon Mill. It is an interesting case in that it shows how a Church court could bring about a peaceful resolution to what appeared an intractable pastoral problem. Whether Mill did hear further sermons from “outed” clergy I cannot say, but he certainly never re-appears before Session so we must suppose that the reconciliation reached was permanent.

Session too often acted as arbiter in disputes. We saw this with our two women in 1617 and we see it again in 1672 when the Kirk Officer, Robert Strachan and David Mill, bell-ringer, fall out over who has the right to ring the Church bells. Here the Session acted to bring about a peaceful resolution. It is of some consequence to think that such disputes are still occurring in congregations today over such trivial matters!

Of course, the Session were not always successful in reaching a satisfactory conciliation between parties, despite their best attempts. Thus in the winter of 1757 we find a dispute arises between William Wilson, doctor at the grammar school and his deputy, schoolmaster John Bruce. An accusation had been made against Wilson

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190 Kirk Session Minutes of Brechin Cathedral 29 August 1667 and 16 October 1667
191 Ibid. 22 May 1672
that he had been “over familiar” with Bruce’s wife. Wilson had complained to Session over the stain to his character and upon investigation it is discovered that there is no basis to the charge. Presbytery censure both Bruce and his wife but, regrettably, it is Wilson who is the real victim, for he demits his post and Bruce becomes the new doctor at the grammar school. Interestingly however the post of Session Clerk and Precentor (which hitherto had been linked to the post of doctor at the grammar school) is not offered to Bruce. Perhaps the Session were genuinely aggrieved at losing Wilson and the innocent party being the one who lost his living.

What is of note with this episode is that although the Session failed to achieve a resolved outcome, the desire and intention for peace and reconciliation were still present.

Again, as with charity towards strangers, we find this particular eschatological practice of reconciliation and conflict resolution not always evident in the Cathedral narrative. Sometimes it rears its head, only to disappear again for many years. However, I think there are sufficient episodes to show that it is there, even if sometimes obscured or buried. What is very interesting is that this practice more than any other was highlighted in my interviews, particularly in relation to the situation that arose during the ministry of Rev Dr Robin McKenzie (1987–1998). Before recounting the comments of my respondents, a little background to the situation may aid the reader. Here, I, as the reporter of the narrative, the describer of the drama, must myself be cautious. Many of those involved in these events are still living and active in the Cathedral’s life. A pastoral sensitivity is needed and recognition that I was not a first-hand witness to events; I base my description solely on the evidence of others presented to me. Nevertheless, the episode must be brought out of darkness

192 Ibid. 25 February 1757
and into light, for the consequences of this episode are (as several of my respondents indicated) still with us.

Rev Dr Robin McKenzie came to the Cathedral as minister following the very pastoral ministry of Rev Peter Gordon in 1987. From the outset there were issues. For one, Robin lacked Peter’s very populist and conversational style. Yet, as we will see in the final section of this chapter that itself need not have been a major drawback; one of the strengths of the Cathedral’s story has been the huge diversity in the style and gifts of its clergy. But the way Robin had been elected by the vacancy committee left a bad taste in some mouths. Person B for example was quite clear that there had been undue influence put on the committee by the Interim Moderator, Rev McKinnon; “I know who you will choose” he is reported to have stated. Present day Church of Scotland congregations are very jealous in their right to elect ministers rather than have them imposed by landowners or anyone else and this played badly at the time. Robin’s higher liturgical style (including kneeling to pray) and more erudite sermons also alienated some within the congregation. I say, some, for some too welcomed a more learned and thoughtful sermon than the anecdotal style of Peter Gordon. Person K for example stated that Robin “tried so hard but it was above our heads to grasp what he was getting at.” Three factors however were to combine to act as Robin’s nemesis; it was to be a perfect ecclesial storm. The first was Robin’s arrival came at a time that the Church of Scotland generally was declining both in terms of membership and finance. This seemed to be exaggerated in its extent at the Cathedral; commenting on the controversy that later arose the Glasgow Herald stated

193 Recording 3, 10.03
194 This happened under patronage from the Glorious Revolution under William and Mary in 1690 until 1929 when the Church of Scotland re-united with the Free Church. The issue of patronage was one of the principal factors in the Disruption of 1843.
195 Recording 9, 19.22
“Brechin Cathedral is having the same kind of problems many congregations have, but unfortunately they are all coming together at the same time.”  
Secondly, Robin’s handling of the developing crisis was viewed by many as arrogant stubbornness and he quickly got into what appeared as a stand-off with a number of elders.  
Finally, a process of union between Maison Dieu, Stracathro and the Cathedral charges was overseen by Robin and (I suspect as an external observer with the benefit of hindsight) he found himself under stress and stretched far too thinly given the additional pastoral and administrative demands this caused.  
The upshot of all this was that the Presbytery early in 1995 declared the charge to be in an “unsatisfactory state” (to use the technical term) and a judicial process began to remove Robin from the charge. However, it is of interest (given my contention of reconciliation being an at times buried eschatological practice) that at a key Session meeting in January 1995 the following motion was passed:

The future of the Kirk depends on us getting people over the door of the Kirk, and for this reason we accept the deliverance of the report (from Presbytery) and invite Presbytery to act to help us endeavour to remedy the situation.

Leaving aside the question as to whether the Cathedral’s future is solely dependent on getting people through its doors (which, as someone who is arguing for an eschatological goal, I personally might see rather differently) it is commendable that the Session at this stage were at least desirous of reconciliation and a solution. The question was: would this involve Robin? Here the division became pronounced. At least four elders clearly wanted the removal of the minister while several others left because of the way the minister had been treated by the Session. Reconciliation now

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196 Glasgow Herald, 5th Oct, 1997
197 Recording 9, 26.11 also Recording 12, 13.12
198 Recording 11, 22.06; See also Kirk Session Minutes of Brechin Cathedral, 29 January 1995 at which Robin McKenzie faces down his accusers and makes the contention that the recent unions had been a difficult process that required his touch of finesse.
199 Ibid. 29 January 1995
seemed impossible. By the autumn of 1996 Robin was to all intents on trial before
Presbytery and in October 1997 was suspended from duty and appealed to the
Judicial Commission of the General Assembly. Although Robin was (according to
some) to win his appeal “on a technicality” the result simply caused a hardening of
attitudes; three elders including the then Session Clerk left the congregation and a
further seventeen resigned from the Eldership. Robin responded by ordaining new
elders and attempting to keep the congregation going, which Person K described as a
good time in the Church’s life with “a smaller congregation and a more intimate
stronger fellowship” almost as if in facing the adversity of the situation faith by
the remnant congregation was immeasurably strengthened. Yet the writing was on
the wall and in May 1998 Robin received a call from the congregation of Strachur
and Strathallan in the Presbytery of Dunoon and duly left the Cathedral.

The Presbytery of Angus then faced a problem: what to do next? It was
decided that an Interim Ministry and a period of healing might be the best way
forward and in September 1998 the Very Rev Dr James Simpson, a former
Moderator of the General Assembly, was introduced as an Interim Minister. Feelings
are divided on the success of this period by many of my respondents. Some, notably
Person G for example, felt that the year in which Dr Simpson served was too short
and that “while he settled things down he really failed to progress matters.” Person
S felt that Dr Simpson was a “performer” who was really only interested in “getting
another Cathedral notch on his belt” and that he failed to take seriously the
enormous task of rebuilding the congregation that was necessary. Yet Person B felt

200 Recording 15, 08.16
201 Recording 9, 34.27
202 We shall return to this thought in the next chapter.
203 Recording 6, 42.01
204 Recording 12, 31.48; Very Rev Dr Simpson had previously served as minister of Dornoch
Cathedral.
that Dr Simpson was a “people person” and this was needed at that time. And Person J described Dr Simpson as being “one in a million” and very successful.

All this may or may not be true, but we are to some extent still living today with the fallout from these dramatic events. Person X, one of our oldest members, described this as a “watershed moment” in the Cathedral’s story. What I think is very clear is that the vast majority of my respondents, some of whom were involved in the events and some watching as interested observers, felt that had Presbytery acted earlier and sought a more genuine process of reconciliation a more peaceful settlement might have been reached. Person C for example stated that “it was a very distressing time and if people had been more compassionate things would have worked out differently.” Person C had prayed hard for reconciliation but felt that too many strong wills were at play. Person K had quite strong views on the matter saying that many of the elders involved had not acted according to the gospel imperative of reconciliation and that the seventeen who had left should never have been re-admitted as elders during Dr Simpson’s ministry. The battle that took place was “not for the glory of God.” Person H said that many of the elders didn’t really want to heal the gulf that existed, “they just wanted rid of the minister.” Almost all of the respondents felt there could have been a resolution of the conflict but, perhaps as with human nature, all of them put the onus on others to bring this about. There was thus a desire for reconciliation in this very troubled part of the Cathedral’s story.

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205 Recording 3, 1.16.13
206 Recording 8, 36.01
207 Recording 1, 12.09 This comment may seem, given the extent of the Cathedral’s story, somewhat of an exaggeration. Perhaps what the person is hinting at is that in their experience of the Cathedral this was a key moment in their lifetime. As we will see in the next chapter much darker times had been experienced by earlier generations; an apt reminder of Pannenberg’s claim that all history must be viewed against a universal horizon.
208 Recording 5, 58.56
209 Recording 9, 42.35
210 Recording 7, 48.16
but it appears that hardly anyone was willing to act to start that painful but necessary healing process. People wanted forgiveness to occur but, to various degrees, were not themselves prepared to pay that cost. Personally, I might remark that it seems Dr Simpson did seem to affect some healing, but his procedure seemed to be built on simply starting afresh and not really acknowledging the great hurts that had been caused to many. In my view many of these hurts were thus not addressed but buried, and we are still partly living with their legacy in today’s story, judging by the very heartfelt comments of many of my respondents. As Desmond Tutu discovered in South Africa following apartheid, reconciliation also involves an exposure of truth, however painful.

I have spent some time on this more recent episode (which could equally have appeared in the next chapter reflecting darker times) because it shows I think that people generally and genuinely do want hurts healed and division ended; their heartfelt desire is for reconciliation, not a re-living of old battles. They see division as something that is not in accord with the way the Church should live and act.

From my respondents regarding the Robin McKenzie situation I would suggest that they saw reconciliation and forgiveness as highly counter-cultural practices which do not sit easily with a world where vengeance is often the norm. Many of my respondents saw this as an episode in which the Cathedral followed the world’s script rather than God’s. For example several congregational members extended the debate beyond the congregational bounds by writing to the local press in criticism of Robin.\footnote{Interestingly, when the news of Rev. Scott Rennie’s homosexuality broke in the press in 2008, the Cathedral congregation did exactly the opposite; closing ranks in protection of him. There were certainly some in the congregation who dissented from this position but chose not to proceed to make complaint.} This was hardly following the Biblical injunction to “seek
peace and pursue it." This desire to vent their grievances in this open forum, rather than seeking healing within the faith community itself, played very badly with others within the congregation.

Yet we see this very counter-cultural dimension to forgiveness more positively in one final episode that bears re-counting. In the early autumn of 1907, just prior to the October celebration of Communion, it is discovered that several items of the Communion silver have gone missing – so too the Beadle, one William Myles! Myles was duly arrested in Berkshire and appeared at Forfar Sheriff Court on 21st September, 1907 charged with theft. It appears that Myles had fallen into debt and with six children and a wife to support had found the temptation to alleviate his cash flow problem too great. He had forwarded two of the Communion cups to a family member in England who had duly sold them on to a Jeweller in Bond Street, London for three hundred guineas. What is extraordinary in the context of our discussion on forgiveness as a counter-cultural practice of the coming Kingdom is that the minister of the Cathedral Rev Dr Coats appears as a witness for the defence. The Aberdeen Journal records: “Rev Dr Coats of the Cathedral Church made an eloquent appeal on behalf of the accused.” It is also of note that the details of this case do not appear in the Cathedral minutes – almost as if the Session had closed ranks to hush the matter up and save Myles from further embarrassment.Sadly, Dr Coats’ plea did not sway the Sheriff and Myles was sentenced to six months in prison.

212 Ps. 34:14
213 See for example the admonition in dealing with our neighbour’s faults in Matthew 18: 15-17 Person K was very vocal in this respect. Recording 9, 44.11
214 Aberdeen Journal, 4th October, 1907
6. THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE SABBATH

The issue of Sabbath observance is not so clear cut as some of the practices I have already outlined. Is it indicative of my eschatological driver or not? Does it point to the Kingdom or distract from it? Jesus himself seems to sit fairly lightly to Sabbath observance, suggesting that the rule is there to aid the person’s welfare not to be slavishly obeyed; “the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” Against this we can, of course, point to the fact that it is one of the Ten Commandments of Moses. But we must seek to understand it eschatologically, for this is the whole tenor of my project. We certainly can assert that worship of God does appear to be one of the Kingdom’s goals for in Revelation 7 we are given a picture of God’s throne room:

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no-one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb. All the angels were standing round the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying: Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength be to our God forever and ever. Amen!

The difference of course is that the eschatological worship of God by God’s people in God’s Kingdom is continuous and is not confined to any one day of the week. This is certainly reflected in the Cathedral’s narrative, both in terms of the daily offices of the monks, both in the Celtic and Medieval period. But also in the Reformed period

\[215\text{ Mark 2:27} \]
\[216\text{ Exod. 20:8-11} \]
\[217\text{ Rev. 7:9-12; we shall return to this passage when in Section 8 we consider the diverse nature of the Kingdom.} \]
when aside from Sunday worship, prayers were held Tuesdays and Thursdays with a Wednesday lecture.\textsuperscript{218}

It is to Jurgen Moltmann to whom we turn in order to tease out the eschatological threads of the sanctification of the Sabbath. Moltmann in particular identifies to a degree the new creation with the seventh day in the Biblical account of creation. For him the Sabbath is an eschatological event for it is “the promise of future consummation built into the initial creation.”\textsuperscript{219} Moltmann views the new creation not as a \textit{restitutio in integrum} (a return to the beginning)\textsuperscript{220} but rather a \textit{renovatio omnium} (a renewal of all things) in which all that is seemingly lost through the course of the drama will be retrieved. The \textit{creatio ex nihilio} in the first instance is completed in a \textit{creatio ex vertere} in the Eschaton. Thus for Moltmann the Sabbath is a sign in the current time that points to the coming Kingdom. It is an event in the time of the present world which finds its fulfilment in space in the world yet to be. God’s presence is seen in time in the here and now through the sanctifying of the Sabbath; God’s presence will be seen in space in the new creation, as God infuses all things. It is this difference in the presence of God within God’s creation that distinguishes this world from the next: in one God locates in time (the Sabbath day) in the next, in space. Only on the Sabbath, the eschatological seventh day, God’s presence will then rest in all creation.

The weekly Sabbath, with the Sabbath year, is God’s homeless Shekinah in the time of exile from Jerusalem, and in the far country of this world, estranged by God. The eschatological Shekinah is the perfected Sabbath in the spaces of the world. Sabbath and Shekinah are related to each other as promise and fulfilment, beginning and completion. In the Sabbath, creation

\begin{footnotes}
\item[218] We have a residue of this practice even today in our fortnightly Mid-week service Sept-May. See Edwards \textit{A pocket history of Brechin}, also Adams \textit{Brechin: the Ancient City}.
\item[219] J Moltmann, \textit{The Coming of God} loc.3764
\item[220] As, Moltmann claims, is the case with much Western theology.
\end{footnotes}
holds within itself from the beginning the true promise of its consummation.\textsuperscript{221}

Thus for Moltmann the Sabbath becomes part of the promise of the new creation, it is God’s promise to be with God’s creation not just one day in a week, in time, but in all spaces in the world yet to come; “the Sabbath rest with which the Creator blesses his creation is the promise of its completion in God’s eschatological Shekinah, a promise built as an endowment into creation itself.”\textsuperscript{222} If Moltmann is indeed correct and the Sabbath is indeed an endowment of the eschatological promise (what I would term an eschatological shard) then I think we can see Sabbath observance as an eschatological practice, for it marks the desire by God to dwell within the whole creation as God will do in the final, fifth Act of our play; the point at which our human \textit{psyches} will be lured into being in tune with the Spirit’s \textit{pneuma}. Yet, we must be cautious. Sabbath observance is but a pointer to the continuous worship we will enjoy in the coming consummated Kingdom, it reflects that continual, communal worship only through a glass darkly. Moltmann himself I think hints at this in pointing to the time/space dichotomy of Sabbath observance. We also do well to recall (as I stated in Chapter Two) that the eschatological practices which \textit{point to the Kingdom} are not necessarily the practices we will encounter \textit{within the Kingdom}. We have already noted in the previous chapter the tension between the now and the not yet of the Kingdom; the discontinuity/continuity aspect of the new creation that we saw reflected both in Jesus’ raised body and in Paul’s discussion of the bodies that we hope to inherit.\textsuperscript{223} The fact that Sabbath observance receives intermittent attention within the Cathedral’s narrative need not, I believe, necessarily be a drawback to considering it as an eschatological practice. Moltmann in his thinking

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{221} Ibid. loc. 3792
\item \textsuperscript{222} Ibid. loc. 4034
\item \textsuperscript{223} I Cor.15:42-44
\end{itemize}
draws attention, I think, to the difference between the eschatological ideal and the current reality in how we treat and regard the Sabbath. The ideal is to honour and sanctify the Sabbath as the foretaste of the eschatological Sabbath, God’s Shekinah or presence within all creation. But the reality is (as with many of our eschatological shards) that our human psyche prefers personal pleasure and satisfaction or, alternatively, must give way to the demands that work and family life make upon us\textsuperscript{224}. The observance (or lack) of the Sabbath reveals in a very concrete way the tension that exists between the now and the not yet of the Kingdom. I shall say more of this in a moment when we consider the practice of Communion which, like Sabbath observance, is equally patchy in the Cathedral’s tale.

This now and not yet tension of the Kingdom was highlighted by Person U in what was perhaps the most theological of all my interviews. For Person U each time we reflect in our lives the practices of the Kingdom, including Sabbath observance, these are the moments Jesus returns, the times Jesus is with us, God Immanuel. As Person U put it “We bring alive the Kingdom in the now when we act and behave according to its tune.”\textsuperscript{225} There is no final fifth Chapter of the metannarrative for Person U; the eschatological chapter becomes the current chapter of the drama when we let the Kingdom break in. This tension between what we ought to do and what we actually do\textsuperscript{226} was highlighted by Person U in regard to many of my suggested eschatological practices. In Sabbath observance, for example, we want to be with God in worship yet the demands of this world intrude and pull us away from dwelling with God. In worship we seek to encounter the holy; this for Person U is

\textsuperscript{224} In any era of history worship of God in Church all the time is not physically possible. Crops need growing and work needs done. The Medieval Church of course dealt partly with this tension by having the daily monastic offices, where clergy offered prayers on behalf of the rest of the community. Even this was not continuous worship however.

\textsuperscript{225} Recording 15, 55.27

\textsuperscript{226} Rom.7:14-25
our attempt to live in the new creation. Yet the daily demands of life pull us back into this current creation, there is a tension between the now and the not yet. Person U’s view of eschatology was much more realised than my own, but nevertheless sheds perhaps some interesting light on the nature of Sabbath observance within the Cathedral narrative.  

So what of the evidence? As with care for the stranger, the sanctification of the Sabbath is another practice that appears in the first volume of Cathedral Session minutes:

> It is statute that no merchant, tradesman or craftsman be found exercising their ordinary calling upon the day aforesaid under the penalty of twenty shillings, according to the Act of Parliament, and repentance. (Further) whosoever in landward, husbandman or cottar, by themselves or servants, shall be found in the break of the Sabbath shall be punished, as said is, according to the Act of Parliament, or at the discretion of the Session according to their estate, together with their repentance, and the masters to relieve the servants.

What is particularly noticeable is that this was a radical departure introduced by the Reformed Church. Prior to this Sundays had been for many centuries (unusually) market day in Brechin, as established in a charter given to the town by King David I (1124-53) and re-confirmed by William the Lion (1165-1214). In this High Medieval period, worship was frequently seen as something the Cathedral clergy did on behalf of the people, not necessarily something the people participated in, except perhaps in the case of festivals or personal matters such as funerals or weddings.

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227 Recording 15, 58.13
228 Kirk Session minutes of Brechin Cathedral, May 1615
229 Registrum Episcopatus Brechinensis, ed. Cosmo Innes (University of Aberdeen, 1856)
230 Market day was moved to Mondays in 1466 and finally to Tuesdays in 1647. David Adams (in Brechin the Ancient City, 1990, unpublished) is not clear as to why the move to Mondays but the move to Tuesday was certainly to stop preparations for the mart infringing upon the keeping of the Lord’s Day.
230 This is an interesting point to consider in the light of the claims being made that our own society is highly secularised.
How far was this Reformed emphasis on keeping the Lord’s Day enforced in the context of the Cathedral?

It seems that the Act of Parliament referred to in the Session minutes was sometimes interpreted fairly loosely, indeed the minute records that non-attendance at the Kirk be allowable for “a lawful and weighty excuse.” But what was lawful and weighty? In the summer of 1616 for example David Whyte of Gateside is excused by Session for working on his field on the Sabbath because he was working on a cairn. So too that year the Milners of East Mill were accused of breaking the Sabbath “in time of the preaching” but were again excused because they claimed any work they had done was “before the sun had risen.” There does in fact seem to be a distinct reticence by the Session to fine parishioners for lack of observance of the Sabbath in the seventeenth century. In fact we find no further mention of Sabbath breaking until 1677, when, in boredom, two young men “did shoot powder and lead at a mark fixed on the wall at the back of the Kirk in time of divine service.” In this case it was not their absence but their misbehaviour on the Sabbath that attracted the ecclesial authorities.

With the arrival of full-blown Presbyterianism in the shape of Rev. John Willison in 1703, Sabbath observance again begins to be more strictly enforced. Thus in 1705 marriages on Saturdays are banned because of “excessive drinking and

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231 Kirk Session minutes of Brechin Cathedral, May 1615
232 Ibid. 2 July 1616
233 Ibid 12 March 1616
234 Ibid. 7 March 1677
235 Possibly too embarrassment since it was a Presbytery service!
236 Rev. John Willison was the minister who, more than most others, sought to impose the Presbyterian form of government and liturgy on the Cathedral. In doing so, he made many enemies in what was a very pro-Episcopal area and when he was translated to a parish in Dundee in 1717 he was unable to find a local carter to move his belongings.
parishioners being unfit for worship on the Lord’s Day." So too the arrival of the army as a prelude to the 1715 rebellion was a cause of Sabbath breaking. Two soldiers, Joseph Diffins and Richard Mailine were found to be drunk on Sunday 6\(^{th}\) November, 1710 and went through the streets “both roaring and crying and swearing aloud to the great surprise and trouble of the inhabitants." The matter was considered serious enough as to be referred to Presbytery. It seems clear, given a minute of January 1718, that Sabbath breaking had indeed not been rigorously enforced for a long time as “a great many of the inhabitants of this place do grossly abuse and profane the Lord’s Day…and on this occasion have allowed themselves, their children and servants unlawful recreations on ice.”

By the early part of the nineteenth century ecclesiastical censure of faults is beginning to break down and the Session decide no longer to bring persons under discipline before the congregation to be rebuked instead it will be done privately. Sabbath breaking by parishioners as an issue has by this time all but disappeared and then, suddenly, re-appears in a new guise. In spring of 1834, Sir Andrew Agnew introduces a Bill into Parliament for better observation of the Lord’s Day. This seems to re-energize the Session in this area. Not only do they support Sir Andrew’s Bill but begin to actively campaign in the keeping of the Lord’s Day. In 1836 the Session complained to the Town Council “that one of the scavengers has for some time past been in the habit of sweeping a part of the streets on the Lord’s Day. The Session do

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237 Kirk Session minutes of Brechin Cathedral, 6 December 1705
238 Ibid. 10 December 1710
239 One could of course argue that the lack of evidence about Sabbath observance in the Session minutes points to the fact that it was being rigorously observed by the inhabitants of Brechin. Given other historical factors and events, I think however this unlikely.
240 Ibid. 22 January 1718
241 In March 1802 for example delinquents are refusing to appear before the Session despite being summoned on multiple occasions. It would also seem the Civil authorities have a certain sympathy with this, Provost Mollison refuses to issue warrants.
242 Kirk Session minutes of Brechin Cathedral, 22 Nov 1818
consider this to be a violation of the law both of God and of this kingdom.” In October 1836 two local farmers are chastised for gathering their harvest on the Sabbath and although the Session acknowledges that the weather may have caused some urgency for the in-gathering, they nevertheless re-affirm the sanctity of the Sabbath. So too in 1839, the Session again complain to the Magistrates that the reading room is open on the Sabbath and is “tempting persons away from the public and private exercises of religion.” And almost exactly a year later in 1840, complaint is made about the “conveyance of mail” by rail on the Sabbath Day. This protest was to become part of a petition to Parliament which was successful. Ten years on a second petition to Parliament for closure of Post Offices on Sundays was also supported by the Session. By now however the Disruption of 1843 had occurred and a vastly diminished Old Kirk was struggling with its financial resources, so much so that many other issues, including Sabbath observance, were seen as of lesser importance to an attempt at keeping the ecclesiastical show on the road. And yet, one final issue regarding Sabbath observance asserts itself as late as 1912 when Session complains against ice cream and “refreshment shops” being open on Sundays and after 10pm on week nights.

Returning to the seventeenth century for a moment, it must also be acknowledged that often external factors such as war, plague or religious strife caused not only the suspension of Session meetings but the failure of divine worship to occur altogether. In autumn 1651 and into winter 1652, services were frequently

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243 Ibid. 23 February 1836. Note that the Scots word for refuse collectors, even today, is scaffies from the old term scavengers.
244 Ibid. 30 October 1836
245 Ibid. 25 March 1839
246 Ibid. 30 March 1840
247 Ibid. 28 January 1850
248 Ibid. 21 July 1912
suspended because “many Englishes quartered in the town and people feared to stay long away from their homes.”\footnote{Ibid. 28 January 1652} No services were held in the Kirk in the winters of 1653 or 1654 as Cromwell’s cavalry had stabled their horses inside the Cathedral for the winter, and services were often abandoned or transferred to either the Tolbooth or to Brechin Castle. But it was not always such military matters that caused the suspension of worship; we find in March 1672 for example that both worship and the Session were suspended as the inhabitants were busied “quenching a great flame that was in the town on the Sabbath which was tempestuous owing to the wind.”\footnote{Ibid. 7 March 1672}

What of my contemporary respondents; was Sabbath observance an issue for them or not? Here there is a noticeable division according to age. Person X for example acknowledged that “people don’t go to Church now like they used to in my young days.”\footnote{Recording 1, 17.48} Yet one of our oldest members, Person Z, recognised that Church attendance on Sundays was not universal even in her youth. Some folk, including her, often had to work on Sundays.\footnote{Person Z was unwilling to be recorded thus the interview with her is in the form of notes taken on Monday 30th September, 2013} Similarly, although Person H had been free to attend Kirk, her children when they started work had often had to work on Sundays.\footnote{Recording 7, 36.12} Person B regarded attendance at Sunday worship as a key indicator of Christian allegiance and accepted that there had been a tail off due to several factors in the modern era.\footnote{Recording 3, 42.16} Person C for example thought that the changes to the times of Sunday worship in the modern era had resulted in confusion by some people.\footnote{Recording 5, 10.22} Person A had some interesting observations in this area, commenting that the whole

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{Ibid. 28 January 1652}
\item \footnote{Ibid. 7 March 1672}
\item \footnote{Recording 1, 17.48}
\item \footnote{Person Z was unwilling to be recorded thus the interview with her is in the form of notes taken on Monday 30th September, 2013}
\item \footnote{Recording 7, 36.12}
\item \footnote{Recording 3, 42.16}
\item \footnote{Recording 5, 10.22}
\end{itemize}
issue of nominal membership had resulted in a reduction in attendance at worship. But it was Person G I think who had the most interesting views on the whole issue of Sabbath observance, commenting that the Church has in fact “connived with the secularization process” in making Sunday attendance at Church such an important marker of Christian witness rather than how we act as Christians Monday-Saturday. We have, as Person G put it “focused on the Church to the exclusion of Christian living.” This is an illuminating comment given Paul’s emphasis on living in the here and now as if we were already in the Kingdom, which I highlighted in the previous chapter. Person N accepted that his own attendance at worship had always been sporadic, often confined to “high days and holy days” but did not see this as lessening either his commitment to “acting out the gospel” in life or indeed in passion for the Cathedral. In short, both the historical record and the interviews revealed a patchwork attitude to Sabbath observance.

Perhaps therefore in the light of both the indecisive Biblical basis and ambiguous Cathedral narrative regarding specifically Sabbath observance, it would be more accurate to say that it is communal worship participation which is more clearly eschatological in its tone. Yet, I do think Moltmann has a valid argument in stressing Sabbath observance as at least a pointer to the Kingdom. And as Wright observed, we are dealing with signposts, shrouded in mist and uncertainty, not an eschatological sat-nav.

In our final two sections we shall deal with matters that are implicit rather than explicit, but nevertheless are vital to understanding how the Cathedral story intersects with God’s metanarrative.

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256 Recording 4, 1.12.00
257 Recording 6, 56.34
258 Recording 10, 01.02
7. THE “HIDDEN WORK” OF THE KINGDOM

I have called this section the “hidden work” of the Kingdom because these are the transformative practices of the Kingdom that have gone on, and continue to go on, in the Cathedral’s story but which we often don’t really draw attention towards; they are simply there, part of the play, yet so obvious as to be almost invisible. Like actions in a theatre production that are so in keeping with the tone of the play or characterisation of the actors as to be virtually unnoticed, unless we are being very attentive as an audience.\(^{259}\) As Person X succinctly put it “things often just go on quietly and normally.”\(^{260}\) We might want to think of Jesus’ illustrations of leaven in dough or light on a hill which work away, regardless.\(^{261}\) In particular, I think of Prayer, Scripture reading and Holy Communion.

As we will discover in considering the evidence in this section there is considerable infrequency in the celebration of the sacrament of Communion in the Cathedral narrative. Is it simply that infrequency in sacramental practice is embedded in the habits of the Cathedral, or might there be a deeper, eschatological reason? Here we must look at Communion as a foretaste of the Messianic banquet which will be a hallmark of the new creation. We already touched on this in the previous chapter when looking at Isaiah 25:6f describing that Messianic feast, but now I intend to discuss in more detail.

As before with Sabbath observance, Communion is another eschatological practice which reveals the continuity/discontinuity aspect of the Kingdom. For one thing, as Rebecca Kuiken reminds us, Communion is in practical terms an earthly

\(^{259}\) We may want to think here of a murder mystery or thriller where the most obvious of actions can seem unimportant yet turn out in the end to be central to the plot. This was one of the successes of Alfred Hitchcock, master of suspense.

\(^{260}\) Recording 1, 08.10

\(^{261}\) Matt.5:14-16, Matt.13:33
snack not the sumptuous banquet spoken of in Isaiah; “Eucharist expresses both continuity and discontinuity in the relationship between the present and future life of God, between the earthly meal and the heavenly banquet.”

Yet despite the sparseness of the feast in Communion it yet alludes to and prefigures something grander that is yet to come. Indeed, Erik Strand goes further and sees worship in general as “a sign of the end...a sign there is another future and another end than the one imagined by the world.”

Worship and more particularly Communion thus points to something beyond this world, it is harbinger of the new creation. The very fact that the Church has often got itself tied in theological knots in seeking to understand how within Communion bread and wine, common things of this earth, can nevertheless point to ultimate realities is a symptom of the new creation breaking eschatologically into the old; earthly understanding cannot grasp what is in reality a foretaste of the Messianic banquet that can only be truly viewed eschatologically. Communion is the physical reality in our day of the prolepsis of the Kingdom we spoke of earlier. It is a sacrament that touches all times: having its origins in the past, its practice in the present and yet ever striving and longing to find its culmination in the future.

Geoffrey Wainwright in his helpful work *Eucharist and Eschatology* reminds us that Communion is a participation in heaven’s unceasing worship, “a vertical eschatology”, but unlike heaven’s worship, the earthly sacrament is imperfect. For one thing only the Church enjoys the sacrament whereas the promised Messianic banquet is intended for all humanity’s enjoyment; for another earthly worship is

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263 Erik Strand “Worship as Sign of the End”, Ibid., 174
often interrupted by the things of the world, just as we saw with Sabbath observance. Again we see this continuity/discontinuity, the already and not yet of the Kingdom. Thus Communion is a very real eschatological shard; it contains within elements of the Messianic feast yet to be enjoyed\textsuperscript{265}, yet in itself it is not the final reality, further transformation is necessary. The very fact that Communion, indeed worship itself, is there in the lifeblood of the Church I conclude is proof of my eschatological driver; for just as with the imperfection of Sabbath observance we find that infrequency in Communion also points also to something greater, more permanent that has yet to come. It is a sign of hope, but merely a sign in the fog, as Wright observed. Communion speaks of coming transformation, for not only does it in some mystical way begin to effect transformation within the believer, it itself will also be transformed into the Messianic banquet in the world yet to be. Wainwright states “the stress on the transformation of the communicant which begins already now but will only be completed through the resurrection.”\textsuperscript{266}

As with Sabbath observance, I am not therefore unduly concerned over the infrequency of the Communion celebrations in the Cathedral narrative. It points to the Messianic feast, but is not the feast itself. The new creation breaks through from the future as it will; our attempts to formalise or control it will always be vanity. Here it would be useful to return to David Ford’s concept of \textit{Rehearsal}, which I introduced in Chapter Two. Should we, given the sporadic, intermittent nature of Sabbath observance and Communion in the Cathedral narrative, perhaps regard them as forms of eschatological rehearsal? These are the times that the people of God, the cast of our play, rehearse for what is yet to come. In the case of Sabbath observance,

\textsuperscript{265} For one thing Wainwright points to the communal element of the Sacrament, only to be enjoyed in community not as a solitary activity, as an eschatological sign of the diverse nature of the Kingdom which we will examine in our next section.

\textsuperscript{266} G. Wainwright \textit{Ibid.} 112
the rehearsal is about God’s presence in time pointing to God’s presence yet to come in space. In the case of Communion, the bread and wine, the sharing in fellowship, are rehearsals for the Messianic banquet in which we shall feast with Christ and all the saints in glory. Ford describes the Sabbath as “rehearsal for the rest of the week, preparing for the days to come through being ‘wise in the Spirit’”267 But I wonder if in extending this concept of Rehearsal eschatologically we are not gleaning a truth about the now/not yet aspect of the Kingdom in relation to how we worship in the here and now compared to in the new creation yet to be.

This infrequency of Communion and the sporadic nature of Sabbath observance far from undermining my contention actually I would claim thus underpin it. For they disappear, only to re-appear again. They come and go, ebb and flow. Yet underlying them, re-introducing them into the Cathedral narrative after an absence, is my eschatological driver, pressing on, pushing always forward to that day when heaven and earth shall be as one and we shall feast in glory with all the saints.

So just how infrequent are Communion celebrations in the Cathedral narrative? In the mid fifteenth century, prior to the Reformation, we know from the reforming attempts by Bishop John Crannoch (1426-54) that worship within the Cathedral had become at best intermittent. Masses were often not said, scripture rarely read and sermons almost unheard of. 268 With the coming of the Reformed Church we find within the Kirk Session minutes not only mention of services being conducted but often the Scriptural text used by the preacher in the Sunday worship. And worship was not only confined to Sundays; Tuesdays and Thursdays saw prayer services with

267 Ford The Drama of Living 96
268 Annie Dunlop “John Crannoch, Bishop of Brechin 1426-54”; The Society of Friends of Brechin Cathedral, Book of the Society vol.6 (1953)
Wednesdays being the day the Reader often gave the lecture\textsuperscript{269}. There were also fast
days or “days of humiliation”, when prayer was sought for specific causes.\textsuperscript{270}
Worship became much more central in the life of the community. Yet the celebration
of the sacrament of Communion was still not always that frequent. For example, in
May 1707, Rev John Willison indicates it was his desire to celebrate Communion.
This was in fact the very first Communion that had been celebrated since around
1694. Partly this irregularity in sacramental practice was caused by an irregularity in
ministry; the old minister, Laurence Skinner had died in August of 1691. He had
been succeeded by his son, John, who although assisting his father had never been
properly ordained either by Episcopal or Presbytery authority. During this period
Presbyterianism had legally been declared as the form of Christianity in Scotland yet
many parts of Scotland, including Brechin, still held out for the Episcopal system.
John Skinner was undoubtedly of the Episcopal party and refused, following the
“Glorious Revolution” of 1690, both to take the oath of allegiance to William and
Mary and to be subservient to Presbytery’s authority. Yet why did Skinner not
celebrate Communion more frequently? Was it because he knew he wasn’t properly
ordained? Or was there a deeper reason? It is of note that during the period when
John Willison and Skinner were vying for control of the Cathedral, suddenly Skinner
decides to celebrate Communion with his congregation after Willison decides to

\textsuperscript{269} These point to the nature of the continuous worship that will be enjoyed within the coming
Kingdom. See for example Rev. 7:15
\textsuperscript{270} For example, a “day of humiliation” was declared to bless the Parliament meeting in Edinburgh on
9\textsuperscript{th} January 1661 following the restoration of Charles II. This was partly because of fear that the new
King, like the old, would try to re-introduce full Episcopacy.
celebrate with his.\textsuperscript{271} There was no Communion celebrated either from 1714-20 as a consequence of an external factor, the Jacobite rebellion of 1715.

But even when the ministry of the Cathedral became more settled in the eighteenth century, still the practice of Communion was not that frequent, being celebrated in the Spring and Autumn of the year, a practice that continues even down to today. After the Second World War, Rev James Anderson certainly sought to have a February Communion season, but without Communion cards being given out to the Congregation.\textsuperscript{272} Both Rev Dr Robin McKenzie and my immediate predecessor Rev Scott Rennie also sought to extend the frequency of Communion but it was never really that successful.

Communion is there within the Cathedral narrative, and it would be wrong to simply ignore it, but nor should we consider it either as central to that narrative. Like Sabbath observance it acts as a signpost, an indicator of an eschatological reality that is yet to come. As I stated in my introductory chapter, these are eschatological shards we are dealing with which by their very nature are broken, fragmented and far from perfect.

8. THE DIVERSITY OF THE KINGDOM

Our final eschatological shard is to be found not so much in the practices in the Cathedral as in the nature of the cast itself. My contention is that the Cathedral’s long story reflects the sheer variety and diversity of the coming Kingdom. There is no monochrome instead it is a vibrant tapestry rich in colour and texture, a true kaleidoscope.

\textsuperscript{271} John Willison was minister of the first charge and John Skinner claimed the second charge, though Presbytery regarded it as vacant until John Johnston arrived in 1710 and Skinner was eventually deposed.

\textsuperscript{272} Kirk Session minutes of Brechin Cathedral 14 October 1946
We noted in Chapter Two that the eschatological promise of God to Israel became over time extended from simply a present promise of land to one tribe to a future promise in which the nation of Israel becomes the conduit through which all the nations will achieve redemption. So the Psalmist declares that “all the nations you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord.”

Thus in Isaiah 2 we have that sense of all the nations of the earth streaming to God’s Temple. A mood of ingathering of the peoples echoed later by Jesus in the Parable of the sheep and goats: “All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” Again in Revelation, the eschatological community is not one people or nation but “a great multitude that no-one could count from every nation, tribe, people and language.”

A rich tapestry indeed!

It is my contention that this eschatological multitude of the varied voices is exemplified in the Cathedral’s story. The very diversity we see in the Cathedral’s narrative is a pointer, a shard indicating the eschatological variety. But more than that, it is my “eschatological driver” in the present tale that is holding these centrifugal forces together. It is allowing these discordant voices to co-exist in the one story of the Cathedral, confident that in our telos all will be gathered together into Christ. If indeed it is the final Chapter of the metanarrative that determines the tone of the story and its outcome then we must expect to live with loose ends, unresolved issues and very divergent personalities in the present tale. This is not a problem to be overcome by the Church; it is in fact a sign of the coming Kingdom to

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273 Psalm 86:9. See also Ps.72:11,17
275 Matt.25:32
276 Rev.7:9
277 John 12:32, Col.1:19f.
278 Recall the five chapter illustration of metanarrative by Sam Wells outlined in my previous chapter.
be embraced by God’s people. The middle part of the story, where we are now, does not have the final word for that belongs to God, who is the only one who writes the final scene of the play. A final scene in which the whole cast is gathered and it is revealed that each of their parts was necessary to the outworking of the entire drama, be it a single line or one particular action. Thus the eschatological cast demands that the Church must live with the “Dignity of Difference,” as Jonathan Sachs put it:

> Can we find in the human ‘thou’ a fragment of the Divine ‘Thou’? Can we recognize God’s image in one who is not my image? There are times when God meets us in the face of the stranger…(faith) must now make space for those who are different and have another way of interpreting the world.²⁷⁹

We have already encountered many of the characters in the Cathedral’s story from so many different periods in its history and seen what an eclectic, ecumenical bunch they are: Picts and Culdees, Catholics and Reformers, Episcopalians and Presbyterians. In looking at these figures in some depth we realise just how varied and multi-faceted they are. Let me just review a few of them.

First the bishops: we meet Samson (c. 1158) the last of the Culdee bishops; John de Kininmouth (1304-1323) who was a friend of William Wallace and a Scots patriot who was likely present at the battle of Bannockburn in 1314; Patrick de Loerys or Leuchars (1351-73) who built the Square Tower and of course John Crannoich (1426-54) the early reformer. The first Reformed minister is John Hepburn, illegitimate son of a former bishop²⁸⁰ who came to the Cathedral in September 1559, a few months before the Reformed Church officially came into being and whose energy helped ease the Roman clergy of the Cathedral Chapter into

²⁷⁹ Jonathan Sacks *The Dignity of Difference* (London: Continuum, 2002) 17
²⁸⁰ His father, also John Hepburn (1523-58) was unlike his son a staunch upholder of the Roman faith and imprisoned many Reformers for heresy.
Reformed ministers. In the later Episcopal period there is Bishop Andrew Lamb (1607-19) who was the most pastoral of clergy and Walter Whiteford (1635-38) who tried to introduce Laud’s liturgy with two primed pistols aimed at the congregation. We have met too Laurence Skinner (1650-91), the truly last Episcopalian minister of the Cathedral whose son John was such a thorn in the side of the Presbyterians, especially John Willison (1703-17); David Blair (1738-69) who started the Sabbath school and in whose era the cutty stool of repentance was finally removed; James McCosh (1839-43) and Alexander Foote (1834-43) who both courageously left the Auld Kirk at the Disruption of 1843 to set up new congregations; Alexander Gardner (1843-93) one of the longest serving clergy, an evangelical, temperamental man with a strong pastoral sense and John Clark (1892-1901), whose premature death did not defeat his vision to restore the Cathedral in 1902 to its original Medieval layout. In more recent times James Anderson (1942-64) who had a passion for enhancing the fabric and Scott Rennie (1999-2009) whose homosexuality opened the whole debate on this issue in the Church of Scotland.

This is not to include the faithful pastors who passed their ministries in unremarkable times, or for that matter the congregation, some of whom have played on our stage for various reasons – not always positive! It is a motley crew indeed. Person A, one of my respondents with a good knowledge of the history, remarked that throughout the Cathedral’s story was one of “change and continuity” in which “some had the vision and some made it real” while others lived in times when the

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Of the eleven living canons at the time of the Reformation only two elderly priests refused to join the Reformed party. The priest at Butterkill was the most hardened of the Roman party being accused in 1560 of “wicked papistrie”. By 1571 he had joined the Jesuits abroad. See Innes Registrum and Edwards Pocket history of Brechin.

We will hear more of Gardner in the next chapter.

This in itself is an interesting phrase given the theme of the continuity/discontinuity aspect of the Kingdom that we often see reflected in the practices.
“vision achieved a falling away.”\textsuperscript{284} We have again that sense of ebb and flow, of the Kingdom breaking through in some times and almost disappearing in others.

This diversity breaks through even in times when we least expect it. For example in 1794 a special collection is held for “certain poor objects in different parts of the Town and Parish at present in very distressing circumstances.”\textsuperscript{285} What is extraordinary about this collection is that it was to be done “by the different churches and religious societies in Brechin.” There was to be an ecumenical dimension to this service to the poor, and this coming a mere forty years after the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 when feelings between Presbyterians on the Hanoverian side and Episcopalians on the Jacobite were running high. Again in 1863, twenty years after the pain of the Disruption, we find the Cathedral using West Free Church to accommodate services during some repairs to the building, the very church which Alexander Foote had started when he left the Cathedral. The minute is telling: “we may reasonably hope for an abundant increase of brotherly kindness and charity, both here and elsewhere, all redounding to the honour and glory of Him who is all our desire and our salvation.”\textsuperscript{286} Fifty or so years later of course the modern ecumenical movement was born in the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910, but these two episodes of ecumenical co-operation stand out, coming as they do within periods following religious conflict.

In my next chapter I shall take this idea of divergence further as we examine how the negative episodes in the Cathedral narrative still allow for the Kingdom to break through. But in this chapter I have drawn upon my evidence both from the

\textsuperscript{284} Recording 4, 1.12.16
\textsuperscript{285} Kirk Session minutes of Brechin Cathedral, 9 March 1794
\textsuperscript{286} Ibid. 8 June 1863
historical records and the contemporary interviews to highlight eight eschatological practices or “shards” that in different ways allude to the fullness of the Kingdom yet to be. Drawing upon my Biblical scenery and theological props outlined in Chapter Two, I have shown that these practices are indeed eschatological in their nature. I have even pointed to how, in the current part of the Cathedral play in which I find myself as a cast member, some of these practices continue in old and new ways.

In the next two chapters we will look at the more negative side of things. First in Chapter Four the less salubrious parts of the Cathedral’s history and how the Kingdom still breaks through even in these darker scenes. Second in Chapter Five I will allow my critics to find voice, to challenge me and seek to undermine my arguments and how I respond to this. We shall finally look at secularisation and whether or not my eschatological practices still have resonance in today’s context. This will form the basis of my final chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR

Enter Stage Left?

“Villains are more exciting than heroes. They have passion and ambition. They make stories happen.”

The traditions of the theatre are such that the villain or baddy in the drama should always enter stage left, that is from the audience’s perspective, the right hand side. So in continuing my dramatic construct in this chapter, I am inviting my “baddies”, the more negative episodes in the Cathedral narrative, to enter (stage left!) into our considerations. Yet, in looking at these negative parts of the Drama, we shall see that a positive outcome, an eschatological outcome in fact, often still emerges.

In the previous chapter I discussed the biblical and theological basis for each of the eschatological practices and then outlined practical examples of these from within the Cathedral’s history. However, in this chapter it is necessary to approach the matter from a reverse angle; namely to describe the negative episodes and then to analyse within these negative episodes whether or not my eschatological driver is still at work.

In this chapter I shall consider the more negative aspects of the Cathedral’s history in three sub-sections, namely:

i. Response to War and Invasion

ii. Response to Plague

iii. Lack of reconciliation and the division in the faith community

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2 The reason for this is that within the production of Medieval mystery plays stage left was seen as the entrance to Hell and stage right the entrance to Heaven.
RESPONSE TO WAR AND INVASION

Brechin has often been caught up in greater conflicts within the Kingdom of Scotland. Edward I himself besieged Brechin Castle in the late summer of 1303\(^3\) and used the lead from the Cathedral roof as a counterweight for his war machine, Ludgar.\(^4\) An archaeological community dig by H K Murray and J C Murray in 2009-2010\(^5\) also revealed that there had been a terribly destructive fire of the Cathedral’s environs in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century and this may be linked to further warlike activities during the Scottish War of Independence. Bishop John de Kinnimouth or Kinninmund (1298-1328) was a great friend of William Wallace and was almost certainly present at Bannockburn in 1314, along with many other of the Scottish bishops.\(^6\)

Whilst this sets the scene, we have to move into the seventeenth century in order to have a first-hand account of how the Christian community at Brechin responded to occupation by an enemy army. By the early 1640s the ecclesiastical policies of Charles I had resulted in the Solemn League and Covenant being adopted by the Kirk’s General Assembly in August 1643. Brechin’s involvement in the debates and politics of this matter was sadly short-lived as Alexander Bisset, minister of the first charge, who had attended the Assembly meeting\(^7\), died in January 1644. By the April, the Session failed to meet due to many strangers passing through the

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\(^3\) See Andrew Jervise Memorials of Angus and the Mearns (Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1861), 106-45 for a fuller account.

\(^4\) It is of note however that even the “Hammer of the Scots” had a Christian conscience and on return to England ordered the King’s Treasurer to pay the Cathedral Chapter for the roof to be re-leaded. It is also rumoured that John Balliol, the “toom tabard” king, did homage to Edward either at the Castle or nearby Stracathro Churchyard. See Jervise Memorials.


\(^6\) David D. Black The History of Brechin to 1864 (Brechin: Pinkfoot Press, 2009 Facsimile edition) also Walter William Coats A Short History of Brechin Cathedral (Brechin: Black & Johnston, 1903)

\(^7\) Rev Alexander Bisset was in attendance at the General Assembly in Edinburgh from 1\(^st\) – 22\(^nd\) August, 1643 See Coats A Short History of Brechin Cathedral
town, going north to join the army. And by the autumn, Brechin was in the frontline between the Royalists and Covenanters. From 17th September – 19th November, 1644 there were neither Session meetings nor weekly collections. In March of 1645, the Treasurer, John Cargill, hid a collection of £5.10s Scots because of “fear of the merciless enemy” and to date this amount has never been recovered.\footnote{Kirk Session minutes of Brechin Cathedral, 18 March 1645. We may suppose that John Cargill either died or left the area as by the time things revert to normal he is no longer listed as Treasurer.} In the summer of 1646, James Graham and his Royalist troops were stationed in the town. Again, there was no Session meetings and the services were held at Brechin Castle from late June until the middle August “for fear of the enemies being in the field.”\footnote{Ibid. 11 August 1646} All this gives the impression of great disruption both to worship and care of the poor, which we noted in the previous Chapter were two of my key intersection points between Cathedral narrative and Kingdom metanarrative. Indeed, we can almost sense the fear of the inhabitants:

No preaching, neither collection this Wednesday by reason the town was in fear that the Laird of Echt and his troop should invade and trouble the town; also a trooper was killed in the night on market day – it is unknown by whom it was done.\footnote{Ibid. 28 November 1649}

Nevertheless we find that in August of 1645 Communion is held.\footnote{Ibid. 26 August 1645} Further, Catherine Brabiners is given 20 shillings to care for a sick soldier of the enemy army\footnote{Ibid. 16 July 1645 and 22 August 1645} and late the following summer 6 shillings is given to John Davidson “a mutilated soldier.”\footnote{Ibid. 8 September 1646} Intolerance towards the soldiers was not tolerated. In August 1650, following the defeat of the Royalist James Graham of Montrose and his
execution in Edinburgh, a squad of soldiers were again quartered in the town. One Bessie Donalson is severely censured and reprimanded by the Session for cursing the soldiers that had been quartered in her house. For all the fear that this conflict engendered, the Cathedral persisted in its worship as far as it was able, even if the services were held at the Castle. Further, its ministry of charity to the stranger even extended to the very cause of the misery of the people of the parish – the enemy soldiers themselves.

We see this in particular with the Cromwellian invasion. This was more serious, for this was no Scottish army at civil war with another. This was the “Auld enemy”, England, come north anew to burn, loot and rape the Scottish lands. In December 1650, Edinburgh had fallen to Cromwell. By summer 1651, Cromwell’s ships were spotted off Arbroath and in the late August, General Monck was at the very gates of Dundee. It was only a matter of time before Brechin was next. From the 2nd September, 1651 until late January 1652, worship, Session meetings and the weekly collections for the poor were often disrupted as Cromwell’s army arrived in town; “No Session nor sermon this Wednesday by reason of twelve hundred Englishes were in the town Tuesday all night and on Wednesday till the time of the divine service was past.” Again we find in late January 1652 “many Englishes quartered in the town and people feart to stay long away from their homes,” thus are both Sunday and Wednesday services cancelled. And yet, again we find charity persisting. £40 Scots is collected for the prisoners of Cromwell’s army being held in

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14 The Cathedral held a service of Thanksgiving on 22nd May, 1650, the day following Graham’s execution at Edinburgh by hanging. Perhaps not the most Christian response to a man’s death, but one I think we can perhaps understand given the misery his armies inflicted on the people of Brechin. See D.H. Edwards Pocket History and Guide to Brechin (1872)
15 Kirk Session minutes of Brechin Cathedral, 15 August 1650
16 Ibid. 19 November, 1651
17 Ibid. 28 January 1652
Dundee\textsuperscript{18} but more than that (and even in spite of Cromwell’s cavalry stabling horses in the Cathedral during the severe winters of 1653 and 1654)\textsuperscript{19} we find the congregation ministering to the “hurt soldiers who had come with Cromwell’s troop from the battle at Dundee.”\textsuperscript{20} Later money is raised, not just for the prisoners being held by Cromwell’s forces, but the enemy troopers themselves.\textsuperscript{21} It is also paradoxical that before Monck leaves with his soldiers in 1658 not only do several of the local lasses eventually marry these English troops in the Cathedral, but the captain of the troop assists the Cathedral hierarchy in enforcing spiritual discipline of prayer and scripture reading amongst the army. Church going is positively encouraged by the military authorities. In 1658, a mere few weeks before their final departure, we find the English Captain William Hellen denouncing one of his own troopers to the Session for fornication with Lilas Gentleman.\textsuperscript{22} The puritan element within Cromwell’s army had percolated the ancient Cathedral itself. So in which ways do these various episodes correlate with my eschatological driver? Was the Kingdom metanarrative still at work?

Jesus himself had stressed this need for love towards enemies\textsuperscript{23}: “You have heard that it was said ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you…”\textsuperscript{24} Again “If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic…Do to others as you would have them do to

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid. 4 January 1652
\textsuperscript{19} See Black \textit{The History of Brechin to 1864}
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid. 29 October 1651
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid. 19 July 1654 £46.15s.4d is raised for the prisoners at Dundee. 17 January 1655 £22.16s is raised for the troops themselves to give them some comforts over the winter months.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid. 23 August 1658
\textsuperscript{23} One of the great imponderables of Jesus’ command is whether these sayings came out of a direct experience of Roman military might impinging upon the local populace of Jesus’ day; an interesting parallel with Brechin’s experience perhaps?
\textsuperscript{24} Matt.5:43
So too Paul in Romans, quoting Proverbs, states: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty give him something to drink.” Encapsulated in these few verses we see the highly counter-cultural nature that is God’s Kingdom; a Kingdom of charity and love, even towards those who are opponents. Those who seek to emulate the Kingdom’s values must often act in ways that are at variance with that of the world. A counter-cultural motif, I would say, that is well reflected in the way the Cathedral people respond to the enemy armies of occupation, particularly in the Cromwellian occupation period.

The next period in which the town saw a military presence was during the Jacobite rebellion in 1715. This was in many ways more disruptive of the Cathedral’s life. As the Session minute records:

In the month of September following broke out the late Earl of Mar’s rebellion against our most gracious Sovereign King George and the Protestant succession in his family and in favour of the popish pretender whom they called King James the Eighth…the rebellion continued until the month of February thereafter. And this is the reason why there was no meeting of the Session from the foresaid 31st August to 29th February thereafter. Indeed James VIII (the Old Pretender) was at Brechin Castle itself in early February 1716, complete with most of the Jacobite army, before he finally left for France. What the minute doesn’t tell us, but is clear from secondary sources, is that both Presbyterian ministers of the Cathedral, John Willison and John Johnston were forced to flee the town, their places in the pulpit and their manses being seized by John Skinner (son of Laurence, whom we noted in the last chapter) and Gideon Guthrie an

26 Romans 12:20, quoting Proverbs 25:21,22 The reference to heaping live coals on his head may be a Middle-eastern cultural reference to the common practice of providing the poor and needy with the means to make fire and thus have warmth, as well as food and drink. See, for example, Ralph Gower The new manners and customs of Bible times (Amersham-on-the-hill: Scripture Press, 1987)
27 Ibid. 29 February 1716
28 See Black The History of Brechin to 1864
29 See particularly David Adams Brechin the Ancient City (unpublished, 1990). Available in the archives at Brechin Library. Also Black The History of Brechin to 1864.
Episcopalian priest. Seventy five Brechiners including Baillie Spence, the Kirk Treasurer James Millar, the Church officer, Alexander Allardyce, and four other elders went over to the rebel cause. The 1715 Rebellion was far more disruptive to Kirk and Town Council than its later more famous 1745 cousin, which in Brechin at least passed with a little less rancour. Thus, just as Presbyterianism becomes the established mode of the Cathedral’s life and worship following 1690’s settlement of William and Mary, the 1715 Rebellion throws everything back again into the ecclesial melting pot. It was to be many years before the repercussions from this conflict were to be fully resolved within the Cathedral. Unlike the Cromwellian period this time there are no indicators of charity for the soldiery or indeed of any other eschatological shards emerging. It is a dark period indeed.

What we can say, however, is that in spite of the real trauma that this episode undoubtedly caused, tenaciously the Cathedral continued. Disrupted, yes; wounded, yes, but destroyed or abandoned, certainly not. And here we come to another eschatological pointer, a very compelling shard: the sheer tenaciousness of the Kingdom. That almost in spite of everything human that is thrown at it or that stands opposed to it, somehow, the Church as the pointer to the coming Kingdom, goes on. Jesus himself had stated that even the very gates of hell itself would not prevail against the Church. Tom Wright’s great clarion cry is that “If Jesus is Lord, Caesar cannot be.” O’Donovan asserts that at the end all kings will be subject to the Servant

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30 We know that the Jacobites passed through the town in January 1746 and stayed possibly a few days. The records state they had a passion for a local delicacy- Gingerbread! The Town Council probably were sympathetic to Bonnie Prince Charlie, as were the inhabitants, but to a large extent kept their counsel. Rev. David Blair, minister at the time, preached in support of the Hanoverians and was threatened by armed rebels, but remained in post. See Edwards A Pocket History.

31 Matt.16:18

King: “The drama of the Kingdom will not end with the rulers, but with the song of the innumerable multitude from every nation, tribe, people and language (Rev. 7:9f).” The Lordship of Jesus demands that Caesar’s world cannot have the last word; the tenacity of the Kingdom continuing to break through even when the odds are heavily stacked against it is testament to Christ’s ultimate sovereignty. The Cathedral’s continuation, even in spite of dark times, points to the sheer sovereign grace of God, a God of faithful endurance.

Before leaving war and invasion, one more incident from the 1745 Rebellion perhaps serves to illustrate a little glimpse of an eschatological shard, again that of mercy to the enemy. The Hanoverian troops under the Duke of Cumberland passed south near the town in Spring 1746 on their way back from the battle of Culloden. Cumberland clearly distrusted the inhabitants, for he neither allowed his army to enter Brechin, nor would he take any refreshment offered by the Council when he entered the town. Cumberland wanted, as an act of revenge, to burn down the Episcopal meeting house at Bishop’s Close. But Presbyterian Cathedral minister, Rev. David Blair, intervened stating that he could use the premises for mid-week services and Cumberland thus contented himself with destroying the Episcopal Prayer books. There is in fact no record whatsoever that the Cathedral ever took control of the Episcopal meeting house and within a few years it was being used again for Episcopal services. Was this in fact an act of compassion and charity by David Blair to the Episcopal community, despite the Hanoverian tendencies of Blair himself? It is certainly on record that despite Blair’s frank report on the Rebellion at

33 Oliver O’Donovan The desire of nations: re-discovering the roots of political theology (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 243
34 See David Adams Brechin the ancient city
Presbytery on 2\textsuperscript{nd} March, 1748 no ecclesiastical censure was taken against the town.\textsuperscript{35} Was this perhaps also due to David Blair’s mercy? Had Blair learned the lesson from John Willison less charitable approach to the Episcopalians some thirty years earlier? If so, we see again that counter-cultural tone of the Kingdom at work, that there was clemency even in victory. We may also perhaps see a realisation by Blair that the Church is not a monochrome uniformity but a multi-coloured kaleidoscope community of diversity, the kind I referred to in the last chapter.

Later military campaigns, from the Napoleonic wars of the early nineteenth century through to the modern conflicts of the World Wars or Iraq and Afghanistan were fought in distant places and thus had much less impact upon the life of the town, even if sometimes they impacted considerably upon individual families. Rev Dr Coats was to serve for several months as a Military Chaplain during the First World War. So too was conflict often an opportunity for ecumenical co-operation. A united intercessory service of prayer at which clergy from the Auld Kirk\textsuperscript{36}, the West United Free Church and the Episcopal Church took part was held in the Cathedral on Wednesday 12\textsuperscript{th} August, 1914 just days after the outbreak of World War I. War itself had become now a unifying factor for the denominations, rather than a divisive one, as in the earlier history of Brechin. Again, perhaps, the Cathedral was saying in time of national conflict that Jesus is ultimately Lord, not Caesar; a very strong eschatological theme.

\textsuperscript{35} David D Black \textit{The History of Brechin to 1864}, 149f.  
\textsuperscript{36} This was how the Cathedral was briefly referred to following the Disruption of 1843.
RESPONSE TO PLAGUE

Our second villain which impacts upon the Cathedral narrative is plague. We have already noted in the previous chapter the stress upon healing and health as a surprising eschatological motif. In this section we consider a major threat to the physical well-being of the inhabitants, the outbreak of Plague, which arrived in the town with Argyll’s army in March 1647. From 7th April until 7th November 1647, the Session minutes record that no meetings were held:

The Lord visiting this burgh with the infecting sickness, there was no Session held from the seventh of April till the day and month underwritten, but when it pleased the Lord that the sickness began to relent, there were some persons contracted and married, whose names follow.  

It is of note, given our earlier focus upon the doctrine of Providence in Chapter Two, that the sickness was viewed as having been brought by God’s action. An attempt was made to convene a Session meeting on 15th November, 1647 but this failed: “No Session held by reason that the Moderator and remnant members thereof were afraid to convene under one roof.” It is also interesting that fear of contagion had become the prime deciding factor and that we also gain the impression that a number of elders had already succumbed to the infection. No Session meetings were then held until December, when Elspit Donaldson and her daughter Isobell Sievewright, were chastised for allowing a strange woman who was pregnant to reside with them for two nights lodging. In this case (and this is one of the very few cases) contact with the stranger was to be shunned because of the fear of plague. The Kingdom values of hospitality and mercy clearly gave way to a struggle for personal survival. There was also a general feeling that if sin within was rooted out, God might be merciful and lift this terrible scourge from the community. Thus we find many people banished from

37 Kirk Session minutes of Brechin Cathedral 7 April 1647.
38 Ibid. 15 November 1647
39 Ibid. 29 December 1647
the town: David Scarlett, a horner, is banished with his whole family because of “drunkenness and troublance”; Helen Drimmie is banished due to her adultery with one Ninian Brown “a cleanser” and married man from Edinburgh; Jonat Drimmie is banished because of her “lewd life and conversation at the time of the visitation” and Margaret Scot is banished “by reason of her scandalous life with a soldier.” There is here no sense of inclusiveness, rather an exclusiveness based on fear, fear of plague; fear of contagion by sin too.

Yet these punishments were offset by other mercies. William Ross “lying in sickness in the huts” was given 30 shillings Scots. An astonishing £20 Scots is given to “a poor woman in the Craigend of Auldbar, who lost all her gear by cleansing thereof the time of the infection.” And another 30 shillings Scots was given to “a young boy who was a stranger, being lately cleansed.” So we find this struggle going on between the human desire to survive (psyche) versus the mercy and charity of the Kingdom struggling to break through (pneuma), even in spite of the plague and the attempts to cleanse the town morally as well as medically.

For a time the sickness abated but then in August 1648 we find “the infection began again in the town” and Session was not to meet again until October. By late September, the Minister himself has fled the town for fear of the Plague. By the time things returned to something approaching normal it is reckoned that of an approximate population of around one thousand in Brechin, over six hundred souls

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40 Ibid. 5 January 1648
41 Ibid. 12 January 1648
42 Ibid. 1 March 1648
43 Ibid. 12 January 1648. The huts were temporary dwellings set up in the fields nearby Brechin for those who were sick with plague.
44 Ibid. 1 March 1648. The “cleansers” were those who burnt dwellings to cleanse the town of the plague. Presumably this woman had had all her possessions destroyed by fire.
45 Ibid. 15 March 1648
46 Ibid. 2 August 1648
47 Ibid. 20 September 1648
had perished in the Plague. Astonishingly, we find that in spite of this terrible event to have fallen, not only does the Cathedral keeps going in its worship and witness, but, more than that, in January 1650 the Session make a donation of £42 14s 2d to Montrose suffering from their own time of pestilence. It was an act of great Christian charity from a people who, only a few months before, might have thought this literally was the end of the world. And this episode reveals to me the sheer tenaciousness of the Kingdom of God breaking through, bringing light and hope in times of darkness.

A number of times now I have referred within this current chapter to the tenacity of the Kingdom, reflected with the narrative of the Cathedral. We need therefore to pause for a moment and consider again the doctrine of Providence in the light of these more negative episodes of war, invasion and plague. Clearly, the Kirk Session of the day understood that God’s hand was upon them in their distress and, as we saw, that they viewed sin and lapses of morality within the local community as possible reasons why God had visited these terrible events upon them; there was a kind of cause and effect motif in the understanding of Providence for my fellow Christians of an earlier age. This does not necessarily mean that we must subscribe to a similar view. Calvin, for one, has a much more pastoral and positive understanding of negative events:

Christ declares that, if only we had eyes to see, we would realise that the glory of His Father shines out in this situation. We must have humility, not compelling God to render an account, but so acknowledging His hidden purposes that we recognise His will must be best. When the sky is overcast and a violent storm breaks, the darkness and thunder terrify us and we think everything is in a state of confusion, when, in fact, everything goes on

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48 There has been considerable debate amongst historians over the extent of the plague in Brechin; six hundred often being the medieval way of expressing a very large number. However, more recent thinking based upon burial records suggests that the number who died certainly was in the hundreds.

49 Accounts of Brechin Cathedral, 15 January, 1650
serenely up above. In the same way, when our lives are in turmoil so that we cannot think straight, we should still believe that God, in the pure light of His justice and wisdom, keeps our problems under His control and finds the right solution.  

Calvin, in this wonderfully pastoral quote, might be addressing the fears of the Cathedral’s congregation at that time as they felt powerless in the face of the oncoming storm. The tide turns, and the Church seems to be frozen in the face of the raging waters. Yet, in spite of (perhaps even because of) the “state of confusion” mentioned by Calvin, God is still in command of events, stubbornly working out the kingdom’s purpose; this is my eschatological driver, tenacious and unyielding even in the face of negative events. The American philosopher William James in his work *The will to believe and other essays in Popular Philosophy* uses the analogy of the chess game between God, as the expert player, and ourselves as the novices to explain how God responds to these negative events. So, whatever move we may make in the game, God (as the master player) is already aware of that move and the means God will use to respond to it; God’s victory is assured. In some senses, James’ analogy is a helpful one in that it preserves the finality of God’s eschatological telos. As James himself states “Of one thing, however, he (God) might be certain; and that is that his world was safe, and that no matter how much it might zig-zag he could surely bring it home at last.”  

My problem with James however is in the very fact that it has God responding to these negative events. In being respondent, somehow God’s sovereign will is eroded. Did God not know that this would happen? Is God responding on the hoof or is it pre-planned? At least Calvin is clear in his assertion that God is always in control of the events, not merely responding to them, however cleverly, but actually having fore-knowledge of them; that it is all part of the Divine plan.

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51 William James *The will to believe and other essays in Popular Philosophy* (New York: Longman, 1897), 81
We return again to Pannenberg’s assertion of the universal horizon of history that we noted in Chapter Two. It reminds us that we simply cannot fully understand events until we reach the final line in our script.\(^{52}\) History can only be fully comprehended from the eschatological standpoint of God; as Pannenberg states “all events are moving ahead to meet, finally, a common future.”\(^{53}\) Yes, we may indeed try to make sense of bad events (from our perspective within time) but it is only at the end of time, on the last page, that these events can truly be seen in their correct, eschatological, context. Pannenberg again: “Only a conception of the actual course of history linking the past with the present situation and its horizon of the future can form a comprehensive horizon within which the interpreter’s limited horizon of the present…fuse together.”\(^{54}\) So, for example, during the Plague in 1647-48 we must recognise that this was a terrible time for the people of that age; we must assert that God, in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, was very much present with God’s suffering people; what we cannot do, at present, is offer an explanation as to why God “allowed” this event to happen. The play is not yet over and, from our temporal standpoint, this past event (however awful) may yet become integral to the future plot. There is a teleological dimension to all events that must only be grounded in the eschatological promise. The mystery and majesty of God is that God will take all and any events and use them for God’s ultimate purpose. No event or incident, however trivial or appalling, can be lost to God; they are all used for God’s purposes.\(^{55}\) That is

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\(^{52}\) Interestingly, a recent television documentary on the survivors of the Holocaust suggested this very idea from several of the interviewees; that the universal horizon of history might make sense of their experiences. *Touched by Auschwitz*, BBC 2, 28\(^{\text{th}}\) January, 2015.


\(^{54}\) Wolfhart Pannenberg *Basic Questions in Theology Volume I*, transl. George H. Kelm (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 129

\(^{55}\) Moltmann for example makes this assertion based upon our resurrection from the dead: “nothing has ever been lost for God – not the pains of life and not its moments of happiness” in *The Coming of God* transl. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, Kindle edition, 2004), loc.1109. Similarly the
not to say that God *necessarily* ordained these events, merely that God’s sovereign grace is such that God may yet use them for an end as yet unseen. Thus we, the actors upon the stage, have faith that “in all things God works for the good of those who love him who have been called according to his purpose.” But, more than that, we, like Simeon and Anna in the Temple, must have patience to await God working out that purpose for good in the fullness of God’s time, not always in our time; God being solely aware of the final denouement of the play. One might even argue, from the perspective of the eschatological horizon, that our focus should be the current performance (i.e. how we are living and witnessing in accord with the Spirit’s purpose) and rather less on the meaning of the play itself. The patient waiting of Simeon and Anna become essential tools and exemplars in living the Christian life where the conclusion of the play has not yet been reached.

**LACK OF RECONCILIATION AND THE PROBLEM OF DIVISION IN THE FAITH COMMUNITY.**

I have already discussed in Chapter Three the events in the late 1990s concerning Rev Dr Robin McKenzie. Now I must highlight a number of other episodes in the Cathedral’s narrative involving dispute and discord and how these may square with our eschatological driver.

In the fifteenth century a serious division that existed in the Cathedral Chapter between Bishop John Crannoch (1426-54) and particularly his Archdeacon Forrester, who was eventually put under sentence of excommunication. We also note the tension between John Willison (1703-17), the most Presbyterian of clergy, and John Skinner,

gathering of the broken fragments at the feeding of the five thousand might be seen as an analogy to God still giving value to broken things. John 6:12f.

56 Rom.8:28
son of the last Episcopalian minister and diehard Episcopalian himself. This dispute was reflected in the events surrounding the 1715 Jacobite rebellion.

We turn our attention in this section however to later discord. Two episodes do well to illustrate: firstly, the Vacancy controversy of 1837-38 leading to the 1843 Disruption; secondly, the dispute between Alexander Gardner (1843-93) and the Kirk Session over the appointment of Charles Anderson as an elder.

The Vacancy controversy of 1837-38 arose following the death of James Burns, minister of the first charge, on 2nd January, 1837. The problem partly centred on the fact that the minister of the first charge in the Cathedral was a Crown appointee whilst the minister of the second charge was always seen as “the toon’s man,” chosen by the local people. At first the town seemed to clamour for James Burns jr., son of the deceased minister, but two factors counted against him: his youth and the fact that he was nephew to the Provost’s wife, thus leading to allegations of nepotism. Eventually, the Crown settled on Rev William Norval, minister at South Church in Kirriemuir and he was to preach on two occasions for the vacancy. A call was duly signed by a majority of the heritors, elders and heads of families within the congregation. However, just as things appeared to be settled, it became apparent that Rev Norval was guilty of plagiarism! He had in fact preached verbatim from a book of sermons by Henry Melvill, a noted divine and don of St. John’s College, Cambridge. The matter produced such a furore that eventually it went to the General

\[57\] For an excellent exposition on this topic see Peter M Gordon “The Brechin vacancy 1837-38 in The Society of Friends of Brechin Cathedral, Book of the Society vol.23 (1974)

\[58\] This was still an age in which patronage by local gentry to Church benefices was widespread. The Cathedral was considered to be subject to the patronage of the monarch, in practice by this time the Home Secretary of the day.
Assembly in May 1838. Norval decided not to pursue the matter, resigned his charge at Kirriemuir and was eventually received into the Church of England. 59

What is important to note is that actually well over half the congregation were to sign a petition in Norval’s defence. It was the fact that he was the Crown’s appointee that counted against him. And, following the General Assembly of May 1843 and the subsequent Disruption, caused partly by the Patronage Act, the two Cathedral ministers James McCosh and Alexander Foote were to leave the Kirk over the issue taking eight hundred of the fourteen hundred members of the Cathedral with them into the Free Church of Scotland. The Disruption took its toll on Church life in Brechin and ecumenism was under strain. On 2nd June, 1843, the Town Clerk’s minute book records that “it was a sad day for the auld Kirk as the doors remained locked. A portion of the outgoing congregation remaining loyal to the outgoing ministers had stayed at home whilst many others had attended the Secession churches.” 60

And yet, a mere twenty years later by June 1863, during two months of building works within the Cathedral, the East Church and West Free Church 61 were used to accommodate services. In thanking the other congregations, the Session minute records:

We may reasonably hope for an abundant increase of brotherly kindness and charity, both here and elsewhere, all redounding to the honour and glory of Him who is all our desire and our salvation, our adorable Redeemer, the same Lord Jesus Christ. 62

59 Recent research on my behalf by the Gateway to the Glens Museum at Kirriemuir has revealed that Norval ended up as Chaplain to the Fulham Workhouse in London.
60 David Adams Brechin: the Ancient City, 66
61 Note that the former minister of the Cathedral prior to the Disruption, Rev. Alexander Foote, had become pastor of the West Free Kirk.
62 Kirk Session minutes of Brechin Cathedral 8 June 1863
In some ways it seems extraordinary that within twenty years of those painful events of the Disruption, the Cathedral authorities were once again reaching out in Christian charity and friendship. Not only this, but in spite of the divisions that had been caused, regarded Jesus as the unifying factor. Wes Avram’s view is that the centrifugal forces must be in balance with the centripetal within the congregation’s life otherwise it will be either pulled asunder by diversity, or become in grave danger of a monochrome uniformity. One might argue that the centrifugal forces, the richness and diversity of the Kingdom (seen in the personalities), was often in the Cathedral’s narrative a great load for the earthly Church to bear. And yet, the fracturing did not occur. Something inherent within the Cathedral’s ecclesial DNA kept the congregation together, in spite of the tensions that existed. Once again, my claim is that the eschatological driver has an inbuilt preference for the unity of the Church even in the face of the diversity of the Kingdom (which we noted in the previous chapter). Jesus himself prayed that “all of them may be one” while still recognising that there are “other sheep that are not of this sheep pen” who nevertheless “will listen to my voice.” Thus we find in Jesus’ prayer itself this tension between centrifugal and centripetal forces, between the strength that comes from unity and the richness that is gifted by diversity. Jesus alone is the sole presence that squares the circle and we fully encounter Jesus in that eschatological conclusion to the Church’s narrative.

Our final episode involves Rev. Alexander Gardner, this time the tension is between him and the Kirk Session. In the summer of 1881, Charles Anderson, a local solicitor, was nominated to the eldership and Anderson is prepared to accept

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63 See Wes Avram Where the light shines through (Grand Rapids, Brazos: 2005)
64 John 17:21
65 John 10:16
nomination. But Alexander Gardner strongly objects on the grounds that “said Charles Anderson has for several years displayed towards me a spirit of the bitterest hostility, acting in a manner so unbecoming and so grossly offensive as to make his conduct a matter of public scandal.”\(^{66}\) Clearly Gardner gathered support for his objection for the Session received a petition against Anderson signed by 169 members\(^{67}\), though significantly no objection is made to either Anderson’s moral character or doctrine. Presbytery intervened and urged the Session to “seek the peace and unity of the Church”\(^{68}\) and in the November we have an astonishing moment of reconciliation between Anderson and Gardner in which both make official statements of reconciliation to the Session.\(^{69}\) But it was a false dawn and when Anderson’s nomination again is raised the following autumn, Gardner again lodged an objection stating that his understanding was that Anderson had withdrawn his nomination.\(^{70}\) Charles Anderson was finally ordained to the eldership in April 1884 yet Rev. Gardner would still not let sleeping dogs lie. He reads a letter to Session\(^{71}\) telling them they have acted illegally in the service of ordination. By now relations within the Session itself have deteriorated to such an extent that routine business has become almost impossible. The case finds its way to the General Assembly of May 1884 where, by 37 votes to 36, the Assembly find Anderson’s ordination to be irregular and invalid. The “Elder’s case” of 1884 was, as with the case of Robin McKenzie a century later, to leave many open wounds within the congregation. It was really only

\(^{66}\) Ibid. 25 September 1882
\(^{67}\) Though this was (as stated at the time) a very small proportion of the 1500 communicant members.
\(^{68}\) Ibid. 26 June 1882
\(^{69}\) Ibid. 27 November 1882
\(^{70}\) Ibid. 24 September 1883
\(^{71}\) Ibid. 28 April 1884
with Gardner’s death in 1893, and the erection of a Church in his son’s memory\textsuperscript{72}, that the matter was in part laid to rest.

In this scenario we again find reconciliation straining to be let loose. Thus, in January 1885, following the Assembly’s judgement we find this extraordinary statement in the minutes:

The Kirk Session having the judgement of the General Assembly in the Elder Case under consideration, in order to promote unanimity in the Session, and peace in the congregation, \textit{unanimously resolved that all offensive allegations and expressions by whomsoever made in the proceedings which have taken place in this case should be entirely withdrawn and held to be unsaid.}\textsuperscript{73}

Thus within the minutes of the period whole sections have lines ruled through them concerning the case of Charles Anderson; a practice Presbytery were not so keen upon, despite the very worthy motives of peace and concord that lay behind it.

The “Elder’s case” of the early 1880s is one of the low points in the Cathedral’s narrative. Yet, I find it extraordinary that the issue of reconciliation and conflict resolution was never entirely lost sight of. Further, throughout the entire dispute various parties in Presbytery or Session tried to achieve a brokering of the peace. In the end, it was the Assembly who decided the issue, yet that reconciliation needed thereafter was recognised by the local Christian community. How successful that was in being achieved is debateable, but it was nevertheless there and often the voice of peace-making sought to make itself heard above the clamour of dispute. For me, that too points to the existence and power of my eschatological driver manifested in an inbuilt desire for reconciliation, peace and harmony between Christian believers.

We have thus noted two main episodes of division and discord in the Cathedral’s story. Superficially, dark times, villains upon the stage! And yet, upon

\textsuperscript{72} Gardner’s son, a solicitor, died at a young age, possibly by suicide.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid. 19 January 1885. Italics mine.
closer investigation we find even in these the shards of the Kingdom straining to be let loose. Further, the Cathedral continues, almost in spite of itself and its own weaknesses. Worship continued, praise was sung, the sacraments observed, charitable work and education carried on. The sheer tenaciousness of the Kingdom, its unyielding power and hope, continues to shed a beam of light even upon these dark periods. Rather than acting as a counter to my claim, several of these incidents, whether war, plague or discord, actually bolster my claims. I would also argue that by including them, I have strengthened my case for the shards of the Kingdom breaking through in dark times as well as in light.

In the next chapter I shall allow my critical voices to find voice. Can my claim be undermined by a different approach to historical or eschatological understanding? And have I been over selective in my choice of historical incidents?
CHAPTER FIVE

The Critics find voice

“Critics are our friends, they show us our faults”

– Benjamin Franklin

Following any artistic performance whether it is cinematic, theatrical or musical, one group of people busily get to work, either to praise, dismiss or ponder what they have seen: the critics. Any producer or impresario will pay close attention to the reviews of the critics. It seems highly apt (particularly given the dramatic construal I have employed in this paper) that in this final substantive chapter of my paper I should allow my critics, those who take a very different perspective from me, to find their voice and to stand as an alternative position to all that I have claimed and set out.

I shall consider criticism in five distinct areas:

i. The limitations to the evidence and my own role

ii. The question of the eschatological telos

iii. The use of Pannenberg’s doctrine of Providence

iv. The alternative eschatology of Kathryn Tanner

v. The issue of secularisation

THE LIMITATIONS TO THE EVIDENCE

Much of the evidential base of my project has been based upon historical records, be they minutes of the Kirk Session of the Cathedral, the papers of the Society of
Friends of the Cathedral or the researches of other historians. Yet we must urge a note of caution in utilising such evidence. For one thing, the records are not complete. We have little contemporary written records (other than mainly Medieval property charters) prior to 1615 when the Cathedral formally adopted a Kirk Session as its governing body rather than a Chapter. And even within the Session minutes there are gaps: there are no records of the Town Session from 1697-1703; from the Landward Session from 1670-1708; and, in more recent times, the Session minutes of 1973-87 were lost following the death of a previous Session Clerk. It is entirely possible therefore that some notable event or incident occurred during these “lost” years that (theoretically at least) could invalidate all my claims and postulations. And in utilising the researches of others (even the most scrupulous historian) we must always be aware that other scholars work to their own, often hidden, agendas. Their interpretation of an event may not necessarily be accurate or even trustworthy.

Furthermore, the records only tell us part of the story. What were people of previous ages thinking, believing and practicing in terms of their faith? What conversations, events or inter-actions were taking place in the life of the Cathedral of a previous age of which we are utterly unaware? Steve Bruce, in particular, warns of setting too much store by parish records; he claims it would be like trying to understand the history of a nation solely on the basis of its criminal or court records. Bruce also cautions: “we need to be very careful not to view the distant past anachronistically through the expectations of the present.” While heeding Bruce’s advice, I would say in response that as far as a congregation is concerned one might expect a great deal of its ethos to be reflected in its records, if indeed the Session is

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1 This was when the Town and Landward Sessions re-united as one body.
2 Steve Bruce Religion in the modern world: from Cathedrals to Cults (Oxford University Press, 1996), 55
3 Ibid., 53
representative of and concerned for the people under its spiritual care. This is after all one of the key precepts of the Reformation: that the spiritual governance of God’s people is rooted within the community representatives themselves. Furthermore, in Chapter Two, I have already highlighted that, if anything, today’s modern Church has perhaps lost sight of the eschatological driver from Jesus’ time that is still there at its very heart. It is not a case therefore of imposing an anachronistic model upon past generations, rather it is about allowing the future, the coming Kingdom of God, to impinge upon the past and for me, as an amateur theological archaeologist of the present, to unearth these eschatological shards within our history. So we must exercise caution in that no historical study is ever truly complete, further evidence may yet emerge to nullify (or at least amend) my conclusions. Yet, in saying this, based upon the fairly extensive historical evidence I have presented, I would claim that there are reasonable grounds for confidence in my findings. And perhaps “reasonable” is all we can ever truly expect this side of the Eschaton itself!

So too must caution be exercised in the interviews I conducted. People (as I discovered in interviewing) do tend to have selective memories! They remember things through a particular lens or perspective, or they choose (consciously or otherwise) to recall some events while forgetting others that don’t quite fit with the narrative framework they are trying to persuade you towards. This was particularly obvious in the, sometimes painful, recollections concerning the ministry of Robin McKenzie. We noted in Chapter Three, for example, that some of my respondents gave this episode a rather exaggerated significance in the face of the Cathedral’s long history. To offset this tendency, I quite deliberately interviewed members of the congregation from a wide range of perspectives, included former clergy of the Cathedral themselves, and also those who viewed the events rather more objectively
as by-standers rather than participants of events. It was a wide-ranging sample of respondents and this assures me (partly too because I was conscious of the bias in some interviews) that I have at least reduced significantly the adverse impact upon my conclusions.

But, of course, there is one other factor that can hardly be ignored, namely, myself. Was I guilty of asking “loaded” questions in the interviews? Did I deliberately skew the historical record to fit my purposes while ignoring it when it did not? I plead not guilty to these suggestions and have deliberately included in Chapter Four a whole series of events that (superficially at least) might have negated my claim that the Kingdom was embedded as shards within the Cathedral’s life. I have also highlighted in Chapter Two that theologically so to speak the jury is still out, the final scene in the play is yet to be performed. Lots of characters and events may yet emerge to change or alter the play’s telos; I must remain humble in the face of Pannenberg’s universal horizon of history. God, the author, is still at work; we are not yet at the denouement of our eschatological play.

Naturally one cannot entirely be unbiased in the interviews. However objective you seek to be, the interview is a relationship between you and the interviewee. In the case of members of the congregation particularly, there is a prior pastoral relationship that cannot be entirely ignored. They know they are talking to their minister and may consequently either hold back or confide more deeply. You know that the person is a parishioner and therefore you may probe more gently than if the person was a complete stranger. In general though I found most of my respondents to be very responsive and open; in a few cases, they contacted me post-interview with further information to assist in my research.
I must acknowledge that the evidence has its limits. However, given the combination of historical records plus interviews, and the fact that the Cathedral’s history covers such a long period of approximately fourteen centuries, I would assert this means that any limits to my evidential base are negligible compared to similar ethnographic studies of this type.

**THE QUESTION OF THE ESCHATOLOGICAL TELOS.**

A second factor and more serious critique of my position concerns the eschatological telos of which I have made so much. Does history actually have a point to it? Does it really have an underlying purpose given by God (as I claim) or is it just a series of unconnected random events with little connection to each other? We do well to consider for a moment the thoughts on history by the philosopher Walter Benjamin in his *On the Concept of History*. In order to convey his point, Benjamin uses in his ninth thesis on the concept of History the illustration of a painting by Klee:

There is a painting by Klee called Angelus Novus. An angel is depicted there who looks as though he were about to distance himself from something which he is staring at. His eyes are opened wide, his mouth stands open and his wings are outstretched. The Angel of History must look just so. His face is turned towards the past. Where we see the appearance of a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet. He would like to pause for a moment so fair, to awaken the dead and piece together what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise, it has caught itself up in his wings and is so strong that the Angel can no longer close them. The storm drives him irresistibly into the future to which his back is turned, while the rubble heap before him grows sky high. That which we call progress, is this storm.

Benjamin is by no means alone in his reading of history as being a heap of rubble rather than a positive progression. We noted earlier that Moltmann was cautious in employing a doctrine of Providence, and this is so for precisely the same reasons as Benjamin, namely, the pain of history itself. The carnage on the battlefields of the

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*Walter Benjamin On the Concept of History (New York: Classic books America, 2009)*, 11
First World War and later the Holocaust has shaken to its foundations any theology based on God’s faithful and progressive acting within history. Moltmann states that “the modern consciousness of history is a consciousness of crisis.”\(^5\) For Moltmann it is not that there is “a divine plan for history” but rather there is “a consciousness of the contradiction inherent in this unredeemed world, and of the sign of the cross under which the Christian mission and Christian hope stand.”\(^6\) Thus history is not redeemable for Moltmann; he must assert his *nova creatio* that is a total break with the past.

For me, this reading of history is simply too pessimistic. If we indeed assert our faith in a sovereign God and God is indeed Creator of all that is or will be (and this includes history itself) then there can be no “no go” areas for God; God must be present and involved in history if God is to be truly God. I cannot accept therefore Benjamin’s suggestion that the Angel of History (which presumably comes from God) is as powerless as he suggests in the face of history’s onslaught of events. Furthermore, as I highlighted earlier in Chapter Two, the continuity/discontinuity aspect of Jesus’ Resurrection demands that the scars of crucifixion are in fact carried forward into the resurrected body of the risen Christ. So it is with history. Certainly we cannot ignore or limit history’s pain and scars but nor can we (as Benjamin does) allow them to limit God’s power to re-create either. The events of history are still felt within the coming Kingdom (continuity) the difference is that these events are no longer determinative of the ethos of the Kingdom (discontinuity); the role of life-giver is alone God’s. God transforms the negative according to God’s purposes. Perhaps the Angelus Novus would have done better to turn and face the future, the


\(^{6}\) Ibid., 182
coming Kingdom, that way the events of history might have been illuminated more clearly through God’s lens?

To be fair to Benjamin he does hint in the addendum that “splinters of messianic time” are “shot through” history, though perhaps more by chance than design. In my own interview with Tom Wright he was sympathetic to Benjamin and Moltmann’s concerns. God’s activity within history, Wright felt, should not be viewed as God striding confidently through the pages of history, leading us from glory unto glory. We must, Wright asserted, avoid triumphalism at all costs. The Kingdom can be present and can act through the suffering of God’s people. My tangential contacts between Cathedral narrative and God’s metanarrative are not crystal clear photographs of the Kingdom, but rather “signposts in the fog”, to use Tom Wright’s evocative phrase. Pointers that hint, suggest or allude to what is yet to come buried within the events of what have been. And this is one reason why I have called them “shards” of the Kingdom, precisely because shards are generally broken, incomplete and damaged. One must use much painstaking research and imagination to piece them together again.

I cannot accept therefore Benjamin’s very negative picture of the rubble of history heaped upon heap. For me, God’s sovereignty demands that history does have a purpose, a telos. Yet, with Wright, I would acknowledge that this telos is often hidden or incompletely seen. But that doesn’t mean (which was Benjamin’s view) that it isn’t there, just that at this juncture in our play we have not yet reached a point in the narrative where all is clear; more has yet to come and we await the clarity of God’s future. Until we reach the final scene and the final line is spoken it is

7 Walter Benjamin On the Concept of History, 22
8 Interview with Rt. Rev. Prof. Tom Wright at St.Andrew’s University, 9th October, 2013
9 This was part of my claim in Chapter Four.
simply not possible to fully appreciate or understand God’s drama. Yes, we have hints, at times very powerful ones, based upon Jesus’ life, teachings and Resurrection. This is why an inaugurated eschatology is so necessary to a theological understanding of history. But we still “walk by faith as strangers here.”¹⁰ Simeon and Anna were correct in that patient waiting is required for discernment to take place. Benjamin, I fear, has not waited; he has based his conclusions on a series of (admittedly) very negative episodes in humanity’s history. My contention however is that the best is yet to come.

**PANNENBERG’S UNDERSTANDING OF PROVIDENCE**

In Chapter Two I relied heavily upon Pannenberg’s approach to the divine agency within time. Yet I must acknowledge that there are theological problems associated with Pannenberg’s approach. These fall into three distinct areas.

Firstly, Pannenberg is criticised¹¹ for seeing the goal of history as lying within history, a history that is badly broken. According to some critics he lacks any sense of transcendence in his eschatological approach. Volf, for example, asserts that “History does not only need to be improved or finished; it is, in fact, so deeply flawed that no amount of completing will remove these flaws. History must be ‘repaired’. ”¹² Volf thus stresses not the need for a completion of history’s process but redemption and this redemption must by nature be eschatological in its final form.

I am not convinced however that Volf’s critique is entirely fair to Pannenberg’s intention. Pannenberg is offering a hermeneutical insight by which we interpret

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¹¹ I have confined my outline of the critique to Pannenberg’s position but it applies equally to Moltmann.
¹² Miroslav Volf “After Moltmann: reflections on the future of eschatology” in God will be all in all edt. Richard Bauckham (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 250
history through an eschatological lens. Volf, in interpreting history as broken from our current standpoint in time, is falling into the precise trap Pannenberg is anxious to avoid, namely offering a universal understanding of history before we have reached the end point. As Tupper states “the historian comprehends the past in the context of meaning wherein the event occurred, a context that ultimately embraces the present age of the historian.”

Pannenberg himself is anxious to assert the provisionality of any understanding of history we have within time, stressing that it is subject to “ceaseless revision…in the light of new experiences and new expectations for the future.”

Bauckham does however warn us of the outcome of the logical extension to Pannenberg’s approach; namely that in apparently excluding the transcendent breaking into time, and relying entirely upon history making sense at the endpoint, we are in grave danger of ignoring the hopes of the suffering. Bauckham says: “the course of history justified by its future goal…means that the meaning of history benefits future rather than past generations, and the victors of history rather than the victims of progress.”

This, admittedly, is a more serious consideration. Yet whichever eschatological model we adopt we will (because of the “delay” in the parousia) always face the problem of theodicy, a fact that Bauckham himself accepts.

Secondly, Pannenberg is criticised for having a deterministic view of history that allows no room for the freedom of the individual acting within the historical process.

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15 Richard Bauckham “Time and Eternity” in God will be all in all edt. Richard Bauckham , 172
16 As I state in Chapter Two, Wright and Wells both debunk this notion of delay as pure subjectivism.
17 Ibid., 182
Van den Brom for instance suggests that Pannenberg’s focus upon God being our future results in a “timeless block universe” in which “the eschaton itself is already a ‘given’, part of time’s picture, being given with creation.” 18 Because of this, Van den Brom claims, we end up with determinism in which “agents may think that they have freedom of choice and freely perform their acts, whereas these are actually given in advance together with the creation of the universe. For in a block universe, all relations seem to be predetermined in this way.”19 Thus it seems “deterministic eschatology neglects the value of history that is supposed to be saved in the first place.”20

Van den Brom’s critique fails, I think, on two counts. One, his underlying assumption is that the author (i.e. God) has already set the script in its entirety, all we are free to do is to perform the parts we are given. However, I have already suggested that while the final outcome of the play (the telos) may indeed be predetermined by God, while the play is still performing improvisation is permissible (one might even argue encouraged) and occasionally this human intervention within the play’s performance may for a time result in the play taking a markedly different turn from the one set by its author; and we have noted this at times within the Cathedral’s narrative. Thus providential determinism is hardly a fair judgement.

Two, the logical extension to Van den Brom’s desire for freedom for human agency is to make the human agent the deciding factor in shaping the future and thus limiting the sovereignty of God. Sponheim for example states: “Must not our choices in some measure matter for the future, our future? If they do, is not ambiguity about

19 Ibid., 163
20 Ibid., 165
the end inevitable? Somehow the relational character of life in the middle must be recognized even in the end.”  

Yet it is God, not we, who have complete freedom in relation to time: “for the free God produces new events (and realities) in history that cannot be anticipated from the past.” In answering the charge of determinism against Pannenberg, Mostert states:

God’s reign in the created universe must eventually be complete. But this coming of the kingdom of God is something other than the natural outcome of the historical process. It is compatible with any course of events, precisely because it will come from the future as something new. God is able to connect the fullness of the divine rule with any historical course of events…

In other words, it is not the events of history that are pre-set by God in some deterministic way; rather it is the telos that is set. Whatever happens, whatever we do, the eventual eschatological outcome must reflect God’s purposes. This is not determinism it is simply accepting that God is truly God.

Van den Brom also questions whether the passage of time from past, through present to future is as illusory as Pannenberg or Moltmann assert. Yet any astrophysicist would tell us that time is always relative to the observer. Only by coming out of time’s process would it be possible to stand in relation to all temporal points. What therefore appears to us future is indeed to God present (indeed, I would agree with Pannenberg and Moltmann that past, present and future are simultaneous to God) otherwise God’s sovereign power is limited and God becomes part of the temporal process. Of course, in fairness to Van den Brom we must

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21 Paul R. Sponheim The Pulse of Creation: God and the transformation of the world (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 34. Sponheim interestingly approaches transformation not from the end of time but its beginning, within the act of creation itself; a clearly different approach from the eschatological angle taken by Wright, Moltmann and Pannenberg.

22 Tupper The Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg, 99


24 Van den Brom “Eschatology and Time”, 160

acknowledge that in discussing such eschatological themes we are reaching the very limits of theological discourse and scientific understanding.

Finally, the last criticism of Pannenberg is that he locates God so much in the coming future that he fails to allow for God to act within the moment. Does Pannenberg have a sense of the moment in which “the continuity of the flow of time is ruptured and the believer stands in the dawn of the eschatological future”? Here I feel we fail to recognise the stress that Pannenberg places upon the importance of the resurrection of Jesus as the supreme moment in which the eschaton breaks into time. Pannenberg himself understands that “the Christ event is not overtaken by any later event and remains superior to all other concepts as the anticipation of the end.” For Pannenberg (as for me, in stressing an inaugurated eschatology) the breaking in of the transcendent into a moment of time is supremely seen in the resurrection of Jesus. That moment is the one that defines all others in the temporal process. It is from this definitive eschatological moment in time that the rippling waves of God’s power flow forth, fracturing into time and depositing (as I have claimed) shards of the eschaton within time. Rendtorff in interpreting Pannenberg puts it thus: “revelation is not given as an experience of immediateness, (it) is transmitted to us through the channel of history.” For Rendtorff, as for Pannenberg (and Wright) it is the Christ event, particularly in the resurrection of Jesus that interprets all other revelatory experiences of God throughout history.

Thus while the critique of Pannenberg is valuable, ultimately I argue it simply fails to convince.

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26 Bauckham “Time and Eternity”, 188
28 Trutz Rendtorff “The Problem of Revelation in the concept of the Church” in Revelation as History, 177
But what of a completely different eschatological understanding from the one I have proposed by Wright? How might that alter my eschatological approach? And does it have validity? Here I wish to spend a little time on the eschatology outlined by Kathryn Tanner.

Tanner’s starting point is the sheer transcendence of God. Thus she stresses the dependent relationship of the creature upon the Creator and how, consequently, the creature may not gain immortality itself, but only in relationship with the Creator. Her understanding of Providence in some ways echoes Pannenberg. She seems to maintain an understanding that events can only be understood from a universal historical horizon: “God’s rule is consequently not one of immediate enactment but one of ultimate fulfilment.”

To answer the criticism of determinism, Tanner asserts that human agents can further God’s intentions: “God is bringing about God’s intentions for human affairs, and indeed for the whole world, by working in and through all human agencies and natural events.” But there are limits to this model, Tanner states. Firstly, creaturely operations lack any divine authority because of the creature’s dependence on the Creator. Secondly, sometimes these human agents can fail in furthering God’s intentions because their motives become corrupted: “When God is at work in and through human agents, these agents remain fallible and limited and corruptible.” The work of human agencies must be open to critique and evaluation by “a divine standard.” Thus far, little of what Tanner states would be in contradiction to my own position. I too have acknowledged the spasmodic and sporadic broken ways in which human events reflect the Kingdom and that human

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29 Kathryn Tanner The Politics of God (Minneapolis, Fortress Press: 1992), 105
30 Ibid., 99
31 Ibid., 102
32 Ibid., 103
beings do often corrupt or skew the Kingdom’s message. I too would accept the “divine standard” as judge on historical events; in a sense that is what I have done by laying Cathedral narrative and Kingdom metanarrative alongside each other. But here one key difference emerges with Tanner. For myself, as I outlined in Chapter Two, this divine standard is to be found in the Biblical template of the Kingdom; this we find glimpsed in the Old Testament and inter-Testamental literature and supremely it is made evident in the life, death and Resurrection of Jesus. The New Testament writers, Paul particularly, then interpret this template through an eschatological lens of an inaugurated eschatology. But Tanner is much more cautious. She largely steers clear of any reference to or concentration upon the New Testament witness preferring, as we will see momentarily, to focus on an Old Testament perspective. But even then one gains the impression of a reluctance to use the Biblical template at all as any kind of standard. Tanner states:

One might try to get a sense of the sort of world God wants to bring about by isolating principles and precedents to be found in the Bible, then using this information to defend the rightfulness of one’s intentions and acts as a response to present circumstances…(but) God may be working differently now than before. \(^{33}\)

Here we see one of the key differences emerging in our approaches. While I have utilised the extensive history of my congregation to echo the Biblical claim of God’s faithfulness, God, for Tanner, is in danger of becoming a capricious deity. The transcendence Tanner stresses for God is in danger of cutting God adrift from the historical process altogether. The God encountered in the Biblical metanarrative is, for Tanner, not necessarily acting in the same way in the historical or congregational narrative. Indeed, with Walter Benjamin, Tanner too has a fundamental pessimism regarding the historical narrative: “apparent progress forward in world history is

\(^{33}\) Ibid., 106. Italics mine.
really, underneath it all, nothing more than the futile washing in and washing out of waves on a beach.”

Thus, despite having some initial points in common, our conclusions about the historical process and God’s place in it are very different. I am fundamentally hopeful, based upon an eschatological outcome, Tanner is not.

This brings us onto areas of major divergence and one of these is our approach to the eschatological outcome. Firstly, for Tanner, there is no sense at all of the transforming power of Christ’s Resurrection or indeed a hope for the coming Kingdom. Tanner’s viewpoint is one of profound pessimism, of human futility and failure: “our lives in Christ seem to come to nothing.”

Tanner’s view is evocative of the writer of Ecclesiastes: “What does the worker gain from his toil? I have seen the burden God has laid on men.” One even suspects that for Tanner it is the voice of Caesar, not Christ, which speaks the loudest: “any hopes of world transformation are dashed by the spirit of contemporary cultural pessimism, by a renewed sense, in contemporary times, of structural intransigencies.”

This is a very different sense from Wright’s assertion that if Jesus is Lord, Caesar simply cannot be.

Secondly, death, for Tanner, is not a symptom of the brokenness of creation but rather a natural part of the created process. Death’s power in Tanner’s model continues unchecked and unfettered, there is no sense of death’s destruction. This is as true for the universe as it is for ourselves at a personal level: “The world as we know it seems constructed in a way to ensure temporal finitude.”

Tanner is accepting of a scientific cosmology and of the world’s ultimate failure. Yet, my

34 Kathryn Tanner Jesus, Humanity and Trinity: a brief systematic theology (Minneapolis, Fortress Press: 2001), 97
35 Ibid.
36 Ecclesiastes 3:9
37 Tanner Jesus, Humanity and Trinity, 97
38 Revelation 20:14
39 Tanner Jesus, Humanity and Trinity, 114
claim (based upon Wright) is that if God has acted decisively in the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth then we might be confident that God will act decisively again to bring about that promised new creation. Robert Russell puts it nicely when commenting on scientific cosmology he urges us to consider when the laws of nature are “descriptive or prescriptive.” Russell continues:

God is free to act in radically new ways, not only in human history, but also in the ongoing history of the universe. Because of this we can claim that scientific predictions are right but inapplicable since God did act in a radically new way at Easter and will continue to act to bring about the new creation...the future of the universe would have been what science predicts (i.e. freeze or fry) had God not acted at Easter and if God did not continue to act in the future.  

The irony, as I see it for Tanner, is the inconsistency of her claim. She wants to asset the transcendent power of God, yet in so doing, she actually limits God’s right to act within God’s own creation. Where in Tanner is a sense that Matter matters to the Creator? Tanner leaves the universe untransformed, left to its fate. She even seems to limit God’s sovereignty. For example, she states: “immortality may be a gift that creatures cannot receive in themselves without the loss of creature-hood (or the loss of particular identity).” Yet surely it is entirely for God to gift the creature as God sees fit? A gift of immortality to the creature may be viewed as a supreme sign of love from the Father to the child. I would disagree that the creature loses a sense of its identity by the gift of immortality, since its identity always (as Tanner lays claim) depends on God alone. God may be transcendent (I am not stating otherwise) but God is nevertheless a Creator with a strong interest in and bias towards the wonder

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41 Tanner Jesus, Humanity and Trinity, 119
and sustainability of God’s created order. As Tanner herself acknowledges, she concedes too much to the claims of scientific cosmology.42

Thirdly, for Tanner, eschatological continuity is provided for not by the continuity of the individual but that of the community. In that sense we are back to an Old Testament model. Tanner states: “The death of individuals may be final for them but not for the community, which continues to exist in relation to God” thus do the dead continue through “offspring or communal memory.”43 While this would have been a perfectly acceptable eschatological model in Old Testament times it falls far short of the New Testament claim. Where is the sense of the future glory that Paul, for one, alludes to in Romans 8? Tanner’s eschatological hope is thus a spatial one. Eternal life is not a temporal extension to the creature’s life but “a matter of the mode of one’s existence in relation to God,” it is “a new quality of life in God.”44 This new relationship of the creature with the Creator “holds whether the world continues to exist or ceases to exist.”45 My concern with Tanner is that she seems to take us back to the neo-platonic model of the disembodied soul which Paul was so eager to avoid in his thoughts on the “pneuma-filled body.”46 Where is the physical dimension to the eschatological promise, the transformed creation, the sense that Matter indeed matters?

The major divergence between Tanner and my viewpoint is undoubtedly in the arena of the locus of the Eschaton. Not for her any sense of the Kingdom lying ahead of us in the future, impacting upon the past and present, as a ship moving ahead leaving a draft in its wake. Here she fundamentally parts company with

42 Ibid., 102
43 Ibid., 106
44 Ibid., 111
45 Ibid., 104
46 1 Cor. 15:44
Pannenberg’s prolepsis, for she states that “the eschaton cannot be primarily understood as what comes from the future to draw the time of this world ever onward” and that “an understanding of the eschaton has no stake in any reworked theological account of temporal relations in which a coming future is given primacy over present and past times.” So Tanner’s eschaton does not break in from the future to transform the present – which is the central claim I am making. Yet the eschaton (what Tanner calls “eternal life”) nevertheless breaks in, but spatially, not temporally; it is all about a new relationship with the Creator. She states:

> Eternal life is also understood in spatial terms so as to become a realm or sphere. Eternal life is a kingdom of God, comparable to an Old Testament sense of righteousness as a new pattern of relationships to which the righteous commit themselves…Eternal life infiltrates, then, the present world of suffering and oppression, to bring life, understood as a new pattern or structure of relationships marked by life-giving vitality and renewed purpose.

This sounds remarkably similar to the views of Person U in their interview with me when the “Kingdom is now” and the Kingdom impacts upon us in our relationships with each other and with God. Indeed, Person U had a view that in the end our spirits are absorbed into the Great Spirit stating: “when I die that which is love within me will be subsumed into God as the Spirit of love.” This is not so different from Tanner who seems, at times, to suggest our absorption into God post-mortem when “God has in fact already assumed our lives in Godself.” But this is far short of the personal continuation of the creature that we find promised in so much of New

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47 Tanner Jesus, Humanity and Trinity, 111
48 Ibid., 112
49 Recording 15, 55:25
50 Recording 15, 1:02:13
51 Tanner Jesus, Humanity and Trinity, 123
Testament scripture, not least the words of Jesus on the cross to the dying brigand:
“today you will be with me in paradise.”

For Tanner therefore the continuity/discontinuity aspect of the Kingdom that we identified in earlier chapters is supplied not by “a transcendent future but a transcendent present.” Utilising an Old Testament motif Tanner presents us with a clear choice between the way of life and the way of death. To follow life is to enter into a new relationship with God in the present. Any eschatological sense comes from the realisation that there is no “second chance for action.” But again, Tanner is paradoxical; she stresses God’s transcendence and our consequent dependency but much of the effort to improve the world in accord with God’s will must lie with us, not God’s action. She states that “one is called to act to counter such forces (of death) in the effort to bring in another kind of life.” Is the coming Kingdom solely dependent upon our action, the players on the stage? The whole thrust of my own position, based on Wright and others, is to suggest the centrality of the author (God), the impact of the actor-author on the drama (Jesus) and the persuasive power of the director (the Spirit) in our human improvisation/rehearsal of the script. The Kingdom comes because that is God’s telos, the script God is writing, not because (as Tanner suggests) the actors have the power to affect the outcome.

I have quite deliberately taken Kathryn Tanner as my principal theological critical voice because she has points of similarity with my view, but her whole basis is vastly different. She ends, I fear, with such a transcendent God who is completely cut adrift from history as to have no power over it. This is not Klee’s angel powerless

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52 Luke 23:43
53 Tanner Jesus, Humanity and Trinity, 120
54 See Deuteronomy 30:15 for example
55 Tanner Jesus, Humanity and Trinity, 123
56 Ibid. 122
in the face of history’s onslaught, this is a rather a Deist model where God desires relationship with us but has no power to alter or change God’s creation. Tanner’s eschatology is not so much realized as relativized; “the relationship (with God) holds whether the world continues to exist or ceases to exist.” Her pessimistic view of the universe’s future may sit well with some scientific cosmology but not with the much more hopeful approach and promise of Biblical witness, particularly within the New Testament.

I am confident therefore that whatever criticisms can be levelled against my own approach, I, at least, accord with the Biblical witness that stresses an inaugurated eschatology. An eschatological model in which the sheer awesomeness of Jesus’ resurrection is the defining moment of history and in which the future impinges upon us in past and present; the paradoxical irony in the project I have undertaken is that ultimately in the Cathedral narrative we have glimpsed our future by studying our past.

**THE SECULARISATION OF SOCIETY**

In the final section of this chapter I shall turn to the disputed issue of secularisation as my last critical voice. This is vital, for is today’s society really more secular than previous ages? If, as is often claimed, we are living in a more secular society where belief is waning does this mean that the eschatological shards I have unearthed become merely theological museum pieces and lose any power to be transformative practices in the context of today’s Cathedral?

In addressing this question we must be clear from the outset that there is in fact no consensus amongst scholars themselves regarding secularisation. Steve Bruce, for example, feels that people are increasingly secular: “an increasingly

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57 Ibid. 104
secular people are gradually losing faith in the specific teachings of the Christian
tradition but retaining a nostalgic fondness for it.” By contrast Jose Casanova sees
secularisation as a self-fulfilling prophecy: “The premise that the more modern and
progressive a society becomes the more religion tends to decline has assumed in
Europe the character of a taken for granted belief, widely shared not only by
sociologists of religion but by a majority of the population.” Grace Davie herself
takes a more nuanced approach concluding that religious life in Britain is not actually
disappearing, rather mutating into something new. She states: “the sacred
undoubtedly persists and will continue to do so, but in forms that may be very
different from those which have gone before.” David Martin, who might be credited
with first introducing the idea of secularisation, helpfully understands his theory in
historical terms:

> at certain crucial periods in their history societies acquire a particular frame
> and the subsequent events persistently move within the limits of that frame.
> There is a contour of dykes and canals set up at crucial turning points in
> history and the flow of events then runs according to that contour.

My argument is of course that the frame the Cathedral has acquired from the future
has been (indeed still is) an eschatological one. The events within the Cathedral
narrative have often run according to the contours of my eschatological driver. The
question however that Bruce, Davie and others pose for me is: have the contours now
changed? Are events still running according to that eschatological pattern from the
future (seen in the past) or are they now going off in a different direction? Are

58 Steve Bruce Religion in the modern world: From cathedrals to cults (Oxford University Press, 1996), 35
60 Grace Davie Religion in Britain since 1945 (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1994), 198
religious decline and the rise of the secular in fact, as Casanova suggests, now “the telos of history”\textsuperscript{62}?

Grace Davie I suspect is closest to the truth in her notion of mutation. The Cathedral has not always performed its eschatological practices consistently or in the same way (as we have noted). There are five distinct periods in its time frame\textsuperscript{63} and even within these there are differences in emphasis. Mutation is nothing new. Indeed in my interview with Person A there is reference to this ebb and flow, this change and continuity. Person A spoke of “some people held the vision, others made it real, while during the times of others the vision achieved a falling away.”\textsuperscript{64} This observation accords with much within the Cathedral’s history and points to the tide of faith coming in, withdrawing, only to return again. I am reminded of Matthew Arnold’s poem \textit{Dover Beach} in which he states:

\begin{quote}
The Sea of Faith
was once, too, at the full, and round earth’s shore lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
But now I only hear its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar, retreating, to the breath of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear and naked shingles of the world.\textsuperscript{65}
\end{quote}

Is the current secularisation process merely an ebbing of this sea of faith is, or is something else at work?

We have already examined in Chapter Three the rather mixed messages from the Cathedral narrative regarding Sabbath observance. Perhaps one more story regarding lack of attendance at worship will serve to highlight the point? During the

\textsuperscript{62} Jose Casanova "Beyond European and American exceptionalisms", 24
\textsuperscript{63} The five periods are namely Pictish, Celtic, Medieval Catholic, Reformed (which includes Episcopacy) and Presbyterian.
\textsuperscript{64} Recording 4, 1.12.16
\textsuperscript{65} See Don Cupitt \textit{The Sea of Faith} (London: BBC, 1985), 21
latter part of the Napoleonic wars, the Rev. James Burns, minister of the first charge, came across a group of soldiers drinking outside the tavern and playing cards at an hour when they ought to have been attending Tuesday prayers in the Cathedral. The Kirk Session were reluctant to take action against these men precisely because they had been away fighting for King and Country. Indeed the incident is not even recorded in the Session minutes, but in James Burns own journal. My point is that this incident could be so easily translated into today’s society. There is actually nothing new under the sun. Soldiers drinking in a pub on a Sunday while divine service is taking place would today hardly raise an ecclesiastical eyebrow. James Burns thought it scandalous, while the Session took a much more lax view back in 1799.

Yet Steve Bruce, in particular, is anxious that we do not utilise the past to draw any conclusions about the present: “It is no easy matter to judge the religious climate of an age so different from our own and so remote.” He urges caution about seeking to try to understand the religious attitudes of the past by reference to Church records of ecclesiastical discipline and thus concludes that “the past was considerably more religious than our modern present.” But in fact, was it? Is not Bruce just falling into the same trap that he accuses Rodney Stark of doing: massaging the evidence to fit his theory rather than allowing the evidence to shape and form the theory? We simply do not know what the people of the Medieval period believed. We only know how they practiced their faith, or rather, how the Church allowed them to practice it. Thus David Martin too urges caution asking “how recent and

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66 Perhaps showing that the Session were not even willing to consider it?  
67 See David Adam Brechin, the Ancient City, 78  
68 Steve Bruce Religion in the modern world, 55  
69 Ibid., 56
superficial the Christianization of Europe sometimes was.” Davie’s more nuanced approach is I would consider closer to the truth. Yes, church going has diminished from the heights of the Victorian age and (in Scotland at least) the boom years of the 1950s and 1960s. But in comparison to the sporadic worship of the laity in the Medieval period (to say nothing of the later corruptions of the clergy in the Chapter identified by John Crannoch) there is possibly more faithfulness in today’s congregations. Let me unpack this a little further.

We know, for example, from the excellent research of Archibald Scott into the Pictish Church which originated with St. Ninian, that the Culdees or Cele Dei were a reforming movement from Ireland who came over to Scotland to correct many of the lax attitudes in the Pictish Church. In particular, the Gospel was not being proclaimed to the people and many of the ancient Druidical practices of animal sacrifice and totem charms were still being observed, even following the Ninian mission of the fourth century. The Culdees changed all that. They utilised the Druidical sites for Christian worship and utilised pagan practices to convey Christian truths. Further the Culdees went into people’s homes to pass on the good news of Jesus first hand. This superstitious age of the Druids may not have been secular in the modern sense but it can hardly be described as Christian either. Even Bruce himself is forced to admit that in that age “among the ungodly, a fundamental superstition was widespread.”

71 See Archibald Scott The Pictish nation- its people and its Church (Edinburgh: TN Faulis, 1918)
72 See for example Donald E. Meek The Quest for Celtic Christianity (Haddington: The Hansel Press, 2000), 106f. for an interesting excursus on the Culdees (or Cele Dei).
73 It is likely that the first wooden Church on the site of the present Cathedral was built around 800 in response to these reforms.
74 Steve Bruce Religion in the modern world, 54
What I suspect we are seeing is a collapse of the “sacred canopy”\(^{75}\) to which Berger referred. What is becoming eroded is a unified epistemological understanding of shared faith values within society, not necessarily a loss of belief.\(^{76}\) As Bruce admits:

Church involvement is not the only expression of religious sentiment nor is it a necessary one. We cannot immediately assume that because we are far less likely than our grandparents to be church-goers, ours is a less religious society.\(^{77}\)

So, in the case of the Cathedral’s parish, the 2011 UK Census statistics show 38% have no religious affiliation while 44% claim to be Church of Scotland.\(^{78}\) Even allowing these figures to be inflated by folks not answering the Census truthfully, we should still expect to see nearly one thousand worshippers on a Sunday morning!\(^{79}\)

I am therefore cautious in accepting Bruce’s analysis of a more secular society. As Philip Jenkins\(^{80}\) and Talal Asad\(^{81}\) remind us, religion is on the rise in many other parts of the world, particularly in the form of Christian fundamentalism and radicalised Islam. Even in so-called secular Western Europe the picture is decidedly more patchy than supposed. We may admittedly be seeing an epistemological change to how people view the religious sphere, as Bruce states:

It is not much of an exaggeration to say that the main churches have themselves become secularized in the sense of reducing the specifically supernatural in their product. Major elements of the Christian faith – the miracles, the Virgin Birth, the bodily resurrection of Christ, the expectation

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\(^{75}\) See Peter Berger *The Social reality of religion* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969)

\(^{76}\) It is interesting to note in the context of the Cathedral that on Christmas Eve and Easter Day we invariably always have a large number of visitors at worship. Christmas 2014 most of the congregation were in fact not regular worshippers. One wonders if this points to a latent Christian belief still resident in the community?

\(^{77}\) Bruce *Religion in the modern world*, 32

\(^{78}\) See [www.cofscotland.org.uk](http://www.cofscotland.org.uk) for Statistics for Mission project.

\(^{79}\) The actual regular worshipping congregation each Sunday is nearer 60.

\(^{80}\) See Philip Jenkins *The lost history of Christianity* (Harper Collins e-books, Kindle edition); also *The next Christendom: The coming of Global Christianity* 3\(^{rd}\) edition (Oxford University Press, 2011)

\(^{81}\) See Talal Asad *Formations of the Secular* (Stanford University Press, 2003)
of Christ’s return, the reality of eternal damnation – have quietly been dropped from the teachings of the major churches.\textsuperscript{82} But again I want to ask: have we? I have laid great stress on bodily resurrection and the expectation of Christ’s return as defining factors in my own considerations, while also touching on the miracles, healings and teachings of Jesus. Indeed the expectation of Christ’s return, while perhaps lost to the modern church, is a sense we do well to re-capture if we are truly to reflect the Kingdom’s imminence. Bruce’s death knell for Christian doctrine is, I suspect, a little premature.

Whether Christianity is over in the West I think is too sweeping a generalisation. It may be as Person A suggests that we are in an ebb tide. Yet, the tide has ebbed before and returned. My eschatological driver continues to make us pursue the Kingdom goal. Thus, my own view is the Secularisation is a phoney villain, a will o’ the wisp, a phantom that we may fear yet which actually will turn out eschatologically to lack any permanent substance.

But how might today’s Church respond to this phoney villain of secularization that seeks to exercise such dread fear upon us? George C. Hunter III suggests that the post-Christian phase in which we find ourselves is not so vastly different from the pre-Christian phase of the Celtic Christians, our Culdees. Hunter recognises the loss of the epistemological canopy that has covered our society, stating that we “cannot assume basic Christian knowledge in the minds of the audience, so clarity is a greater requirement for engaging most people.”\textsuperscript{83} Yet Hunter also believes, as I have argued, that it is precisely by unearthing our lost history that

\textsuperscript{82} Bruce Religion in the modern world, 36
Katie Edwards of Sheffield University is publishing a new work Rethinking Biblical Literacy (Bloomsbury) in February 2015 which will be a useful research tool in this whole Biblical epistemological arena.
we will find the tools necessary for the mission of today’s (and tomorrow’s) Church.  

The question I must face is: are my eschatological shards that I have unearthed merely antiquated antiques in my cluttered junk shop, theological curios, in this supposedly secular age? Or might my eschatological practices still speak to today’s congregation in our context of that eschatological future of the Kingdom? It is to this final contemporary challenge I will turn in my final concluding chapter.

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84 Ibid. loc. 1881-82  
85 See Chapter One
CHAPTER SIX

The end of the story or a new beginning: finis or telos?

“Belief in the past things and in the future things is easy; but here and now, that’s different”\(^1\)

The stimulus for my project was a sense of crisis in the future direction of my congregation of Brechin Cathedral which, given their extensive historical past, I found somewhat curious. My argument throughout this paper has been that my congregation does indeed have a future direction, grounded in a telos determined by God. Their future is an eschatological one, inaugurated in the ministry of Jesus and his bodily resurrection from the dead and which has left embedded within the past narrative of the Cathedral shards of the coming Kingdom. My task has been to unearth these buried shards and reveal that there is within the Cathedral what I call an eschatological driver, the power of the Spirit moving us towards a telos. My contention is that I have fulfilled that task. The shards stand open to scrutiny and, I claim, the eschatological driver is shown to be working.

However, as Norah Lofts observed, analysing the past and having hope for the future is one thing; the question my congregation now face is a present one: what do they do with this eschatologically driven historical drama that I now lay before them? The danger is that my project becomes a finis, an end in itself; useful to historian and scholar but of little further congregational relevance. Instead it needs to

\(^1\) Norah Lofts *How far to Bethlehem?* (Birmingham: Tree of Life Kindle Publications, 2011; originally published by London: Hutchison & Co, 2007) loc. 703
become a launch pad, a transformative moment, a breaking in in its own way of the Kingdom. My project itself hopefully will produce new shards, further Kingdom moments in the on-going drama that is the Cathedral narrative. In the previous chapter I considered the whole question of secularisation, which I suggest is a phantom villain for us. If indeed secularisation has overplayed its hand, in what ways might my eschatological practices still find relevance in the current context? Does the Cathedral still have an eschatological story to tell or are we at the finis of the drama? In this final concluding section I want to utilise a sense of vision, to take my eschatological practices and see how we, today’s congregation, might seek to utilise them in the context of that pseudo-secular society in which we find ourselves.

As we noted in the previous chapter, Grace Davie spoke of in terms of mutation; so might these historical practices, which I have identified, be yet useful in ways that remain congruent with my eschatological driver while at the same time transformative and relevant in the modern pseudo-secular context which my congregation faces? At one level much of the responsibility for providing these practices has been taken over by the State, for example, education of the young, health care or the provision for the poor. It is interesting that Pannenberg for one does not see State provision of welfare as a problem for the Church, indeed he argues for it:

The Church’s effort should be directed toward making the state ready and able to assume these responsibilities which are appropriate to the political structures of society. It is a strange twisting of its sense of mission when the Church becomes jealous of the state and wants to monopolize certain welfare activities. The Church’s satisfaction is in stimulating the political community to accept its responsibilities.  

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2 I have deliberately used this term as it acknowledges that we may be living in a more secular age, while still leaving open the possibility that, as I have stated, it may simply be an ebb tide in what Matthew Arnold famously called the Sea of Faith in his 1867 poem “Dover beach”.

3 Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, 91
Without seeking to get into a political debate with Pannenberg, I might merely raise the question of what happens in an age of economic austerity when the State either cannot or will not fully meet the needs of the poor and sick. Should the Church in these circumstances stand idly by and neglect (what I would claim) are key eschatological practices? Thus it is not sufficient, even in the modern era, for the Church to devolve welfare functions of healthcare and poor relief purely to the State.4 If the Church is true to its eschatological calling as a harbinger of redeemed and transformed creation, part of the inaugural work of this, in conjunction with the Spirit as our Director of the play, must be in these welfare arenas. Don Cupitt recognises the limits to the work of the Church in these areas when he remarks “it would be foolish nowadays to look to religious action to cure disease or ensure a good harvest.”5 Yet, as Cupitt goes on to say, religion generates for us “an order of meanings and values for us to live by, an order which can give moral weight and purpose to individual and social life.”6

So might my practices, even in our modern context, still give meaning and value to people? Let us consider briefly each in turn.7

1. Care and education of the young is now a State provision. But is the State offering a fully rounded education for our young people with a truly spiritual under-pining? Students and teaching staff live in a very target driven educational environment, where results are assessed on exam performance. How young people might find a sense of value or meaning, or indeed any sense of the transcendent or eschatological dimension to life in this context?

4 Nor even, as Pannenberg seems to suggest, ensure the State fulfils them.
5 Don Cupitt The Sea of Faith (London: BBC, 1984), 32
6 Ibid.
7 Much of the information I have utilised in this section is from pastoral conversations I have had in the context of ministry and of chaplaincy duties both in school and hospital environments.
And what of Biblical literacy; is the Church to still seek to convey this to the young? Might the Church thus still have a crucial role in the educational sphere?

2. **Bias towards women.** Domestic abuse both on women and men is, as Social work agencies will tell us, still as present with us in today’s town as it was in seventeenth century Brechin. How might today’s faith community offer a place of sanctuary and even, daringly, an opportunity for reconciliation and conflict resolution in sometimes very intractable relationships?

3. **Friendship for the stranger.** Immigration is becoming one of the foremost political issues of our time; it may indeed be decisive in the forthcoming UK General Election debate. Within Brechin we have a very strong Polish community. How might today’s Church reach out to these new strangers in our midst? And how might we, as Christians, counter-culturally answer the fear of migrants that is often prevalent in society?

4. **Alleviation of poverty** is, supposedly, also a State obligation yet the Brechin Foodbank (supported by the local churches) is in greater demand than ever before. Indeed, we are now urged to donate packet soups or sweets that may be made with hot water from a kettle as many of the poorest sections of the community lack basic cooking facilities or, due to fuel poverty, the means to heat their homes. Is this too an area where our eschatological practices still come into play?

5. **Healthcare.** Again much of this field has fallen to the responsibility of the secular State, and yet healthcare professionals often speak of being under-manned and over-stretched. Nurses have less time than they would like to offer a listening ear to patients. Mental health care, particularly amongst
young males, is an area where there is often patchy provision. Might the congregation be bold, and in partnership with health providers, step into to plug the gaps in our National Health Service offering a friendship service or a way of supporting those who are suicidal or in depression?

6. **Reconciliation and conflict resolution.** To my mind this practice is the most counter-cultural and Kingdom orientated practice of them all. Our world is beset by the scars of division in religion, class, colour and creed. Internationally we see an ongoing battle between radicalised Islamists and western democracies. In Scotland we still see tensions between communities on the basis of Protestant/Catholic-Rangers/Celtic fault lines. Are there ways which in addressing its own past hurts and wounds, the Cathedral might modestly act as a centre of conflict resolution, a beacon of light in a darkened world?

7. **Sabbath observance.** People in work speak of more and more demands being laid upon them with stress levels rising. People out of work tell of a being stuck in the system, with feelings of loss of value and individual identity. Might the congregation find ways in providing worship or fellowship opportunities that allow for spiritual and emotional refreshment and restoration? This need not necessarily be on Sundays but would at least maintain the Sabbath and Jubilee principles of re-creation. Jesus rose bodily from the dead; Matter as we have noted matters. The physical environment of workplace is also a place to seek and find God.

8. **Diversity.** Again, this is arguably one of the Church’s greatest gifts. The Christie Commission (2011) suggested that loneliness and social isolation

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8 Two Glasgow based football teams that, theoretically at least, derive support from the two denominations.
was one of the greatest scourges in modern Scottish society. As a result of this the Scottish government is now beginning to look seriously at the issue. In this field the Church has much to contribute. In what other kind of community on earth would people of different ages, classes, social and educational backgrounds, colours, sexualities be brought together as one people? In Christ Jesus, as I suggested in Chapter Three, we find unity and value as individuals. How might the Church reach out to those who are lonely and forgotten in Brechin?

9. **Tenacity.** In Chapter Four, I suggested that another key eschatological practice or shard was the sheer tenacity of the Cathedral, surviving as it had wars, plagues, invasions and internal divisions; that the metannarative of the Kingdom simply cannot be overcome by the dark periods in the congregational narrative. In a society where folk often face intractable problems in their own lives, might the survival of the Cathedral itself perhaps give witness to the constancy of the kerygma and the unending hope we have in God? The very eschatological tone of the Cathedral’s tale suggests to the whole Church (and to the world) that God is still with us, that the play goes on, the drama continues, we are not yet at the curtain call.

Tom Wright, in my own interview with him\(^9\), spoke of both the Eschaton (the end of time itself) and the eschatons, these moments in our own lives or our life as a congregation where we are truly presented with a *Kairos* moment, a moment of

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\(^9\) Interview with Rt. Rev. Prof. Tom Wright at St. Andrew’s University, 9th October, 2013. Two examples were given by Prof. Wright of eschatons: one the fall of the Temple in Jerusalem in AD70 when the Jewish people had to re-interpret the practice of their faith without a cultic centre; two, at a congregational level the closure of a church building and the loss of identity that results from this. While neither of these directly compare with where the Cathedral stands at present, its sense of crisis of identity I would argue is a sort of eschaton, a *Kairos* moment.
challenge, of decision for or against the Kingdom, a time when God acts. Simeon and Anna faced such a moment that day in the Temple when the infant Jesus appeared and they responded, as did the fishermen on the Sea of Galilee when Jesus called them. Might this indeed be a *Kairos* moment in the Cathedral’s life? We have noted such other moments in the Cathedral’s history, moments of turning to God, times when the Kingdom story was embraced. I would not suggest that *all* the practices I have outlined in this paper might lead to a transformed witness and life for my congregation but I do believe *some* of them might. The current missional task of my congregation, I believe, is to take these practices which I have outlined, practices which are not only embedded in the soil of their history but (as I have shown) are also pointers to the present yet coming Kingdom, and seek to apply them in our cultural context. How might we, today’s Cathedral people, utilise the intersection points between Cathedral story and Kingdom’s metanarrative? What are we already doing now that reflects these eschatological practices? And what might we be doing better?

In the field of education of the young the Cathedral is already involved within both the local Primary Schools and High School. Biblical literacy is being partly addressed through the excellent work of our Brechin Crossroads Storytellers project in which drama is being taught to youngsters in the context of the telling of Biblical stories. These stories are then performed by the children to a wider audience of parents, grandparents and the community, who consequently also learn more about the Biblical narrative. But in what other ways might we use the medium of the arts to

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10 Mark 1:15
12 Mark 1:17f.
13 This is being funded by “Go for It”, a Church of Scotland fund that supports congregational projects.
convey to several generations the Biblical story? This might be an area worthy of further investigation. In the practice of the alleviation of poverty, the Cathedral is supportive of the Brechin Foodbank and at Christmas the Angel Tree provides the opportunity for the congregation to donate gifts for the children of impoverished families. More might yet be done in offering support and practical help to the most poor and needy in our community. So too in the field of Sabbath observance we already have fortnightly mid-week services and have, in the past, had a “Prayer event” in which people were free to utilise different spiritual prayer stations within the Cathedral. There is also a “Prayer tree” within the Cathedral where visitors may leave prayers, as well as an active Prayer Circle that receives fortnightly (by email) a list of prayer requests. Might these ideas be extended so that additional opportunities for reflective worship are provided on a monthly or quarterly basis out with the normal Sunday worship?

However, it must also be recognised that there are times (as with all congregations) when we can become over insular and inward-looking, focused upon paying our bills and keeping our ancient building wind and water-tight. Thus the bias towards women, friendship to the stranger and the practice of healthcare are not so readily and obviously to be found in the Cathedral’s current narrative. Certainly the work of the Society of Friends, as well as the Cathedral being open daily to visitors, is part of that hospitality to the stranger, but this area in particular needs deepening and strengthening. Perhaps my greatest surprise in this project however was in two aspects: the strong emphasis on reconciliation and conflict resolution that emerged within our history and the sheer diversity within the Cathedral’s narrative itself. It is these two, in particular that, in my view, may act as “compass markers”, setting the

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14 From September until late May in the Queen’s Aisle.
course of the Cathedral for a new millennium. These are two aspects of life where the Cathedral can act as witness to the power of forgiveness of God on the one hand and a recognition that we live in a multi-cultured world where all God’s children are valued on the other. It would be interesting, for example, to enter discussions with Coventry Cathedral in England on the whole concept of reconciliation and see what Brechin might offer in this field within a Scottish context.

These combined issues of conflict resolution and the acceptance of diversity, I would argue, also offer a strong model of the Kingdom for the Church at large; so often intractable issues within congregations, even within one denomination, have as their foundation a view that one voice, rather than many, must be heard. There is sometimes a lack of grace and a failure to accept that Jesus calls a wide variety of differing personalities and skills to serve him. Yet, central within that rich kaleidoscope of disciples, is Jesus call to peace and unity of love in him alone. He is the one who breaks down the barriers between peoples and brings reconciliation.

A series of conversations and inter-changes with the charity A Place for Hope which seeks, amongst other things, to “support and enable 21st century church, communities and society in Scotland to develop creative, positive and life-giving ways to explore and address our differences” might very well be a valuable place to take our next step as a congregation, as we discern reconciliation and diversity within our midst.

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15 Coventry Cathedral has a unique insight to offer in the field of conflict resolution following the destruction of that ancient Cathedral by the Luftwaffe in 1940. Provost Howard at the time made a rudimentary cross and wrote on the wall behind the bombed altar the words “Father, forgive”. See www.coventrycathedral.org.uk/reconciliation-ministry.
16 John 10:16, also John 17:23
17 Ephesians 2:14
18 See www.placeforhope.org.uk Initially this began as a Guild project within the Church of Scotland but has now become a registered charitable organisation in its own right. Its vision is to seek “unity in diversity”.
However it is the tenacity of the Cathedral which we have observed, in the face of so many difficulties over the ages which offers, I believe, the greatest hope to the Church at large. A recent newspaper article suggested that the Kirk in Scotland was dying on its feet.\(^{19}\) The Cathedral’s witness over the ages would suggest otherwise. Yes, at times, it has looked as if the Cathedral and its people might disappear from history’s stage, but time and again they have re-appeared to continue their performance in God’s drama. My project has been an eschatologically orientated one, a project centred on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Church too is part of that process of resurrection; dying and being re-born into a transformed state. I would be bold enough to suggest that our *apparent* current crisis in the Kirk is just another in the series of deaths and re-births that the Church has undergone for centuries; no worse and no better than previous crises. A little eschaton, as Wright would say. But one in which God still is acting, still is present.

It would be useful, and I think a mark of hope for the whole Church, if the other Cathedrals of Scotland\(^{20}\) were to offer their own eschatological insights. What eschatological practices might we find embedded in St.Giles’ Cathedral in Edinburgh or in Dunblane Cathedral for example? Perhaps the congregations and clergy of these ancient places of worship, learning and Christian hope should form some sort of collegium to bring unique insights (and hope) to the whole Scottish church context?

My analysis is complete; the greater task, applying what we have learnt is waiting. As a congregation of God’s people this is not our finis, merely the opportunity to start a new chapter in the same story, a story of hope, faith, love; the

\(^{19}\) See *Dundee Courier and Advertiser* article “Are plummeting congregation’s numbers leaving our nation’s churches in crisis”, Saturday 28\(^{th}\) February, 2015

\(^{20}\) There are eight ancient Cathedrals still extant in the Kirk as worshipping congregations: St.Machar’s in Aberdeen, Brechin, Dornoch, Dunblane, Dunkeld, St.Giles’ in Edinburgh, St. Mungo’s or St. Kentigern’s in Glasgow and St.Magnus in Kirkwall. There is a case I would think to add Iona Abbey to that list.
story of Jesus. It is an eschatological story, with a telos. Therefore in hope, as Bonhoeffer noted “only Jesus Christ, who bids us follow him, knows the journey’s end.”

“Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it and you will find rest for your souls”

22 Jeremiah 6:16
APPENDIX ONE: The Cathedral’s Timeline

As with many great historical churches, Brechin Cathedral's origins are shrouded in the fogs of time. Some scholars claim that one Brychan was martyred down by the river in the second century, though this may relate more to Wales. There may indeed have been Christians in this area as early as the second century, as we know of a Roman encampment at Stracathro in Emperor Hadrian’s era. What does seem certain is that by c. 630 a hermit called Dubhoc (a Pict) had his anchorite cell at or near the site of the present Cathedral. This site in pagan times may have seen Druidic practices, even human sacrifice. By the late 700s, the Cele De (servants of God), a Celtic group of monks, had arrived from Ireland whose task it was to reform the Pictish Church. This reform movement gained momentum during the reign of Kenneth MacAlpine (842-58) who wanted to supplant the Pictish Church with Scots. Yet the liturgy (prayer book) of the Picts continued to be used in the Cathedral until as late as 1348.

There have probably been 5 churches on the site altogether, the first being a circular wooden structure built by the Picts, c. 650, the last, the restoration of the Medieval Cathedral in 1902. Yet remains from all five periods can still be gleaned with careful observation.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT DATES ARE:

- 971-995 King Kenneth MacMalcom dedicates the “great city” of Brechin to the Lord. The Church of St. Dubhoc is dedicated to the Holy Trinity and a cathedral created.
- 1012 Brechin destroyed by the Danes. The city is burned, only the Round
Tower survives the fire.

- 1296 Cathedral partly destroyed by Edward “Hammer of the Scots”. He uses lead from the roof as a counterweight for his great siege engine Ludgar, the warwolf. Later, in restitution, he sends lead to the Church authorities that the roof might be repaired! The Prayer books are burned and the liturgy of Sarum instituted.

- John Crannach (1426-53) bishop of Brechin “a gude, actif and vertuis man” sets up the Choir School, unique in Scotland.

- 1560 Protestant Reformation. Brechin largely untouched. Only two of the priests in the Cathedral chapter refuse to join the new reformed church.

- 1617 Visit of King James VI to Brechin, though there is no evidence he ever set foot in the Cathedral.

- 1637 Liturgy of Laud, Bishop Whiteford seeks to introduce the new prayer book to a hostile congregation with two pistols primed and ready in the pulpit. Eventually he flees the town.

- 1644 Brechin is in the frontline between the Covenanters & Royalist forces. By the October the town is virtually empty after most inhabitants flee.

- 1647 Plague reaches Brechin; some 600 folk perish (over half the population). Services suspended.

- 1651-58 Cromwell's forces in the town. During one harsh winter the Cathedral is used as a stable for the Calvary unit.

- 1689 King William's solemnity. Great controversy in Brechin over John Skinner, son of the deceased minister who continues to preach without Presbytery approval until 1710.

- 1703 John Willison arrives as minister. Attempts to introduce full
Presbyterian religion but without great success. Eventually forced to leave.


- 1760 Rev. David Blair introduces first Sabbath school in Scotland

- May 1764 Riot in the town by the weavers. Group of rowdy lads destroy Cutty stool, including Rev. Blair's own son!

- 1806 Georgian refurbishment of Cathedral. Largely considered a disaster!

- 1837-38 The vacancy controversy. A precursor to the Disruption of the Kirk in 1843 when the majority of Cathedral members (2/3rds) along with its two ministers left the Church of Scotland.

- 1902 Restoration of the Cathedral to its Medieval form. This project is continued by Rev. James Anderson in the 1950s and 60s who seeks stained glass in all the Cathedral windows.

- Late 1990s the ministry of Rev. Dr. Robin McKenzie is declared “unsatisfactory” by the Presbytery of Angus amidst a dwindling congregation. After Dr. McKenzie is translated Rev. Dr. James Simpson is appointed Interim minister for one year by Presbytery.

- 2009 Rev. Scott Rennie translated to Aberdeen: Queen's Cross and, because of Scott's sexuality, a national debate begins in the Kirk over “gay clergy”.

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APPENDIX TWO:
Table of Clergy of Brechin Cathedral, 1156-2015

**BISHOPS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T (only initial known)</td>
<td>1156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samson</td>
<td>1158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turpin</td>
<td>1178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodolph (Abbot of Melrose)</td>
<td>1202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugo</td>
<td>1218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gregory (Archdeacon)</td>
<td>1225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilbert</td>
<td>1247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albin (Precentor)</td>
<td>1248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William de Kilconcaeth (Rector of Dominicans at Perth)</td>
<td>1260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward (Monk at Cupar Angus)</td>
<td>1280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert (Archdeacon)</td>
<td>1284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William</td>
<td>1286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John de Kinninmund</td>
<td>1298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>1328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philip (Dean)</td>
<td>1350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick de Leuchars (Lord Chancellor)</td>
<td>1351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen</td>
<td>1374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter Forrester of Garden (Lord Clerk Register)</td>
<td>1400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Crannoch</td>
<td>1426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George de Shoreswood (Lord Chancellor and confessor to the Royal household)</td>
<td>1454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Graham (Nephew of King James I)</td>
<td>1463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Balfour</td>
<td>1466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter Meldrum</td>
<td>1488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Hepburn (arch anti-Reformer)</td>
<td>1517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Sinclair (President of Court of Session)</td>
<td>1562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Campbell (titular only)</td>
<td>1566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Lamb</td>
<td>1607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Lindsay</td>
<td>1619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Sydserf (Dean of Edinburgh)</td>
<td>1634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter Whiteford (Sub dean of Glasgow)</td>
<td>1635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Strachan</td>
<td>1662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Laurie (Dean of Edinburgh)</td>
<td>1672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Halliburton</td>
<td>1678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Douglas (Dean of Glasgow)</td>
<td>1682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Cairncross</td>
<td>1684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Drummond</td>
<td>1684</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### MINISTERS OF THE FIRST CHARGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Hepburn (illegitimate son of Bishop Hepburn)</td>
<td>1562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Merschell</td>
<td>1600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Bisset</td>
<td>1608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Rait</td>
<td>1644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop Strachan</td>
<td>1662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop Laurie</td>
<td>1672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop Halliburton</td>
<td>1678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop Douglas</td>
<td>1682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bishop Cairncross</td>
<td>1684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurence Skinner (from second charge)</td>
<td>1689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Willison</td>
<td>1703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Gray</td>
<td>1717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Blair (from second charge)</td>
<td>1738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Bisset</td>
<td>1769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Burns</td>
<td>1798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James McCosh (demitted at Disruption)</td>
<td>1839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathaniel Morrin</td>
<td>1843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Halkett (from Canada)</td>
<td>1847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Mackay</td>
<td>1872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John A. Clark (died in office)</td>
<td>1892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter W. Coats</td>
<td>1901</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### MINISTERS OF THE SECOND CHARGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David Carnegy</td>
<td>1631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Marshall</td>
<td>1633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Norie</td>
<td>1639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurence Skinner (to first charge)</td>
<td>1650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Skinner (never formally ordained or inducted)</td>
<td>1687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Johnston</td>
<td>1710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Blair (to first charge)</td>
<td>1733</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Shank</td>
<td>1740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Fordyce</td>
<td>1745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Mathison</td>
<td>1754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Bruce</td>
<td>1760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Coutts (assistant and successor)</td>
<td>1798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Whitson</td>
<td>1804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander L.R. Foote (demitted at Disruption)</td>
<td>1834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Gardner</td>
<td>1843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam D. Tait Hutchison</td>
<td>1893</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# MINISTERS OF THE ONE CHARGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James Anderson</td>
<td>1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter M Gordon</td>
<td>1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert (Robin) W McKenzie</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Simpson (interim minister)</td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott M Rennie</td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roderick J Grahame</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX THREE: Authorisation Forms and Questionnaires utilised in Interviews

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary / University of Aberdeen

Informed Consent Form

INTRODUCTION:
My name is Roderick J Grahame, and I am a student at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary/Aberdeen University conducting an ethnographic study for my Doctor of Ministry degree. My contact number is 01356 624980 (Home) or 07950681277 (Mobile). My research supervisors are Rev. Dr. Edwin van Driel (email: evandriel@pts.edu) and Prof. Tom Greggs (Tel: 01224 272388)

You may contact either myself or my research supervisors at any time if you have questions about this study.

PURPOSE:
The purpose of this study is to examine the historical practices at Brechin Cathedral with a view to discern which past or present practices most reflect God's present and coming Kingdom.

PROCEDURE:
If you consent, you will be asked several questions in an oral interview that will take place
at.......................................................................................on...........................................................................................................................

I will make a digital recording of your interview.

TIME REQUIRED:
It will take approximately 1 – 2 hours of your time.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate you may still refuse to answer any question that you do not wish to answer. You may also withdraw from the study at any time.

RISKS:
There are no known risks associated with this interview.

Should you feel distress in any of the areas explored, please inform me promptly.

**BENEFITS:**

While there is no guaranteed benefit, it is possible you will enjoy discussing the Cathedral’s past and that you may find the conversation meaningful. This study is intended to benefit the congregation of Brechin Cathedral by enlivening our discourse on its theology and practice.

Your comments may also inform a planned new history of the Cathedral.

**CONFIDENTIALITY/ANONYMITY:**

Your name will be kept confidential in all reporting and/or writing related to this study. I will be the only person present for the interview and the only person who listens to the recording. When I record your comments in my study you will simply be referred to as ................................................

If you prefer to use another anonymous designation for the study, please let me know.

**SHARING THE RESULTS:**

I plan to construct an ethnography – a written account of what I learn – based on these interviews together with my historical and theological reading and research. This final paper will be presented to my Faculty Committee (listed above) as the final part of my Doctor of Ministry degree.

It is also intended that parts of the study may be shared more widely both within the congregation and the Christian Church. Portions may be printed but anonymity will always be preserved.

**PUBLICATION:**

There is the possibility that I may publish this study or that it may be used as the basis for other publications in the future. I will continue to use designations (as above) and may change some identifying details in order to further protect your anonymity.

**BEFORE YOU SIGN**

By signing below you are agreeing to undertake a digitally recorded interview for this research study. Be sure that any questions you may have are answered to your satisfaction. If you agree to participate a signed copy of this document will be retained by you.
Participant's signature: .................................................................

PRINT NAME: 

DATE: 

Researcher's signature: .................................................................

PRINT NAME: 

DATE: 

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ANONYMOUS
DESIGNATION: ........................................................................................................

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED ON: ........................................................................

When did your association with Brechin Cathedral first begin?

What is your first or earliest memory of the Cathedral?

Which practices from the past life of the Cathedral have been lost and, in your view, is this a positive or a negative thing and why?

When would you say the Cathedral was at its best and why?

When was it at its worst and why?

What would you say changed most within the Cathedral over the time you have been involved with it?

Which of the practices within the Cathedral brought you closer to God?

Or made you feel further from God?

Which practices of the Cathedral helped you understand the gospel?

What, in your view, should the Cathedral re-institute in terms of a practice?

What would most reflect God's Kingdom within what the Cathedral does today? And in the past?
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(* No record of any minute book or register has been found from 1697 – 1703)

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Register of United Session: 30th December 1703 – 17th August 1726

Scroll Minute Books: 10th June 1716 – 30th December 1785

Record Books of the Kirk Session: 4th January 1786 – 3rd January 1790

6th January 1790 – 25th December 1803

1st January 1804 – 31st December 1820

3rd January 1821 – 30th January 1843

27th February 1843 – 30th March 1868

13th April 1868 – 9th May 1883

28th May 1883 – 27th December 1909

31st January 1910 – 12th May 1939

29th January 1940 – 11th November 1963

16th December 1963 – 11th February 1973

Missing volume: 13th February 1973 – March 1987

Loose Leaf Record of the Kirk Session: April 1987 - present

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