

**Royal Piety in thirteenth-century Scotland:
the religion and religiosity of Alexander II (1214-49) and Alexander III (1249-86)**

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Introduction

It is perhaps inevitable that both the public and personal piety of Scotland's thirteenth-century kings should appear, at first, unremarkable in contrast to that of the long-reigning Henry III of England and Louis IX of France. Henry's consuming spiritual and material investment at Westminster Abbey in the cult of his ancestor, Edward the Confessor, and, from 1247, the associated veneration at that house of a Holy Blood relic, were but the most outward signs of a deep personal faith wedded tightly to Plantagenet political ends. The studies of David Carpenter, Paul Binski, Nicholas Vincent, Sarah Dixon-Smith and others have revealed in Henry a commitment to a wide, varied and costly round of religious building as well as daily and annual observances through masses, alms-giving and ritual commemoration.¹ Many of these practices were continued by Henry's son: as Michael Prestwich has illustrated, Edward I's rule can also be shown to reflect a strong personal as well as heavily politicised faith.² Nonetheless, the contemporary and historical reputations of both these English monarchs have always struggled to compete with that of the 'most Christian' French king. Louis was a charismatic religious exemplar, canonised in 1297, but

¹ P. Binski, *Westminster Abbey and the Plantagenets: Kingship and the Representation of Power, 1200-1400* (London, 1995); D.A. Carpenter, 'The Burial of King Henry III, the Regalia and Royal Ideology', in idem, *The Reign of Henry III* (London, 1996), 427-61; D.A. Carpenter, 'King Henry III and Saint Edward the Confessor: the Origins of the Cult', *EHR*, cxxii (2007) 865-91; N. Vincent, *The Holy Blood: King Henry III and the Westminster Blood Relic* (Cambridge, 2001); S.A. Dixon-Smith, 'Feeding the Poor to Commemorate the Dead: the Pro Anima Almsgiving of Henry III of England, 1227-72', unpublished PhD thesis, University College of London, 2003.

² M. Prestwich, 'The Piety of Edward I', in W.M. Ormrod ed., *England in the Thirteenth Century* (Harlaxton, 1985), 120-8.

during his lifetime already praised throughout Europe for his charity, devotion to his royal predecessors at St Denis, veneration of both local and universal saints and their newly translated relics and, of course, his firm will to actually crusade.³

Little wonder, then, that the successive Kings Alexander of Scotland from 1214 seem, at best – to use a well-worn measure in investigations of piety – largely ‘conventional’ in their religious politics and patronage as well as in their religiosity as individuals; or, at worst, they are really ‘unknowable’ as spiritual beings. Contemporary and later Scottish chronicles note, for example, Alexander II’s protection of churches in times of war, his humility before priests and his ‘...wonderful zeal for the increase of religion, seen especially in his concern with building churches for the Friars Preachers.’⁴ But these were traits reflected in many a medieval royal epitaph and Alexander is more usually reduced by modern historians to a hard-edged political and military king focussed on laying claim first to the northern counties of England and then, from 1237, the Norse-ruled western isles off Scotland.⁵ The latter was an objective which Matthew Paris chronicled as causing Alexander to knowingly offend the cult of St Columba thus leading to the king’s early death of illness on the Argyllshire island of Kerrera in 1249.⁶ Alexander II certainly pales in comparison, too, with his own father, William I (or the Lion, 1165-1214). William is remembered in far more personal terms and beyond his realm by chroniclers for his ‘great religion and large and lasting devotion toward God and the cult of holy church’, his generous alms, his receipt of one of the first Papal

³ W.C. Jordan, *Louis IX and the Challenge of the Crusade: A Study in Rulership* (Princeton, 1978), 107-93; J. le Goff, *Saint Louis* (Paris, 1996), Part I ch.s ii-iv., Part II ch.s ii-v, Part III ch.s ix-x.

⁴ D.E.R. Watt et. al. eds., *The Scotichronicon of Walter Bower* (9 vols., Aberdeen, 1987-99), v, 191; A.O.R. Anderson ed., *Early Sources of Scottish History* (2 vols., Stamford, 1990 reprint), ii, 509.

⁵ R.D. Oram, ‘Introduction: an Overview of the Reign of Alexander II’, in idem ed., *The Reign of Alexander II, 1214-49* (Leiden, 2005), 1-49.

⁶ R. Vaughan ed., *The Illustrated Chronicles of Matthew Paris* (2nd edition, London, 1994), 119-20. For the wider cult of Columba see: C. Bourke ed., *Studies in the cult of Saint Columba* (Dublin, 1997); D. Broun and T.O. Clancy eds., *Spes Spectorum – Hope of Scots: Saint Columba, Iona and Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1999); M.A. Hall, ‘Of holy men and heroes: the cult of saints in medieval Perthshire’, *Innes Review*, lvi (2005), 61-88.

golden Lenten roses gifted to a layman (c.1182), and his penitential foundation of such great houses as the Tironesian abbey of Arbroath, dedicated to Thomas Becket (1178).⁷

By the same measure, Alexander III, although king of a reign recalled as a golden age by Scots from the late fourteenth century onwards, has never been especially remarked for his piety: we have only routine claims, say, that ‘every day in the life of this king the church of Christ flourished...[and he was] unstinting in his charity’. Moreover, English chroniclers, such as the monks of Lanercost, homilised - in terms as equally conventional as those of Matthew Paris, it could be said - Alexander III’s early death in a drunken riding accident as punishment for his violation of the Durham diocesan lands of St Cuthbert.⁸ This is the case even though Alexander III’s reign opened with the canonisation and translation in 1249-50 at Dunfermline’s Benedictine abbey of the incorrupt body of St Margaret, the royal Anglo-Saxon wife of Alexander III’s great-great-grandfather, Malcolm III (1070-93). The latter, of course, was both a religious and political event which can be directly related to the development of the subjects of the kings of Scots as a nation or *gens*, obviously comparable and in competition with similar rituals choreographed and embraced by sacral monarchy at thirteenth-century Westminster and St Denis.⁹ But to date it is not an event which historians have particularly linked to the religion or religiosity of any individual king of Scots.

It is likely the case that there has been little attempt to probe deeper into the faith of Scottish kings in a manner similar to studies of Henry III and St Louis because of an

⁷ *Early Sources of Scottish History*, ii, 400; *The Scotichronicon of Walter Bower*, iv, 475; K.J. Stringer, ‘Arbroath Abbey in Context, 1178-1320’ in G.W.S. Barrow ed., *The Declaration of Arbroath: History, Significance, Setting* (Edinburgh 2003), 116-42. The papal rose was most likely adapted as the royal sceptre of Scotland’s kings, styled ‘Aaron’s rod’ and removed by Edward I in 1296 [A.A.M. Duncan, ‘Before Coronation: Making a King at Scone in the Thirteenth Century’, in R. Welander, D.J. Breeze and T.O. Clancy eds., *The Stone of Destiny: Artefact and Icon* (Edinburgh, 2003), 139-67].

⁸ *Early Sources of Scottish History*, ii, 688-9; *The Scotichronicon of Walter Bower*, v, 421; N. Reid, ‘Historiography’, and M. Ash, ‘The Church in the Reign of Alexander III’, in N. Reid ed., *Scotland in the Age of Alexander III, 1249-86* (Edinburgh, 1988), 31-52, 181-213.

⁹ *John of Fordun’s Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, ed. W.F. Skene (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1872, reprint 1993), ii, 290-1; *The Scotichronicon of Walter Bower*, v, 297-9; P.A. Yeoman, ‘Saint Margaret’s Shrine at Dunfermline Abbey’, in R. Fawcett ed., *Royal Dunfermline* (Edinburgh, 2005), 79-88; Binski, *Westminster Abbey*, passim; C. Beaune [trans. S.R. Huston and F.L. Cheyette], *The Birth of an Ideology: Myths and Symbols of Nation in Late-Medieval France* (California, 1991), ch. 1.

ingrained perception of a painful lack of sources, allied to a sense that the relative poverty of the Scots kings meant that they had little to spend on religious foundations and decoration. There certainly survive little or no financial accounts – comparable, say, to Henry III's fragmentary Almoner's Rolls (soon to be published) – with which to track the daily observances and oblations of Alexanders II and III: indeed, we have only a portion of Alexander III's rolls of Exchequer for 1264 and can in no way undertake an exercise as detailed, say, as Nicholas Vincent's study of English royal pilgrimages in this period.¹⁰ In addition, for a number of historical reasons, the Scottish evidence is undeniably characterised by a *relative* dearth of surviving liturgical, architectural and other material remains.¹¹ However, this paper seeks to advocate the application to the thirteenth century of a quite simple methodology which has already borne fruit for the study of Scottish royal piety between 1306 and 1371 and thus what such research can reveal about the development of Scotland's kingship and liturgy as well as the personalities of her kings.

By taking all the extant *acta* of Alexanders II and III and removing their dates of issue from a blank calendar year it is possible to identify royal 'non-business' days on which the king and his household may have observed a particular annual religious event.¹² To these

¹⁰ D.A. Carpenter, 'The household rolls of King Henry III of England', *HR*, 80, 207 (2007), 22-46; J. Stuart et al. eds., *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland* (23 vols., Edinburgh, 1878-1908), i, 1-51; N. Vincent, 'The Pilgrimages of the Angevin Kings of England, 1154-1272', in C. Morris and P. Roberts eds., *Pilgrimage: the English Experience from Becket to Bunyan* (Cambridge, 2002), 12-45.

¹¹ For example see: A.P. Forbes ed., *Kalendars of Scottish Saints* (Edinburgh, 1872); C.R. Borland ed., *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Western Medieval Manuscripts in Edinburgh University Library* (Edinburgh, 1916), 38-41; D. McRoberts, *Catalogue of Scottish Medieval Liturgical Books and Fragments* (Glasgow, 1953); D. McRoberts, 'The Medieval Scottish Liturgy Illustrated by Surviving Documents', *Transactions of the Scottish Ecclesiological Society*, 15 (1957), 24-40; D. McRoberts, 'Material Destruction caused by the Scottish Reformation', *Innes Review*, x (1959), 126-72; D.H. Caldwell ed., *Angels, Nobles and Unicorns: Art and Patronage in Medieval Scotland* (Edinburgh 1982); J. Higgitt, 'Imageis Maid with Mennis Hand': *Saints, Images, Belief and Identity in Later Medieval Scotland* (9th Whithorn lecture, 2003); J. Higgitt ed., *Medieval Art and Architecture in the Diocese of St Andrews* (London, 1994); R. Fawcett, 'Ecclesiastical Architecture in the Second Half of the Thirteenth Century' in Reid ed., *Scotland in the Reign of Alexander III*, 148-77; R. Fawcett ed., *Medieval Art and Architecture in the Diocese of Glasgow* (London 1998); R. Fawcett, *Scottish Medieval Churches: Architecture and Furnishings* (Stroud, 2002).

¹² These dates have been extrapolated from J. Scoular ed., *A Handlist of the Acts of Alexander II, 1214-49* (Edinburgh, 1959) and G.G. Simpson ed., *A Handlist of the Acts of Alexander III, the Guardians and John, 1249-96* (Edinburgh, 1960). N.B. the first of these volumes is about to be superseded by K.J. Stringer ed., *Regesta Regum Scottorum, volume iii: the Acts of Alexander II, 1214-49* (forthcoming).

fixed dates should be added an awareness of moveable religious feasts such as Lent, Easter and Trinity Sunday. It is possible to use royal *acta* to attempt to furthermore identify where the court was located around such major Christian feasts each year (just as its location for fixed dates might also be extrapolated). Admittedly, this approach has severe limitations. Far fewer royal acts are extant for the thirteenth century than for the fourteenth, leaving a higher proportion of blank possible non-business or liturgical days to be explored.¹³ Moreover, this method is, above all, retrospective, and we must remain otherwise sensitive to observances introduced, discontinued or opportunistically short-lived during a reign. Finally, it is known that kings very often deliberately chose to conduct important business on key religious dates as well as secular (if increasingly liturgicised) anniversaries.

Nevertheless, this method does at least allow the historian to draw close to some very persuasive possibilities in the study of Scottish royal piety. These are speculations which can often be further elaborated from the actual detailed content of extant royal acts and monastic cartularies, chronicle references, fragments of liturgical texts and material, archaeological and architectural remains. Such an approach has certainly illuminated the kingship of Robert I after 1306. A study of this reign has collated evidence that the first Bruce king did indeed learn well from Edward I about the value of observing and invoking local and national saints, dynastic obsequies and battle anniversaries during war and political conflict; but it also reveals that Robert displayed an at times very penitent, fearful and thankful, genuinely pious – and by no means ‘conventional’ - interest in such cults as that of Becket of Canterbury and Arbroath, Machutus of Lesmahagow, Fillan of Perthshire or Ninian of Whithorn. Furthermore, King Robert (1306-29) and/or his son, David II (1329-71), are revealed as seeking to develop St Margaret’s Dunfermline as a royal mausoleum, much in the manner of

¹³ N. Tanner and S. Watson, ‘Least of the Laity: the minimum requirements for a medieval Christian’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 32 (2006), 395-423. About 50 saints days were to be observed by the medieval laity annually in addition to Sundays and major festivals [E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (London, 1992), 156]: from the late twelfth-century Scotland followed the Sarum/Salisbury liturgy.

Westminster or St Denis; yet for David this was combined with universal religious observances arguably designed to reach out to England rather than to antagonise in the manner of his father.¹⁴ Overall, such research has underlined the ambivalence or multi-layered motivation which can be read in many royal acts of devotion.

Can we, then, approach similar illumination of Alexanders II and III? Did these kings act on religious impulses driven solely by dynastic tradition and Scottish political concerns or can we, at the same time, discern genuine personal motivations and an awareness of wider liturgical development? Were these kings influenced in any way by Henry III's potent religious ethos which they had the chance to observe through the course of several personal visits to England; or was their worship shaped by their respective royal English first and French aristocratic second wives?

Alexander II (1214-49)

If we turn to the speculative calendar of observances of Alexander II [Appendix A], at first glance we can indeed find much that might be deemed 'conventional'. It should not be surprising to find that any king observed most, if not all, of the major feasts of the Virgin and sought a public association with this universal cult from the late twelfth century onwards.¹⁵ Alexander can on occasion be pinpointed at major Scottish religious sites on or around feasts such as the Purification or Annunciation of Mary. This was an itinerary perhaps designed to enhance royal authority and sacrality through observance at such venues as: the cathedral and Augustinian priory at St Andrews¹⁶; or the Friars Preachers at Edinburgh, founded by

¹⁴ M. Penman, 'Christian days and knights: the religious devotions and court of David II of Scotland, 1329-71', *HR*, 75, 189 (2002), 249-72; M. Penman, 'The Piety of Robert I of Scotland, 1306-29', in A. Beam and N. Scott eds., *The Wallace And Bruce 700th Anniversary Volume* (forthcoming); M. Penman, 'The Bruces, Becket and Scottish Pilgrimage to Canterbury, c.1174-c.1406', *Journal of Medieval History*, 32 (2006), 346-70.

¹⁵ N. Vincent, 'King Henry III and the Blessed Virgin Mary', in R.N. Swanson ed., *The Church and Mary* (Woodbridge, 2004), 126-46.

¹⁶ For Alexander II's itinerary see: Scouler ed., *A Handlist of the Acts of Alexander II*, passim; P.G.B. McNeil and H. L. MacQueen eds., *Atlas of Scottish History to 1707* (Edinburgh, 1996), 162. For St Andrews see D.

Alexander about 1233 and dedicated to the Virgin¹⁷; or the great border abbey of Melrose, a Cistercian house, also dedicated to the Virgin, and mother to at least six Scottish houses by 1214.¹⁸ However, Alexander's possible devotions on 8 December, the feast of the Conception of the Virgin may also speak to the English influence of his marriage to Henry III's sister, Joanna, at York in 1221.¹⁹

Elsewhere on Alexander II's calendar, common sense might dictate the regular observance of such universal feasts as those of several apostles, including St Peter and St Paul, as well as All Saints and All Souls. However, as David Ditchburn has recently emphasised, Alexander II founded a number of Dominican, Franciscan and Vallasculan preaching houses in the 1230s and 1240s (on a scale proportionate with the foundations of Henry III and Louis IX in this period). Alexander was clearly attracted to the more intimate and austere spirituality and confessional offered by these mendicants. But his dedication of these new houses in Scottish royal burghs to such international saints as St Andrew [Perth], St Bartholomew [Inverness], St James [Elgin], the Assumption of the Virgin [Edinburgh], St John the Baptist [Aberdeen], St Katherine of Siena [Ayr] and St Peter Martyr of Milan [Berwick], all had a role to play in Scotland's dealings with the Papacy, vis à vis the rest of Europe and especially England.²⁰ Considerations such as the joint efforts of the Scottish Crown and *Ecclesia* to secure a metropolitan archbishop, or the royal rite of coronation, or a

McRoberts, 'The Glorious House of St Andrew' in idem ed., *The Medieval Church of St Andrews* (Glasgow, 1976), 63-120.

¹⁷ D.E. Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses: Scotland* (London, 1957), 99.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 65; R. Fawcett and R.D. Oram, *Melrose Abbey* (Stroud, 2004).

¹⁹ J. Stevenson ed., *The Chronicle of Melrose* (Edinburgh, 1991 reprint), 56; R.W. Pfaff, *New Liturgical Feasts in Later Medieval England* (Oxford, 1970), 8-9.

²⁰ D. Ditchburn, 'Saints and Silver: Scotland and Europe in the Age of Alexander II', in Oram ed., *Reign of Alexander II*, 179-209; Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses: Scotland*, 98-105; Jordan, *Louis IX and the Challenge of the Crusade*, Appendix 2. In January 1220, Alexander played the international card by granting 30 merks per annum to Cîteaux Abbey to help pay for the holding of annual Chapters General of the Cistercian order: this was also to pay for the 'relief of his [Alexander's] soul and of the souls of his ancestors and successors' on the feast of St Peter and St Paul, 29 June [Scouler ed., *A Handlist of the Acts of Alexander II*, no. 370; J. Wilson, 'Charter of the Abbot and Convent of Cîteaux, 1220', *Scottish Historical Review*, viii (1911), 172-7]. St Bartholomew's feast day was also Alexander II's birthday: on 21 March 1341 the king granted lands to the abbey of Neubottle in Mid-Lothian to support bi-annual 'pittances' for the Cistercian monks there on St Bartholomew's day and the Nativity of the Virgin [C. Innes ed., *Registrum S. Marie de Neubottle* (Edinburgh, 1849), xxxviii-xxxix; Scouler ed., *A Handlist of the Acts of Alexander II*, no. 248].

national church Council (which was granted by Rome in 1225²¹), may have determined Alexander's observance, too, of important curial anniversaries. This may have included Alexander's papal pardon from excommunication for his roles in the Anglo-Scottish conflict of 1216-7: in that conflict Alexander allied with Prince Louis against Henry III and Northumbrian churches were destroyed, including Melrose Abbey's daughter-house at Holm Cultram, founded by David I of Scotland (1124-53) who before becoming king had married into the earldom of Northumbria.²² However, given this indiscriminate violence, we should not simply dismiss the possibility that the young Alexander was and remained genuinely penitent for his complicity in this assault, a point returned to below.

Convention, though, might also have dictated that Alexander II observe the key anniversaries of his immediate ancestors and dynasty: hence the appearance on the speculative calendar of the inauguration date of his father, William I, and the deaths of his mother and uncle, Earl David of Huntingdon (d.1219), as well as those of Malcolm II (1005-34), the great royal couple Malcolm III and St Margaret (d. 1093), and, possibly, David I (1124-53). To these masses might be added annual commemoration of key dates from Alexander's own life – his birth, inauguration and knighting (by John of England). Public devotions on these dates each year would, crucially, have played an important part in the legitimisation and presentation of Canmore authority, especially in the face of dynastic challenge from the MacWilliams in northern Scotland. That problem, effectively neutralised by c.1230, may also – in part - explain Alexander II's devotions to the memory of Malcolm II's son, Duncan I (1034-40), killed by his rival MacBeth in Moray, a northern region largely brought into the royal fold by the mid-thirteenth century: in April 1235 Alexander granted an

²¹ D.E.R. Watt, *Medieval Church Councils in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2000), 1-46; A.A.M. Duncan, *The Kingship of the Scots: Succession and Independence, 842-1292* (Edinburgh, 2002), ch. 5; D. Broun, *Scottish Independence and the Idea of Britain: from the Picts to Alexander III* (Edinburgh, 2007), 16-7, ch.s 4-5.

²² *The Chronicle of Melrose*, 44; K.J. Stringer, 'Kingship, Conflict and State-Making in the Reign of Alexander II: the War of 1215-7 and its Context' and A.D.M. Barrell, 'Scotland and the Papacy in the Reign of Alexander II', in Oram ed., *Reign of Alexander II*, 99-156, 157-18

annuity of three marks to pay for a chaplain at the bishop of Moray's Elgin cathedral to say prayers for Duncan and the soul of Alexander and his other ancestors.²³

However, if we look beyond these more obvious dates we can identify a number of such observances which may speak directly to Alexander's evolving nature and kingship and, above all, his relations with England. Alexander II visited Henry III in England on at least four occasions. His trips in 1237 and 1244 were concerned with defusing high tension over Scottish claims to Northumbria, Cumbria and Westmorland. But the meeting of the kings at Christmases in York in 1221 and 1229 would have allowed Alexander to observe for himself the intense personal piety of his counterpart.²⁴ In 1229 Alexander observed Henry's Maundy alms-giving with the feeding and clothing of paupers and monks running into thousands at individual sittings. Yet if Alexander was impressed by such charity – and aware that Henry did this on a daily and expensive basis, as illustrated by Sarah Dixon-Smith – it does not seem to have caused the Scottish Crown to increase its own alms-giving.²⁵ The surviving Exchequer roll fragments of King Robert I of Scotland (from 1326) may fossilise the payment of 'king's alms', on a regular basis through the Dominican friars of Stirling, as a practice first initiated in the thirteenth, twelfth or even eleventh centuries. However, the sums distributed at Stirling, a royal burgh high on both Alexander II's and Alexander III's itineraries, only average £10 to £15 per annum.²⁶ At roughly a penny or penny-and-a-half per monk or pauper per day this might only benefit up to 1,500 souls a year. This certainly falls far short of, at times, the thousands of individuals gifted charity through the daily almsgiving of Henry III and even the daily feeding of three hundred poor in the royal household by Malcolm III and (St) Margaret reported by the latter's confessor-hagiographer, Turgot, prior

²³ Scoular ed., *A Handlist of the Acts of Alexander II*, no. 195.

²⁴ *CLR, Henry III 1226-40*, 131, 160, 309-15; *CPR, Henry III 1216-25*, 230; *ibid., Henry III 1232-47*, 132, 148; *CCR, Henry III 1234-7*, 331, 559-60; *CDS*, i, no.s 1255, 1309-12, 1654.

²⁵ Dixon-Smith, 'Feeding the Poor to Commemorate the Dead', Appendix 5.

²⁶ *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland*, i, 67, 86, 160.

of Durham, in the early twelfth century.²⁷ Nonetheless, the extant Exchequer rolls cannot account for irregularly distributed alms by Scotland's more itinerant kings or the charity of the leftover 'king's dishes' from court. Moreover, further investigation may reveal a conscious preference for wider charity through 'free alms' grants of land and annuities to monastic foundations by the Scottish kings, established by David I (later lamented as 'ane sair sanct' for the crown) and continued by his successors.²⁸

Henry III, though, may have impressed Alexander with his devotions to particular cults and, through these, his intensifying interest in the sacraments through daily masses. In 1247, Henry would present his Holy Blood relic to Westminster Abbey, the high point of his devotion to the Passion and associated with the English king's great faith in Edward the Confessor by its introduction on 13 October, the Confessor's Translation Feast (established under Henry II in 1169).²⁹ Back in Scotland, Alexander II seems to have taken some interest in the relics of the Passion, perhaps marking some of the feasts of the True Cross: in 1237 his negotiations with Henry III would take place over the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Rood.³⁰ About 1227, Alexander and his mother, Ermengarde de Beaumont, had also established a Cistercian abbey at Balmerino in Fife, a seventh daughter house of Melrose Abbey and dedicated to the Confessor.³¹ Moreover, within the small number of extant acts by Alexander which extended new patronage to churches or religious houses – rather than confirmation of existing privileges – at least three speak to the king's direct concern for the accoutrements of the mass.³² One such grant saw Alexander dedicate ten merks a year in 1247 to Arbroath Abbey for the upkeep of altar lights, thus continuing William I's generous

²⁷ *Early Sources of Scottish History*, ii, 59-88, at 78-9.

²⁸ R.D. Oram, *David I: the king who made Scotland* (Stroud, 2005), ch. 12; D. Postles, 'Small gifts, but big rewards: the symbolism of some gifts to the religious', *Journal of Medieval History*, 27 (2001), 23-42.

²⁹ Vincent, *Holy Blood*, 35-6, 82-5; Binski, *Westminster Abbey*, 142.

³⁰ *CDS*, i, no. 1349. The early fifteenth-century Scottish chronicler, Andrew Wyntoun, asserts that Alexander also met Henry at Newcastle in 1238 at the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin [A. Amours ed., *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun* (6 vols., Edinburgh, 1903-14), ii, 243].

³¹ C. Innes ed., *Liber Sancte Marie de Balmarinach* (Edinburgh, 1841), no. 1; Scouler ed., *A Handlist of the Acts of Alexander II*, no.s 145, 157, 185-6.

³² *Ibid.*, no.s 24 [altar candles at Melrose Abbey], 252 [chaplains in chapel of Roxburgh castle], 282 [Arbroath].

support of this house dedicated to Becket. This may speak to a general devotion to a saint by then firmly at the heart of Plantagenet liturgy: in 1222-3, Alexander secured safe-conducts to visit Becket's tomb at Canterbury perhaps having been unable to take advantage of the large indulgences offered there at the saint's new Translation shrine in 1220 (due to rebellion in northern Caithness which saw the bishop there killed): Queen Joanna would die shortly after a pilgrimage to Canterbury in 1238.³³

These acts of worship would seem to identify Alexander's religion and religiosity as a potential strategy for managing and easing Anglo-Scottish relations in the face of inherited and recurrent territorial tensions. However, the potential ambivalence or double-edged, personal and political meaning for devotees to such religious figures must be kept in view. Some of the feasts of Becket may have been marked annually by Alexander but not, it seems, the feast days of the Confessor, 5 January and 13 October, and Alexander's initial interest in Balmerino as a Confessor dedication was arguably not sustained: an interest in Beckett besides could have strong anti-Plantagenet overtones.³⁴ Moreover, in parallel with the Scots' recognition in 1237 that they relinquished by treaty almost all their former holdings in northern and southern England, Alexander showed no interest in otherwise maintaining that other clearly important familial and spiritual link with his English in-laws, that of the masses established at Westminster by David I of Scotland in the twelfth century for the soul of Queen Matilda, David's sister, a daughter of St Margaret and wife of Henry I, an anniversary on 24 April which had been confirmed by all intervening kings of Scots, crucially when present as guests at Westminster.³⁵ That Alexander had been made aware of the spiritual and

³³ M.A.E. Green, *Lives of the Princesses of England* (6 vols., London, 1849-55), i, 377-401; *CDS*, i, no.s 831, 855; *CPR, Henry III, 1216-25*, 338; *The Chronicle of Melrose*, 57; *The Scotichronicon of Walter Bower*, v, 113-7, 161.

³⁴ C. Valente, 'Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, and the utility of sanctity in thirteenth-century England', *Journal of Medieval History*, 21 (1995), 27-49; Penman, 'The Bruce Dynasty, Becket and Scottish Pilgrimage', 352.

³⁵ G.W.S. Barrow ed., *The Charters of King David I: the written acts of David I King of Scots, 1124-53 and of his son Henry Earl of Northumberland, 1139-52* (Woodbridge, 1999), no.s 13, 46, 105-7, 110. David's grant also requested masses for his parents while subsequent Scots kings added David himself; Matilda founded the

political importance of historic dates, is suggested as early as his inauguration as king in 1214. Nicholas Vincent has noted that Henry II of England had imposed the punitive treaty of Falaise on William I of Scotland on 8 December 1174, the feast of the Conception of the Virgin (and this in the immediate wake of the Becket miracle which had led to William's capture while invading northern England): this may explain why, although William I died on 4 December 1214, Alexander was inaugurated rapidly at Scone on 5 December, the anniversary of the Quitclaim of Canterbury of 1189 - the act which had cancelled Falaise's terms - and his father was not interred until 9 December.³⁶

Alexander's likely spiritual antipathy towards England was most tellingly exposed when Queen Joanna died in England, leaving the Scots king childless. Alexander seems to have left all obsequies to Henry III whose brother's grief was deep and sustained, paying regularly for lights, masses, alms-giving at Westminster and the erection of a marble mausoleum at the Cistercian nunnery of Tarente Kaines (Dorset) in her name.³⁷ Alexander, meanwhile, took a second French wife of the Normandy house of Couci in 1239. This Queen Marie may have enthused Alexander with a fresh interest in the Passion, influenced by Louis IX's purchase of several Passion relics from Constantinople in 1238 and his commencement of their host altar at Sainte Chappelle.³⁸ But if Marie did so, we should note that she at most refired a devotion which Queen/St Margaret had passed to all her descendants through their possession of her 'Blak Rude' and other fragments of the True Cross, items removed from the Scottish household by Edward I in 1296 (and inventoried in 1307 before their removal to Holmcultram Abbey). Housed in a silver jewel, the sainted queen was said to have kissed her

Holy Trinity Priory in Aldgate, London, a house also favoured by Alexander II's uncle, Earl David of Huntingdon [CDS, i, no. 603; B. Harvey, *Westminster Abbey and its Estates in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1977), Appendix II; E. Mason, *Westminster Abbey and its People c.1050-c.1216* (Stroud, 1996), 39-40, 56-7, 90, 155, 264-5; L.L. Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland: A Study in Medieval Queenship* (Woodbridge, 2003), ch. 5].

³⁶ Vincent, 'King Henry III and the Blessed Virgin Mary', 129; *The Scotichronicon of Walter Bower*, v, 3-5, which relates that a day's feasting on St Nicholas' day followed the inauguration with a procession behind a cross on the 8th to Arbroath abbey for the funeral.

³⁷ *CLR, Henry III 1226-40*, 316-7; *ibid.*, *Henry III 1240-5*, 17, 220, 290, 306-7; *ibid.*, *Henry III 1245-51*, 35, 62, 97, 242; CDS, i, no.s 1405, 1407, 1458, 1626, 1660, 1670, 1692.

³⁸ Jordan, *Louis IX and the Challenge of the Crusade*, 107-9.

fragment of Christ's cross on her deathbed; Robert I would secure its return from England by 1329 but David II would use and lose it as an icon in battle against England in 1346.³⁹

Then, of course, there is Alexander's part in the canonisation of Margaret. The later Spanish manuscript copy of a collection of miracles of St Margaret collated at Dunfermline Abbey in the thirteenth century, now edited by Robert Bartlett, includes a number of cures from the 1240s.⁴⁰ These are thus coincident with the official inquiry into Margaret's sanctity begun by the Papacy at the behest of the Scots about 1245, strongly suggesting that Alexander, along with Robert, abbot of Dunfermline, played a directive role.⁴¹ It is possible that, had he lived, Alexander intended the Translation of his newly canonised ancestor to a magnificent new feretory shrine of marble and 'deal, set with gold and precious stones' as a way of both emulating and reaching out to fellow Christian King, Henry III.⁴² However, as Paul Binski has remarked, the Scots' committed campaign on behalf of Margaret was surely a comparatively rushed, inexpensive and low-key response to news that Henry had, also in 1245, commenced re-building work on a grand-scale to showcase the Confessor's relics at Westminster Abbey and sought a fresh Translation.⁴³ Moreover, although Matilda's marriage to Henry I had been predicted by Edward the Confessor himself to be the sort of match which would reunite the Anglo-Saxon and Norman blood lines⁴⁴, Alexander had abandoned Matilda's memory and his veneration of Margaret could have been presented in the longer-term as a dynastic challenge to the Plantagenets, a valuable tool if Alexander chose to renew

³⁹ CDS, v, no.s 494 [TNA E 101/370/3] and 525. *Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland*, eds. T. Thomson and C. Innes (12 vols., Edinburgh, 1814-75), i, 111-2.

⁴⁰ R. Bartlett ed. and trans., *The Miracles of StÆbbe of Coldingham and St Margaret of Scotland* (Oxford, 2003).

⁴¹ Directive input from Alexander is further suggested by the coincidence of the production of king-lists, chronicles and seals in his reign which further legitimised and expressed Scottish royal authority [M. Ash and D. Broun, 'The Adoption of St Andrew as Patron Saint of Scotland', in Higgitt ed., *Medieval Art and Architecture in the Diocese of St Andrew*, 16-24; D. Broun, 'Contemporary Perspectives on Alexander II's Succession: the Evidence of King-Lists' in Oram ed., *Reign of Alexander II*, 79-98; Duncan, *Kingship of the Scots*, ch.s 5-7].

⁴² *John of Fordun's Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, ii, 291. According to *The Scotichronicon of Walter Bower*, v, 297-9, the translation was interrupted by the miraculous refusal of Margaret's body to be carried east of the remains of her husband, Malcolm III, who thus also had to be relocated.

⁴³ Binski, *Westminster Abbey*, 4.

⁴⁴ Carpenter, 'The Burial of King Henry III', 457-8.

his claims to the northern English counties. Margaret's relics and cult, after all, had enduring personnel, hagiographic, relic and other physical links with Durham and St Cuthbert in particular.⁴⁵ That Alexander's focus on Margaret was in large part political is further suggested by the fact that none of the collected Margaret *miracula* involve the Crown from his period and that the king chose not to be buried at Dunfermline. However, it should be acknowledged that in venerating Margaret, Alexander (and his son) associated the Scottish crown with a cult which was undeniably far more popular and enduring than those of the Confessor and Holy Blood championed by Henry III.⁴⁶

All of these motivations – and Alexander's complex piety – are perhaps more clearly visible in the events of 1249 when he died of illness on Kerrera in Argyll on 8 July during a military expedition to weaken the Norwegian Crown's control of the western isles. On his very last day, his final recorded act was to grant the church of Kilbride to the bishop of Argyll. Historians have interpreted this as both an attempt to move the see of Argyll to the mainland as a challenge to Norse lordship or a conventional act of deathbed contrition.⁴⁷ But both motives can surely be taken further. The church of Kilbride was dedicated to St Brigit of Kildare, a cult with extensive dedications throughout Ireland, Wales, northern England, the western isles, mainland Scotland and Irish-Christianised Europe: Brigit also had strong associations in *vitae* with such saints as Columba, Malachy, Patrick and the Virgin.⁴⁸ In sum, a king seeking to lay claim to authority over the western isles and the extent of the old kingdoms of Strathclyde and Northumbria would do well to venerate such a cult. Yet at the same time, Alexander may have felt genuine contrition that his raids since 1241 had led to his

⁴⁵ G.W.S. Barrow, 'The Kings of Scots and Durham' in D. Rollason and M. Prestwich eds., *Anglo-Norman Durham 1093-1193* (Woodbridge, 1994), 311-21; W.M. Aird, 'St Cuthbert, the Scots and the Normans', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 16 (1994), 1-20; Bartlett ed. and trans., *The Miracles of StEbbe of Coldingham and St Margaret of Scotland*, xlv.

⁴⁶ Vincent, *Holy Blood*, 189; P. Yeoman, *Pilgrimage in Medieval Scotland* (London, 1996), 71-4.

⁴⁷ Scouler ed., *A Handlist of the Acts of Alexander II*, no. 298.

⁴⁸ D.H. Farmer ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford, 1979), 56-7; J.M. Mackinlay, *Ancient Church Dedications in Scotland: vol. ii – Non-Scriptural Dedications* (Edinburgh, 1914), 116-8; R. Bartlett, 'Cults of Irish, Scottish and Welsh Saints in Twelfth-century England', in B. Smith ed., *Britain and Ireland, 900-1300* (Cambridge, 1999), 67-86.

illness and he now sought Bridgit's famed compassion and intercessory cure (too late): hence the traditions, too, in English chronicles and Norse Sagas that Alexander had offended such other isles saints as Magnus and Olaf.⁴⁹

A similar layering of meaning can be found, too in Alexander's requested burial at Melrose Abbey. As a number of historians have noted, Alexander had strong associations with his realm's most important Cistercian house from an early age, showing Melrose marked favour throughout his reign. Alexander took the oaths of Yorkshire barons in Melrose's chapter house on the 'relics of the saints' during the conflict of 1216; and the only Easter-time for which the king's itinerary can be positively pinpointed places him at Melrose in 1231. Nevertheless, what is most striking is Melrose's place at the heart of the spiritual, political and economic world of south-eastern Scotland, Northumbria, Galloway [including Dumfriesshire], and Cumbria and beyond: in the 1240s especially it was a popular burial ground for the important cross-border laity of Northumbria.⁵⁰ As the editors of the new edition of the contemporary *Melrose Chronicle* note, the monks there did not cease to style themselves as part of that older but enduring English world until the later thirteenth century.⁵¹ A glance at the Saints' *Vitae* and the *Liber Vitae* recorded at adjacent Durham Priory in this period confirms strong associations and enduring connections between the cults of Cuthbert, Margaret, Columba of Dunkeld, Kentigern of Glasgow and Waltheof of Melrose and the personnel of their houses and the Scottish royal administration and Episcopal bench: this was

⁴⁹ *Early Sources of Scottish History*, ii, 556-7. Alexander's illness, however, may have been long term: in 1248 he secured permission to eat eggs, butter, cheese and meat during Lent due to an unreported condition [*CPL*, i, 243].

⁵⁰ Fawcett and Oram, *Melrose Abbey*, ch. 3; E. Jamroziak, 'Making Friends Beyond the Grave: Melrose Abbey and its Lay Burials in the Thirteenth Century', *Citeaux: commentarii cistercienses*, t. 56, fasc. 1-4 (2005), 36.

⁵¹ D. Broun and J. Harrison eds., *The Chronicle of Melrose: A Stratigraphic Edition, vol. I – Introduction and Facsimile* (Scottish History Society, Woodbridge, 2007), 1-12.

a wide circle which embraced much of Yorkshire and its great Cistercian house at Rievaulx (the mother of Melrose).⁵²

These spiritual lights and their geographic and institutional influence would surely thus have been reflected in the relics kept closest to the kings of Scots. Again, the inventories of Edward I from post-1296 reveal a number of coffers or decorated reliquaries taken from the Scottish Crown's holdings and described as containing 'diverse relics'.⁵³ Their contents cannot now be known in detail but they must surely have contained fragmentary relics collected by or sent to kings of Scots from throughout their spheres of cross-border influence and ambition. This thus must have embraced relics of St Cuthbert gifted to Alexander I (1107-24), another son of St Margaret, who was present at Cuthbert's translation in 1104⁵⁴; relics of St Waltheof whose tomb was opened at Melrose in 1207 and his body found to be then incorrupt but crumbling and divisible when re-opened during Alexander II's reign in 1240 and reinterred in a new shrine in Melrose's Chapter House⁵⁵; we might also speculatively add relics of Sts Columba, Andrew, Kentigern, Becket and, of course, Margaret herself. A similarly interwoven spiritual and political horizon may also further explain Alexander's aforementioned foundation of a chaplainry for King Duncan I, the son of an abbot of Dunkeld and a daughter of Malcolm II, who had also wed into the Northumbrian earldom and was known to some as 'king of Strathclyde and the Cumbrians'.⁵⁶

Yet in emphasising Alexander II's likely northern English political aims in his interment will in 1249 we should not lose sight of the younger king. Alexander may have felt

⁵² G.W.S. Barrow, 'Scots in the Durham *Liber Vitae*', in D. Rollason et al eds., *The Durham Liber Vitae and its Context* (Woodbridge, 2004), 109-16. As Barrow notes, however, the entries of Scottish royal names in the *Liber Vitae*, cease with Alexander II, again hinting at his anti-Englishness?

⁵³ *CDS*, v, no.s 494 [1307], 799 [1344, including bones of St Margaret and a black rood]. See also F. Palgrave ed., *The Antient Kalendars and Inventories of the Treasury of his Majesty's Exchequer* (5 vols., London, 1836), iii, 123-42, 166-95, 206-8, 262-70.

⁵⁴ Barrow, 'The Kings of Scots and Durham', 316. Malcolm III and Margaret were also present at the laying of Durham cathedral's foundations in 1093 and paid for pauper meals.

⁵⁵ *The Chronicle of Melrose*, 65-6.

⁵⁶ H.C.G. Mathew and B. Harrison eds., *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (61 vols., Oxford, 2005), 17, 218-9.

a genuine debt of penance, too, to Melrose's St Waltheof for his own breach of oaths made in 1216 and the destruction of Melrose's daughter churches and the papal excommunication which had ensued: Alexander's burial thus echoed that of his father, William I, in his penitential foundation of Arbroath.⁵⁷ The Cistercian order may more generally have been the focus of the Scottish monarchy's obsequies at this time: Alexander's second queen, Marie, had declared her intention to be buried at Neubottle Abbey in 1238. On a more practical note, Melrose was relatively clear of major building work about 1249, unlike Dunfermline or St Andrews, and the Cistercians had been exempted from papal interdicts which might otherwise inhibit worship elsewhere in Scotland during any repeat of 1216-7.⁵⁸

Alexander III (1249-86)

In contrast, the results which can be extrapolated for the reign of Alexander III may present something of a shift in the tone of Scottish royal devotions. Turning to the speculative retrospective calendar for this reign [Appendix B], we can identify a similar variegated spread of dynastic, curial, Scottish regional and universal observances. Alexander III most likely marked the regnal dates of a number of his ancestors, including now his father plus his own birth-date (4 September, the Translation feast of Cuthbert) and inauguration at Scone (13 July).⁵⁹ The king must also have been imbued with a strong sense of the spiritual lights of the evolving Scottish kingdom and people. This would have been a natural consequence of his

⁵⁷ *The Chronicle of Melrose*, 51, notes that Prince Louis, whom Alexander had met at Dover-Canterbury in 1217, had to present himself 'girded and barefoot' as a penitent to be pardoned excommunication. As Paul Binski shows, Henry III's desire to be buried in Westminster was not yet part of designs to establish a dynastic mausoleum but followed the royal pattern of interment within personal foundations [*Westminster Abbey*, 92]. Alexander II may thus have regarded Melrose as his most significant or prestigious *re*-foundation, especially if he attended the retranslation of Waltheof and the other abbots in 1240, accumulating indulgences at that time; the king's speculative calendar suggests he may have observed the anniversary of Melrose's original foundation, too, 23 March.

⁵⁸ *Registrum S. Marie de Neubottle*, xxxviii-xxxix, xl; *The Scotichronicon of Walter Bower*, v, 93-103. It is notable, too, that *miracula* collected in the *Melrose Chronicle* include notice of a hermetical and wise Melrose monk consulted by many, among them Alexander [*The Chronicle of Melrose*, 94-6].

⁵⁹ A.A.M. Duncan has done much to reconstruct this royal inauguration ceremony, including a suggestion that the Stone of Destiny was designed to hold a reliquary ['Before Coronation: Making a King at Scone in the Thirteenth Century', and *Kingship of the Scots*, ch. 7].

awareness of the growing sense of community which was reflected in his subjects' continuance of the campaign for Margaret's canonisation and then the Translation of her relics at Dunfermline in 1250: such a collective spiritual identity was also expressed through the commencement of a chronicling of the events of the Scottish realm by clerics at St Andrews from about the mid-century (and the gradual shift towards a Scottish identity in the *Chronicle of Melrose*).⁶⁰ In the same vein, the feasts of 'Scottish' Saints like Columba, Kentigern, Andrew and Ninian may have been observed by Alexander and his court. We can also highlight a number of 'conventional' Marian and Apostolic feasts which would have had continued international appeal.⁶¹

However, Alexander's unexpected minority and the internal political strife of the period 1249-59 admitted a strong Henrician influence to Scotland, anchored through Alexander's marriage to the English king's daughter, Margaret, at York in 1251.⁶² This match was highly successful producing two sons and a daughter and Alexander would mourn his first Queen's death in 1275.⁶³ But the initial youth of the royal couple allowed Henry to intervene in Scottish factional conflict which had itself surely been sufficient to divert many of the policy directions (and with these, the devotional overtones) intended by Alexander II. This closer relationship also meant that Alexander III visited the English court on more occasions and for longer than his father. He stayed with Henry III at York in 1251, Woodstock in summer 1256 (including the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin) and October/November 1260, perhaps Westminster in December 1257, Woodstock again in July

⁶⁰ Broun, *Scottish Independence and the Idea of Britain*, ch. 6.

⁶¹ For many of the cults of these Scottish saints see: A. Boyle 'Notes on Scottish Saints', *Innes Review*, xxxii (1981), 59-82; A. Macquarrie, *The Saints of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1997).

⁶² K. Staniland, 'The Nuptials of Alexander III of Scotland and Margaret Plantagenet', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 30 (1986), 20-45.

⁶³ Scouler ed., *A Handlist of the Acts of Alexander II*, no. 238 [a grant to the chapel of St Lawrence, Forres, of six merks p.a. for the soul of Margaret].

1266 and York in summer 1268 (for ‘solace and recreation’).⁶⁴ There were return visits, too: the kings are known to have met at Roxburgh in 1255 and to have again attended the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin (15 August) at nearby Kelso’s Tironesian abbey; in 1256 Alexander and his wife surely accompanied Prince Edward on a pilgrimage to St Ninian’s at Whithorn.⁶⁵ The Scots king may also have had access to the liturgical books carefully provided for Queen Margaret’s chapel by her father.⁶⁶

During his journeys south Alexander must also have seen at first hand (and perhaps contributed to) the scale of Henry’s alms-giving and devotion to such cults as those of the Confessor, Passion relics and Virgin. This may also explain why Alexander III’s devotional interests with a Northumbrian or English focus seem to convey a far more amicable intent than those of his father. For example, Henry’s *Close Rolls* make it clear that Alexander was present for the Confessor feast celebrations in 1260 and he seems to have marked St Edward’s dates throughout his reign: it is, though, unknown if the Scots king attended Henry’s great centennial re-translation procession at Westminster on 13 October 1269.⁶⁷ In 1272, the year of Henry’s death, Alexander would make a pilgrimage to St Cuthbert’s at Durham. He may also have made one or more pilgrimages to Becket’s tomb at Canterbury (as did his mother in 1276). In 1279 he certainly granted a gift of one hundred shillings per annum to pay for thirteen paupers’ meals to be distributed at Canterbury Christ Church every Tuesday (which was Becket’s ‘special day’): this was a very public act of charity arranged

⁶⁴ *CDS*, i, no.s 1816, 1872, 2055, 2198, 2205, 2209, 2229, 2250, 2482, 2542 ; *ibid.*, ii, no.s 33, 107, 131 ; *CPR*, *Henry III 1254-6*, 331, 434; *ibid.*, *Henry III, 1256-9*, 168; *ibid.*, *Henry III, 1259-61*, 124, 198, 202, 211, 238; *ibid.*, *Henry III 1264-8*, 202, 363.

⁶⁵ *The Chronicle of Melrose*, 90; R. Studd, *An Itinerary of the Lord Edward* (List and Index Society, 284, 2000), 30. Edward I’s devotions at St Kentigern’s shrine, Glasgow, in 1301, and Dunfermline in 1303-4 surely reflect knowledge of Scottish cults gained from his sister and Alexander III [Yeoman, *Pilgrimage in Medieval Scotland* 21, 113].

⁶⁶ *CLR*, *Henry III 1251-60*, 39-40, 55.

⁶⁷ Alexander III perhaps received the gift of a relic from Henry III on this occasion. The presentation of the Holy Blood relic at Westminster in 1247 may also have seen such gifts distributed: a small relic could have been brought north by the bishop of Dunblane who issued a letter of indulgence at Westminster c.1247-50 [Vincent, *Holy Blood*, 162]. Alexander III and his English wife also impressed as friendly visitors at Edward I’s coronation at Westminster in 1274 and ‘exceeded the generosity of all the others, in hospitality and gifts’ [*Early Sources of Scottish History*, ii, 669-70].

for the king with Canterbury by the abbot and convent of Arbroath and surely a significant sign of good relations, binding as it did Scottish lands held by Arbroath, rather than lands held by the king of Scots in England, to yield these alms.⁶⁸

There may also have been new liturgical developments through English influence. Scottish chronicles assert that on 9 May 1262, at Holy Cross in Peeblesshire in the borders, Alexander was present at the discovery of an ancient holy cross of stone and the skeletal relics of an unidentified saintly 'Bishop Nicholas'. The Scots king established a substantial pilgrimage church there, probably of Trinitarians, and may have visited this site frequently on Holy Cross festivals, for example 14 September 1279, the feast of the Exultation of the Cross.⁶⁹ The moveable feast of Corpus Christi may also have drawn Alexander to Holy Cross, Peebles, from about 1262, following growing English practice.⁷⁰

But most striking of all may have been Scottish royal interest in the cult of St Edmund of Abingdon, the archbishop of Canterbury who had died in exile at the Cistercian abbey and pilgrimage stop of Pontigny in Auxerre en route to the Papacy in 1240.⁷¹ Admittedly, Edmund had been canonised in 1246 and his remains translated at Pontigny in 1247 in the reverential presence of Louis IX (and again in 1249) and Scottish interest may thus date to the reign of Alexander II: the *Chronicle of Melrose* certainly records miracles attributed to Edmund's tomb as early as 1241.⁷² But it was surely Alexander III and his English wife, Margaret, who inherited and were the chief devotees to a relic found again among the possessions of the Scottish Crown inventoried at Edinburgh castle and Holyrood Abbey and

⁶⁸ CDS, ii, no.s 1, 67; Simpson ed., *A Handlist of the Acts of Alexander III*, no. 128.

⁶⁹ *The Scotichronicon of Walter Bower*, v, 325 [a note of Urban IV's institution of Corpus Christi on 11 August 1264], 335-7 [Peebles]; Yeoman, *Pilgrimage in Medieval Scotland*, 46-9; Vincent, *Holy Blood*, 188; M. Rubin, *Corpus Christi: the Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1991), ch. 3.

⁷⁰ Alexander III, like his father, was regularly to be found staying in various sites around Melrose – e.g. Traquair (his second most frequent place of charter issue), Selkirk, Roxburgh, Kelso [*Atlas of Scottish History to 1707*, 163].

⁷¹ Farmer, *Dictionary of Saints*, 122-3; D. McRoberts, 'St Edmund in Scotland', *Innes Review*, xiii (1962), 219-20, which notes a relic of Edmund's hair at Aberdeen cathedral. See also Edinburgh University's *Mapping Scottish Saints* project on-line database: <http://webdb.ucs.ed.ac.uk/saints/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.main>.

⁷² Jordan, *Louis IX and the Challenge of the Crusade*, 192-3; *The Chronicle of Melrose*, 66; *The Scotichronicon of Walter Bower*, v, 189-91.

re-audited by English officials in 1307, alongside the papal golden rose sceptre, the ‘Blak Rude’ of St Margaret and another bejewelled ‘crux Sancte Elene de Scoc’: this additional item was ‘a box of silver-gilt and gems containing part of the Holy Cross and many small relics of the confessor St Edmund, in a burse bearing the arms of the kings of France, with other relics which that king sent to Alexander king of Scotland.’⁷³ Louis IX may have dispatched this reliquary object upon the translation of 1247 or in the wake of his peace talks with Henry III in France in 1259-60 (or they may have been a wedding gift from Philip III to Alexander III, c.1285). If gifted early, this burse may thus have added to the devotion to Edmund of Queen Margaret which she had learned from her father and, above all, her mother, Eleanor of Provence.⁷⁴ For Alexander, however, the real attraction of St Edmund’s relics was that they perhaps allowed him scope for wider veneration within the shared Sarum liturgy on key dates which almost overlapped exactly with those of his dynasty’s cult, that of the festival of the relics [10 or 19 June] and death [16 November] of St Margaret: for the translation and feast days of Edmund, probably observed by Alexander, were 9 June and 16 November [see Appendix B].

This convergence of observance and notable intensification of worship around at least three possible relics of the True Cross relating to St Margaret and other saints would have provided strong common ground for the Scottish and English monarchies: given the marital connections between the two houses, it is more likely that such twinned devotion would have been developed in a spirit of Christian amity, rather than rivalry (all the more so after the Anglo-French peace of 1259). It may also have drawn Alexander III to more sustained devotion at Dunfermline Abbey. It was most probably his later reign which saw the beginnings of the expansion of the church of the Trinity there to include a new Lady chapel.

⁷³ CDS, v, no. 494.

⁷⁴ M. Howell, *Eleanor of Provence: Queenship in Thirteenth-Century England* (London, 1998), 95, 136; Vincent, *Holy Blood*, 9-10; J. Nelson, ‘Scottish Queenship in the Thirteenth Century’, in B. Weiler et al eds., *TCE*, xi (Woodbridge, 2007), 61-81.

At her death, Alexander's Queen Margaret was likely buried there, to be followed soon by her two sons and – as he seems to have long intended – Alexander III himself in 1286, probably before the high altar. In addition, a miraculous vision of St Margaret was associated with the Scottish success at the battle of Largs against the Norse in 1263; it may also have been about this time that the sainted queen's 'serk' began to be used as a birthing shirt for Scottish queens in labour (much like the 'Virgin's girdle' held at Westminster).⁷⁵

We should acknowledge, however, that Alexander III might yet have turned his devotions away from English amity had he too lived longer. The Scots king might have been increasingly alienated by the pressure brought to bear following the accession of the crusading Edward I over the issue of over lordship for Scotland and Papal legate receipt of St Peter's Pence: these political confrontations occurred at such spiritual venues as Westminster and Canterbury.⁷⁶ It should also be borne in mind that Alexander's second marriage in 1285 to Yolande of Dreux strengthened channels of Capetian influence. It is perhaps the case, anyway, that the itinerant Scottish monarchy remained more conscious throughout this period of the French royal model of enkinging, government and burial at separate royal sites, rather than increasing focus on a single capital as at Plantagenet Westminster: in this sense Scottish royal devotions at their inaugural seat of Scone (dedicated to St Michael) and usual burial ground of Dunfermline followed the French royal traditions of Rheims and St Denis respectively. Alexander III was also perhaps more directly influenced by Louis IX's remodelling of his dynasty's monuments from 1263 at St Denis rather than Henry III's and

⁷⁵ Bartlett ed. and trans., *The Miracles of StÆbbe of Coldingham and St Margaret of Scotland*, 87-9 [no. 7]; Fawcett, 'Dunfermline Abbey Church' and S. Boardman, 'Dunfermline as a royal mausoleum', in Fawcett ed., *Royal Dunfermline*, 27-64, 139-54. Alexander III's heart was buried somewhere in Perth, perhaps in the Dominican friary established by Alexander II and dedicated to St Andrew; Alexander II probably had his heart buried separately, as did Robert I at Melrose (d.1329) [*The Scotichronicon of Walter Bower*, v, 420-1; E.A.R. Brown, 'Death and the Human Body in the Later Middle Ages: the Legislation of Boniface VIII on the Division of the Corpse', *Viator*, 12 (1981), 221-70].

⁷⁶ E.L.G. Stones ed., *Anglo-Scottish Relations 1174-1328: Some Selected Documents* (London, 1965), no. 12.

Edward I's establishment of Westminster as the Plantagenet mausoleum, really by the later thirteenth century.⁷⁷

Conclusion

There are a number of further themes which should be investigated in the course of a full study of Scottish royal piety in the thirteenth century, in particular the influence of individual churchmen on the kings of Scots (e.g. royal Chancellor Bishop William Bondington of Glasgow, d.1258, as an advocate of the cult of St Kentigern⁷⁸) and the Crown's attitude to the power of royal touch (apparently nil in contrast to their English and French counterparts⁷⁹), crusading⁸⁰ and religious music⁸¹. But the methodology offered here can initiate insights into the personal as well as political motivations of the devotions of Scotland's monarchs in the period. It reveals something of the interaction between changing Anglo-Scottish and Franco-Scottish relations and the religion of the Scottish kings. Furthermore, it reveals Scottish royal worship to be as much a part of the wider liturgical developments as the rest of western Christendom. However, such a study can also detail the inward religion and religiosity of Scotland's kings and how churches, monastic houses, relics and cult festivals could be used to forward the Crown's regional objectives, albeit on a far more limited budget than that wielded from Westminster or Paris. Overall, in the longer term, such research also seems to underline just what a wrench and break with some important earlier patterns of worship – as well as some key continuities – would result from the Wars of Independence after 1296.

⁷⁷ Binski, *Westminster Abbey*, 35-6, 92-3.

⁷⁸ R. Fawcett, 'The Architectural Framework for the Cults of Saints: some Scottish examples', in D.H. Strickland ed., *Images of Medieval Sanctity: Essays in Honour of Gary Dickson* (Leiden, 2007), 71-104, at 83-4.

⁷⁹ M. Bloch [trans. J.E. Anderson], *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France* (London, 1973), 139-40; F. Barlow, 'The King's Evil', *EHR*, xcvi (1980), 3-27. Edward I would 'touch' some 995 people while in Scotland in 1303-4 [Prestwich, 'Piety of Edward I', 124].

⁸⁰ A. Macquarrie, *Scotland and the Crusades, 1095-1560* (Edinburgh, 1985), ch.s 2-3.

⁸¹ I. Woods-Preece, *Our awin Scottis use: Music in the Scottish Church up to 1603* (Glasgow/Aberdeen, 2000) ch.s 1-3.

Appendix A: Possible Devotions of Alexander II of Scotland (1214-49)*

January: 3; 4; 6 – Epiphany; 8; 10; 14; 16; 17; 19; 21; 22; 23; 24; 27; 29; 30; 31.

February: 2 – Purification BVM; 6 – feast of the coming of the relics to St Andrews; 9; 11 – Queen Mother d. 1233; 13; 14; 15; 18; 19; 20; 25; 26; 28; 29.

March: 2; 6 – St Baldred of Tynningham?; 8 – Alexander II knighted (by John I) and dedication of Arbroath Abbey 1233; 9; 15; 22; 23 – foundation of Melrose Abbey; 25 – Annunciation BVM.

April: 1; 13; 22; 25 – St Mark; 27, 28, 29 – St Peter martyr.

May: 2; 3 – discovery of the True Cross (by Helena); 4; 5; 6; 7 – St John of Beverley?; 10; 11; 12; 13; 14; 18; 20; 21; 22 – David I?; 27 – St Bede?; 30.

June – 2; 4; 6; 12 – Earl Henry (son of David I) d.1152; 13; 14; 16; 17 – Earl David of Huntingdon (brother of William I) d.1219; 19 – Alexander II weds 1221; 20 – St Fillan; 23; 25; 26; 27; 29 – Sts Peter and Paul.

July: 1 – St Serf; 2 – Visitation BVM; 4 – St Martin (translation)?; 6 – St Kentigern of Glasgow (translation); 11 – St Benedict; 13; 14; 17; 19; 21; 24; 25 – Sts Christopher and James; 27; 29.

August: 2; 5 – St Oswald?; 6 – Transfiguration of Jesus; 7 – Name of Jesus?; 8; 9 – foundation of Arbroath Abbey 1178; 11; 12; 14 – Duncan I d.1040; 16; 19; 21; 22 – battle of the Standard 1138?; 23; 24 – Alexander II born 1198 and St Bartholomew; 27; 30 – Pope Alexander III d. 1181.

September: 1 – St Giles; 3; 4 – St Cuthbert (translation); 8 – Nativity BVM; 9; 10; 13; 14 – Exaltation of the Holy Cross; 16 – St Ninian of Whithorn; 17; 19; 20; 21; 24; 26; 27.

October: 1; 10; 11; 14; 17; 19 – John of England d.1216?; 21, 22, 26, 27, 28.

November: 1 – All Saints; 2 – All Souls; 3 – St Malachy; 4; 7; 8; 9; 11 – St Martin; 13 – Malcolm III d.1093; 14; 16 – St Margaret and St Edmund of Abingdon; 17; 18; 20; 21; 23; 24; 25 – St Katherine of Alexandria and Malcolm II d. 1034; 26.

December: 1 – absolution of excommunication of Alexander II 1217; 2 – St Thomas Becket ('*regressio de exilio*' feast); 5 – Quitclaim of Canterbury 1189 and Alexander II inauguration 1214?; 6; 8 – Conception BVM; 10; 11; 12; 14; 15; 18; 19; 21 – St Thomas apostle; 23; 24 – inauguration William I 1165; 28 – Holy Innocents; 29 – St Thomas Becket; 30; 31.

Appendix B: Possible devotions of Alexander III of Scotland (1249-86)*

January: 1; 2; 3; 4; 5 – St Edward the Confessor; 8; 9; 10; 11 – St Edmund of Abingdon (canonisation); 12; 13 – St Kentigern of Glasgow; 15; 16; 17; 18; 21 – St Agnes and Prince Alexander born 1264; 22; 23; 24; 25 – St Paul; 29; 30; 31.

February: 1 – St Brigit of Larne; 2 – Purification BVM; 3; 5 – St Agatha; 7 – St Edward the Confessor (canonisation); 8; 9; 11 – Queen Ermengarde d.1233; 13; 15; 16; 17; 18; 19; 21; 22; 23; 24; 25; 26 – Queen Margaret d.1275; 27; 28; 29.

March: 1; 2; 3; 6 – St Baldred of Tynningham?; 7; 11 – St Constantine and St Oswin (translation)?; 12; 13 – *Cum Universi* papal bull, 1182?; 16; 18; 23 – foundation of Melrose Abbey; 25 Annunciation BVM; 27; 30.

April: 2 – St Edmund of Abingdon consecrated; 3; 5; 6; 7; 8; 11; 12; 17; 19; 27; 28.

May: 2; 4; 5; 7 – St John of Beverley?; 8 – dedication of Arbroath Abbey 1233; 9 – St Andrew (translation) and foundation of Holy Cross relic and church, Peebles, 1262; 11; 13; 15 – Alexander II weds 1239; 16; 17; 19; 22; 23; 26 – St Augustine; 27 – St Bede?; 29 – David I?; 30.

June: 2; 4 – St Martin (translation); 6; 9 – St Columba and St Edmund of Abingdon (translation); 12 – Earl Henry d. 1152; 15; 19 – St Margaret (translation, 1249-); 20; 22; 23; 24 – St John the Baptist; 25; 29 – Sts Peter and Paul; 30.

July: 3; 5; 6 – St Kentigern of Glasgow (translation); 7 – St Thomas Becket (translation); 8 – Alexander II d.1249; 9; 13 – Alexander III inaugurated 1249; 14; 15; 16; 17; 18; 20; 22; 23; 24; 27; 29; 30; 31.

August: 2; 4; 5 – St Oswald?; 6 – Transfiguration of Jesus; 8; 9 – foundation of Arbroath Abbey 1178; 11 – David earl of Atholl d.1270?; 12; 16; 17; 20 – St Oswin?; 21; 22 – battle of the Standard 1138?; 24 – Alexander II born 1198; 25 – St Æbbe of Coldingham and St Louis d.1270; 26 – St Ninian; 30 – Pope Alexander III d.1181.

September: 1 – St Giles; 2; 4 – St Cuthbert (translation) and Alexander III born 1241; 6; 7; 9; 11; 13; 15; 16; 17; 18; 19; 22; 24; 25; 26; 27; 29 – St Michael.

October: 1; 5; 6; 8 – St Oswald (translation)?; 9 – St Denis; 11; 12 – St Wilfrid of Hexham?; 13 – St Edward the Confessor (translation); 14; 15; 17; 18; 19; 21; 22; 23; 26; 27; 28; 29; 30; 31 – foundation of Balmerino Abbey c.1227?

November: 2 – All Souls; 3 – St Malachy; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 9; 10 – St Leonard; 16 – St Margaret and St Edward of Abingdon; 17; 18; 19; 21; 22; 23; 24; 25 – St Katherine of Alexandria and Malcolm II d.1034; 26; 29; 30 – St Andrew.

December: 4 – William I d.1214; 5 – Quitclaim of Canterbury 1189 and Alexander II inauguration 1214?; 6 – Alexander II inauguration 1214?; 7; 8 – Conception BVM; 10; 11; 13; 14; 15; 16; 19; 20; 22; 23; 26 – Alexander III weds 1251; 28 – Holy Innocents; 30; 31.

* Extrapolated from Scoular ed., *A Handlist of the Acts of Alexander II* and Simpson ed., *A Handlist of the Acts of Alexander III*.