
The Scots Church in Rotterdam – a Church for Seventeenth Century Migrants and Exiles

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PART I. “THE CREATION OF A KIRK”

The year 1660 saw the restoration of King Charles II to the throne of Scotland. This ushered in three decades “when the Church of Scotland was thrown into the furnace of persecution. Never did a more rapid, more complete, or more melancholy change pass over the character of a people, than that which Scotland underwent at this era. He proceeded to overturn the whole work of reformation, civil and ecclesiastical, which he had solemnly sworn to support. All that had been done for religion and the reformation of the Church during the Second Reformation was completely annulled.”¹ Persecution soon followed as Charles II harassed, pursued, fined, imprisoned and tortured those who remained faithful to the covenanted work of Reformation. Executions of Covenanters began in 1661 and many gained the crown of martyrdom throughout the doleful reigns of the despotic Stuart dynasty Kings Charles II and James VII (his brother who succeeded him in 1685). This tyranny ended in the “Glorious Revolution” of 1688.

Literature relating to the Scottish Covenanters from the Restoration to the “Glorious Revolution” contains frequent references to them leaving their native shores and taking refuge in the Dutch

¹ T. McCrie, *The Story of the Scottish Church* (repr. Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1988), pp. 254-5.

Republic,² either as a result of banishment or voluntary exile. Some of the older works are now available online or as e-books, facilitating study of authors such as John Howie,³ Robert Wodrow,⁴ and Patrick Walker.⁵ In addition, recently published works on the Covenanters (such as Maurice Grant's biographical trilogy) also include extensive references to their connections with the Netherlands.⁶

The present paper examines the factors which led to the choice of Rotterdam as the main refuge for the Covenanting exiles as they began arriving in the Dutch Republic from 1661. It looks at Scottish involvement with the Netherlands through the early part of the seventeenth century which led to the founding of the Scots Church in 1643. As Rotterdam was by then home to the largest of the Scots migrant communities, the Scots Church immediately became the largest of the Scottish Presbyterian congregations in the country. This paper looks at the basis on which the Church was founded and the ways in which the first minister and his office-bearers ensured that the doctrines, worship and practice in Rotterdam would be in exact conformity to the Church of Scotland. This provides the background for a series of future papers which, it is hoped, will examine, among other things, the Scottish covenanter exiles in Rotterdam between 1661 and the late 1680s.

² The Dutch Republic existed from 1581 to 1795 and was the country formed by the Union of Utrecht (1579) which unified the seven northern provinces of the Netherlands hitherto under the control of Habsburg Spain. The Republic was officially known as the *Republic of the Seven United Netherlands*, the *Republic of the United Netherlands*, or the *Republic of the Seven United Provinces*. It was also known as *The United Provinces*. These terms are used interchangeably. The provinces of the Dutch Republic comprised the Duchy of Guelders, the County of Holland, the County of Zeeland, the former Bishopric of Utrecht, the Lordship of Overijssel, the Lordship of Frisia, and the Lordship of Groningen and Ommelanden. The remaining southern provinces were then known as the Spanish Netherlands. References to Holland in the present paper (and subsequent papers in the series) indicate specifically the Dutch province of that name.

³ J. Howie, *Biographia Scotiana: or, a brief historical account of the lives, characters, and memorable transactions of the most eminent Scots worthies* (Glasgow: Bryce, 1782). Later editions appeared under the title *The Scots Worthies* and in a revised form as *Lives of the Scottish Covenanters*.

⁴ R. Wodrow, *Analecta: Or, Materials for a history of remarkable providences; mostly relating to Scotch Ministers and Christians* (Edinburgh: Maitland Club, 1842); R. Wodrow, *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland from the Restoration to the Revolution. With an original memoir of the author, extracts from his correspondence, a preliminary dissertation, and notes, by the Rev. Robert Burns, D.D., F.A.S.E.* (Glasgow: Blackie, Fullarton & Co., 1828).

⁵ P. Walker, *Six Saints of the Covenant. Edited with Illustrative Documents, Introduction, Notes, and a Glossary by D. Hay Fleming* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1901).

⁶ M. Grant, *No King but Christ: the story of Donald Cargill* (Durham: Evangelical Press, 1988); *The Lion of the Covenant: the story of Richard Cameron* (Durham: Evangelical Press, 1997); *Preacher to the Remnant: the story of James Renwick* (Edinburgh: Scottish Reformation Society, 2009).

Records of the Scots Church, Rotterdam

The primary source manuscript materials relating to the period are considerable. In particular, there is a large archive of unpublished manuscript documents from the Scots Church of Rotterdam dating from its foundation in 1643 to the present era.⁷ The records of the Consistory⁸ and other church documents were transferred from the Scots Church to the *Gemeentearchief Rotterdam*⁹ (GAR) in 2001. The principal document of the Scottish Church Records (SCR) relevant to the present paper is the first volume of the Consistory minutes, covering from August 1643 to 24th January 1675 (GAR/SCR/1).¹⁰ References to page numbers relate to handwritten numbering in the records and dates of the meetings are also given.¹¹

1. The history of Scottish trade and settlement in the Netherlands

Commercial contacts between Scotland and other countries bordering the North Sea existed for centuries before the Reformation. During the Middle Ages there was a regular trade between Scotland and the Low Countries and Scottish merchants took up residence in the principal trading towns. Early documentary confirmation of this extends back to

⁷ With the exception of one relatively recent volume lost during the upheaval of moving the archive to safety during the Second World War.

⁸ The Consistory (from the Latin *consistorium*, meaning “sitting together”) in Reformed churches is the governing body where the elders and deacons meet together. It has the functions of a combined Kirk Session and Deacons’ Court. The minutes of the Rotterdam consistory meetings relate to the offices and duties of both elders and deacons, often without distinction of the separate roles. The minutes often use “Consistory” and “Session” interchangeably but the phrase “Deacons’ Court” is absent from the records.

⁹ The Municipal Archive of Rotterdam (www.gemeentearchief.rotterdam.nl/en/collectie/archives).

¹⁰ The papers will quote extensively from the documents verbatim, something which is often missing from other accounts of the Rotterdam congregation. There is no uniformly accepted way of transcribing manuscripts from that era. I have opted to transcribe words, capitalisation and punctuation literally, expanding abbreviated or contracted words where necessary (e.g., Minister for “Minr”, Session for “Sess:”, with for “wt”, and which for “wch”). Flourishes on words and letters [such as ũ] are omitted. The letters “u”, “v” and “w” were interchangeable, as were “i” and “j” and “ij” and “y”. The Middle Scots letter combination “quh” represents “wh”. English translations of obscure words have been supplied as necessary.

¹¹ GAR/SCR/1 consists of ninety-three pages. Scribal error has resulted in two pages bearing the number 34.

1321 when safe conducts were issued by the Flemish Earl of Hainault to subjects of King Robert the Bruce.¹²

Historically, much of the formal trading contact between Scotland and the Netherlands was centred on the port of Campveere (nowadays known as Veere)¹³ on the island of Walcheren.¹⁴ Despite its historical commercial importance the small town of Veere is scarcely known within the Netherlands nowadays. Veere's bond with Scotland was strengthened in 1444 with the marriage of the eleven-year-old Wolfert VI van Borselen with Mary, Countess of Buchan, who was a daughter of King James I of Scotland.¹⁵ By the marriage, Wolfert became Count of Buchan. Almost a century later Veere was granted staple-rights for imports of Scottish wool to the Low Countries in 1541.¹⁶ This encouraged Scottish merchants to establish themselves there on a permanent basis, and a large Scots colony developed in Campveere: in 1600, some three hundred of the three thousand inhabitants were Scottish.¹⁷ In exchange, the Scottish community in Veere received special privileges including tax exemptions, and it had its own Church

¹² F. van Meires, *Groot Charter Boek* (Leyden: Pieter Van der Eyk, 1753), Vol. 2, p. 268, quoted in J. Yair, *An Account of the Scotch Trade in The Netherlands, and of the Staple Port in Campveere* (London: Printed for Messrs. Wilson and Nicol in The Strand, 1776). It should be noted that migration to the Low Countries was mirrored by migration from the Low Countries to Scotland. Many settlers in Scottish towns and rural areas were Flemish. See L. Toorians, *Twelfth-century Flemish Settlements in Scotland in Scotland and the Low Countries 1124-1994*, ed. G. Simpson (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1996), pp. 1-14.

¹³ Also known as Ter Veere, Campveere was spelled in several recognisably similar ways in the Rotterdam consistory records, and appears as Travar or Tarver in historical documents relating to staple port status. Historical place names may differ from current usage and, as in this instance, the historical or documentary usage will be given first and thereafter the current name will be used in the text.

¹⁴ Nowadays, due to land reclamation, the island of Walcheren has become a peninsula connected to the (former) island of Zuid-Beveland (South Beveland), which in turn is now joined to Noord-Brabant (North Brabant).

¹⁵ Wolfert VI (c. 1433-29th April 1486) was Lord of Veere. Mary was born before 1428 and died on 20th March 1465.

¹⁶ The staple-right was an obligation on traders to discharge their goods at specified ports (staple ports). Only after displaying the goods to local traders for a certain period could the trader release his goods for open sale elsewhere. In 1669, Charles II transferred the Scottish staple-right from Veere to Dordrecht (also known as Dort or Dordt) but this proved unpopular and staple port status was conferred back to Veere in 1676. Articles of Agreement for Settling the Staple Port at Veere and Dordrecht may be found online at www.fdca.org.uk/Veere_Transcripts.html.

¹⁷ J. Yair, *ibid.*; J. Davidson and A. Gray, *The Scottish Staple at Veere: a study in the economic history of Scotland* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909).

(part of the main town Church), its own legal jurisdiction, and reserved accommodation in the town.¹⁸

The Dutch maritime provinces of Holland and Zeeland allowed much trading outside the formal arrangements relating to the Staple Port. Scottish exports included salted salmon, hides, sheepskins, wool, and plaids, with between 500 and 600 Scottish vessels a year passing through Rotterdam. In particular, Rotterdam monopolised the coal imports from Scotland to satisfy the booming requirements of industrial and household consumption, with some 120 to 130 ships annually transporting coal from Fife and Lothian to the city in the seventeenth century.¹⁹ Trade brought many sailors and other itinerants to the city and contributed to the Scots migrant population. It should be noted that trade was not one-way: vessels returning to Scotland were heavily laden with a wide range of cargo, including luxury and manufactured goods, drugs, soap, wines and brandy, spices, tiles, flax and linen, horticultural products, ironware and weapons.²⁰

After the Reformation further strong ties developed between Scotland and the protestant areas of mainland Europe. The common bond of Calvinistic religion was particularly important in forging ever stronger links with the United Provinces. In addition to the ongoing staple trade links centred on Veere²¹ and the rapidly evolving commercial links with Rotterdam (and to a lesser extent, with Amsterdam), military service in the Scots Brigade took thousands of men and camp followers to the United Provinces for long periods.²² Moreover, Scottish students increasingly sought education at the

¹⁸ One of the historical attractions of Veere (1650 inhabitants in 2010) is the row of *Schotse huizen* [Scottish houses]. www.deltacultureel.nl/schotsehuizen/english.html and [http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veere_\(stad\)](http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veere_(stad)).

¹⁹ D. Catterall, *Community without borders: Scots migrants and the changing face of power in the Dutch Republic, c. 1600-1700* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 26-7, 32, 133 (referring to statements by the Scottish Divine, John Durie, in Hartlib Papers/2/9/34A).

²⁰ The old town archive (*Oud-stadsarchief* – OSA) notes that “one Scots ship took more merchandise back than ten English ships are usually wont to do”: “*hier by gebracht nu dat een Schots schip, meer coopmanschap in retour nemt als thien engelse schepen gemeenlyck gewoon zyn te doen.*” GAR/OSA/2203/7, quoted in D. Catterall, *ibid.*, p. 27. (The translation of the Dutch quotation is mine, as Catterall gives a rather free translation and introduces references to Scotland and England which are not in the original.)

²¹ J. Davidson and A. Gray, *ibid.*; T. C. Smout, *Scottish Trade on the Eve of Union* (Edinburgh & London: Oliver and Boyd, 1963).

²² “The first Scots soldiers to fight for the Dutch cause were on Dutch soil by 1572, in time to assist and die in the defence of Haarlem in 1573. These were the beginnings of the Scots Brigade, which the Dutch authorities had established on a permanent footing

internationally renowned universities of Leiden²³ and Utrecht.²⁴ It is therefore not surprising that congregations of Scots migrants sprang up in various locations in the United Provinces. However, although these congregations were Scottish in origin and Presbyterian in Church government, they were not necessarily a recognised part of the Church of Scotland and consequently had no relation to a Presbytery or Synod. For example, in Veere the Scots congregation formed in 1587 did not become part of the Church of Scotland until 1641. Thereafter the minister and an elder were entitled to seats in the Synod of Lothian and Tweeddale and two commissioners (representatives of the Kirk Session) could attend the General Assembly in Edinburgh.²⁵

The large number of British migrants in the Netherlands led to the establishment of many English-language congregations, including Presbyterians,²⁶ Episcopalians, Independents, Brownists,²⁷ and Quakers. Based on data in Steven's book,²⁸ seventeen British congregations existed in twelve towns during the three decades relating to the Covenanter exile period (1660-90): Amsterdam, Brielle,²⁹ Delft, Den Haag,³⁰ Dordrecht, Haarlem, Leiden, Middelburg, Rotterdam,

by 1603 at a strength of three thousand men." D. Catterall, *ibid.*, p. 31; J. Ferguson (ed.), *Papers Illustrating the History of the Scots Brigade in the Service of the United Netherlands* (Scottish History Society, 1st ser., xxxii, 1899).

²³ Also known as Leyden or Leijden.

²⁴ K. van Strien, *Britse studenten in Utrecht omstreeks 1660-1710*, Jaarboek Oud Utrecht (1997), pp. 205-30; C. D. van Strien, *Schotse studenten in Leiden omstreeks 1700*, Leids Jaarboekje, lxxxvi (1994), pp.133-48.

²⁵ W. Steven, *The History of the Scottish Church, Rotterdam. To which are subjoined, Notices of the Other British Churches in The Netherlands; and a Brief View of the Dutch Ecclesiastical Establishment* (Edinburgh: Waugh and Innes, 1833), p. 291.

²⁶ The Presbyterian churches were generally denominated English, British, or Scottish depending on the origin of the congregation. Ordained Scottish Presbyterian ministers were not infrequently inducted to "English Presbyterian" churches. W. Steven, *ibid.*, pp. 257-344 *passim*.

²⁷ The Brownists were a group of independents under the leadership of Robert Browne. After preaching in Norwich (where there was a large migrant Dutch community, including Dutch Mennonites), Browne left for Middelburg in Zeeland in the United Provinces. There he issued works expounding his Independent (Congregationalist) views which had been tainted with "Radical Reformation" Anabaptist tenets. Eventually he left for Scotland to try to gain support for his cause. He was imprisoned in Scotland on several occasions. For an account of his activities in the United Provinces see J. G. de Hoop Schepper, *History of the Free Churchmen called the Brownists, Pilgrim Fathers and Baptists in the Dutch Republic 1581-1701* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Andrus & Church, 1922), pp. 7-13, 46.

²⁸ W. Steven, *ibid.*, pp. 257-344.

²⁹ Also known as Den Briel, and in Consistory records as The Briel.

³⁰ Also known as 's-Gravenhage, and as The Hague in English.



The territorial extent of the Dutch Republic in the 17th century, showing the locations of the British churches in 1643. German territories and the Spanish Netherlands are medium grey and dark grey respectively.

[Mapwork by James Dickie]

Utrecht, Veere, and Vlissingen.³¹ In addition, garrison church services were conducted by chaplains of the Scots Brigade.

2. Rotterdam as a centre for Scots migrants

Economic growth in the United Provinces between 1647 and 1688 was impressive and the estimated population of Rotterdam rose from 30,000

³¹ Also known as Flushing in English.

in 1647 to 45,000 in 1672. It peaked in 1688 at 50,000 and dropped slightly to 45,000 in 1700.³² The quest for well-paid employment took considerable numbers of Scotsmen to the city where they found land-based employment as merchants, tradesmen, and manual labourers at the harbour, as well as in industries such as brewing and brandy distillation, textile production, and processing and manufacturing of items as diverse as pipes, sugar, and tobacco.³³ In common with seamen from other northern European maritime countries (Norway, Denmark, and north Germany), Scotsmen were attracted to service in the Dutch navy: wages unattractively low in Dutch terms were deemed substantial by other nationals.³⁴ For similar reasons there was also a sharp rise in the numbers of foreign merchant seamen, particularly in whaling enterprises³⁵ and the trading companies (VOC³⁶ and WIC³⁷), despite the unenviable risks of these maritime employments.³⁸ These employment opportunities led to established communities of migrant Scotsmen and their families, by far the largest of which was in Rotterdam.³⁹

In the early 1600s, most Scots lived in the eastern part of Rotterdam, principally in the newly developed harbour district, and also in one of the northern areas of the city.⁴⁰ Following urban expansion in

³² J. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477-1806* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 621.

³³ D. Catterall, *ibid.*, p. 39; A. Storie, *Memoirs* (1776), quoted in J. Morrison, *Scots on the Dijk* (Rotterdam: J. Morrison, 1981), p. 1: "... a good many people ... seeking work (the wages at that time being much higher in Holland than in Scotland) such as Tradesmen and Workmen in Breweries, Warehouses and Porters etc; likewise Sailors to sail with Dutch Warships, Greenland ships, Straat Davis ships and Merchant ships." The Davis Strait (*Straat Davis*) is a northern arm of the Labrador Sea and lies between Greenland and Baffin Island.

³⁴ Wages for a common sailor were approximately twelve guilders a month at a time when the average monthly wage in the Dutch Republic was approximately thirty guilders. (Data derived from D. Catterall, *ibid.*, p. 43). At that time, thirty guilders was approximately £3 sterling or thirty-six Scots pounds (F. Turner, *Money and exchange rates in 1632*. www.1632.org/1632Slush/1632money.rtf).

³⁵ J. Israel, *ibid.*, pp. 622-3.

³⁶ *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (VOC) – the United East India Company.

³⁷ *Geotroyeerde Westindische Compagnie* (GWIC) or simply *Westindische Compagnie* (WIC) – the (Chartered) West India Company.

³⁸ In regard to sailors with the VOC (which existed from 1602-1800) alone, "only 47% of these men ever returned to Europe. Over the life of the Dutch East India Company, historians estimate the number of men lost in this way at a substantial 255,000." D. Catterall, *ibid.*, p. 135.

³⁹ D. Catterall, *ibid.*, p. 31.

⁴⁰ D. Catterall, *ibid.*, p. 99.

the early seventeenth century (and by the time the Scots Church was established in 1643) the majority of the Scots population lived in the district centred on the present-day *Leuvehaven* and *Schiedamsedijk* in the south-west of the city, an area which became popularly known as *Schotsedijkje* [Little Scottish dyke].⁴¹ Comparison of maps from 1599⁴² and 1652⁴³ shows the transformation of this district from undeveloped land inside the city's western perimeter dyke to a built-up area with dense housing.

In apparent contrast to the situation pertaining in other large centres of Scots population in the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century, a definitively Scottish Presbyterian church was not founded in Rotterdam until 1643, some sixty-five years after Scots began to settle there in significant numbers.⁴⁴ Before then Scottish migrants enjoyed occasional services from chaplains in the Scots Brigade and from ministers visiting from other Dutch towns. Attendance under a settled English-speaking congregation was possible under a chaplain to the English merchants, or in a recently formed Independent congregation. The numerous Scots migrants who understood the Dutch language attended services of the Dutch Reformed Church, which had a similar doctrinal and practical basis and many were married in that Church.⁴⁵ It is difficult to assess the full extent of Scots involvement with these English and Dutch congregations, however, due to the lack of Consistorial records.⁴⁶

⁴¹ D. Catterall, *ibid.*, p. 100. Catterall does not take cognisance of the *-je* suffix (which indicates smallness) in his rendering "Scots dike".

⁴² An image of the map by Henric van Haestens (<http://images.kb.dk/present?id=dk004119>) may be seen on the website of the National Library of Denmark (<http://www.kb.dk/en/>). Van Haestens shows south at the top. The area of the *Leuvehaven* is in the top right corner, with the future "Scots Dijk" area numbered 40: *Tnieu werck binnen dijcx*.

⁴³ An image of Blaeu's Rotterdam map may be accessed on Wikipedia (http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bestand:Blaeu_1652_-_Rotterdam.jpg). The map shows the traditional orientation with north at the top of the map and the *Leuvehaven* at the lower left corner of the city.

⁴⁴ Churches specifically denominated Scottish existed in Delft, Leiden, Middelburg, and Veere.

⁴⁵ W. Steven, *ibid.*, p. 2; J. MacLean, *De huwelijksintekeningen van Schotse militairen in Nederland, 1574-1665* (Zutphen: De Walburg Pers, 1976), pp. 226-57.

⁴⁶ "The consistorial records of the Dutch Reformed Church do not begin until the fourth decade of the seventeenth century and those of the English churches not until even later." D. Catterall, *ibid.*, p. 239, fn. 9.

3. The religious situation in the Dutch Republic

Despite the religious affinity between the seventeenth century Calvinistic churches of Scotland and the United Provinces, it is misleading to imagine that the religious situations of the two countries were comparable. A brief selective summary of the religious history of the Netherlands following the Reformation may help the reader to understand the religious complexities which form the backdrop to the period covered in this series of papers.

The Lutheran Reformation spread to the Low Countries at an early stage, with many of Luther's early works circulating in 1518-19 such that Erasmus of Rotterdam informed the English cardinal Thomas Wolsey that Luther's works were "everywhere".⁴⁷ Following the ban by Emperor Charles V in the Edict of Worms in 1521, hundreds of copies of Luther's works were publicly burnt in the Netherlands.⁴⁸ Persecution of Lutherans began in earnest in 1525 and the first martyr was burnt in Friesland in 1530.⁴⁹ After that the Anabaptist movement gained strength, but eventually the Calvinistic Reformation gained a strong influence, helped by returning Dutch exiles who had come in contact with Calvinistic churches in London and Germany.⁵⁰ The first Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church took place at Edam in August 1572. However, whereas the Scottish Parliament established Presbyterianism as the national religion in 1560, the Netherlands remained a mixed community of Roman Catholics and Protestants of various persuasions.

Thirty years after the Edam Synod the Calvinism of the Dutch Reformed Church came under sustained attack from within when Jacobus Arminius⁵¹ (1560-1609) was appointed to a chair of theology at

⁴⁷ J. G. de Hoop Scheffer, *Geschiedenis der kerkhervorming in Nederland van haar ontstaan tot 1537* (Amsterdam: G. L. Funke, 1873), Vol. 1, pp. 70-1; C. C. G. Visser, *Luther's geschriften in de Nederlanden tot 1546* (Assen: van Gorcum & Comp., 1969), p. 16.

⁴⁸ M. E. Kronenberg, *Verboden boeken en opstandige drukkers in de hervormingstijd* (Amsterdam: P. N. van Kampen en zoon, 1948), pp. 31-3.

⁴⁹ W. Bergsma, "Uyt Christelijcken yver en ter eeren Godes". *Wederdopers en verdraagzaamheid*, in M. F. Gijswijt-Hofstra (ed.), *Een schijn van verdraagzaamheid. Afwijking en tolerantie in Nederland van de zestiende eeuw tot heden* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1989), p. 70.

⁵⁰ J. Decavele, *De dageraad van de Reformatie in Vlaanderen* (Doctoral thesis: 2 vols.; Brussel, 1975), Vol. 2, pp. 330-2; "The strength of Calvinism [. . .] sprang from its clear, systematic exposition [. . .] its ability to provide that stable and orderly structure, both in dogma and organization, needed to counter the fragmentation, and proliferation of theological tendencies, so characteristic of the early Netherlands Reformation" (J. Israel, *ibid.*, p. 103).

⁵¹ The Latinized form of the Dutch name Jakob Hermanszoon.

Leiden in 1603. His antagonism to the doctrine of predestination was already well known and this led inevitably to conflict with his fellow professor in Leiden, Franciscus Gomarus⁵² (1563-1641), an orthodox Calvinist. By 1605 the acrimonious dispute had spread beyond the university until it preoccupied the Dutch Reformed Church throughout the United Provinces and neighbouring areas of Germany.⁵³

Following the death of Arminius in 1609, his eponymous followers perversely contended that the only way to resolve the conflict was to alter the Church's doctrinal standards to accommodate their views. The Arminians drew up a "Remonstrance" in 1610, which called for revision of the Belgic Confession, asserted Erastian authority of the State over the Church,⁵⁴ and restated Arminius' erroneous views on predestination. At a theological disputation before the States General,⁵⁵ Gomarus and his party presented their "Counter-Remonstrance" which set out the Calvinist position and rejected confessional amendment.

Subsequently the Remonstrants (Arminians) proposed a National Synod to resolve the doctrinal conflicts and this was naturally opposed by orthodox preachers who demanded that ministers (together with the Leiden theology professors) should subscribe to the existing Confession before convening a Synod.⁵⁶ Political intrigues led the Remonstrants to agree to a National Synod to settle the religious controversies. However, the *Stadhouder*⁵⁷ intervened to protect the security of the state by arresting the Arminian *Raadspensionaris*⁵⁸ of Holland, Johan van Oldenbarneveldt (1547-1619), and two leading supporters to ensure the security of the state. Arminian leadership then crumbled with the flight of their foremost preacher, Johannes Uytenbogaert (1557-1664). This

⁵² The Latinized form of the Flemish name François Gomaer.

⁵³ J. H. Maronier, *Jacobus Arminius. Een biografie* (Amsterdam: Rogge, 1905), pp. 186-7, 202.

⁵⁴ Erastianism is the theological position that the State is supreme in ecclesiastical matters. Erastus was a 16th century Swiss theologian best known for a posthumously published work in which he argued that the sins of Christians should be punished by the State rather than the Church.

⁵⁵ States General is the usual translation of *Staten Generaal*, the Dutch legislature which has met in Den Haag at the *Binnenhof* since 1446 until the present day.

⁵⁶ C. D. Bangs, *Arminius: A study in the Dutch Reformation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), pp. 280-1.

⁵⁷ The *Stadhouder* was the Head of State, at this time Maurits of Nassau (1567-1625), Prince of Orange since February 1618.

⁵⁸ *Raad(s)pensionaris* is a Dutch term, usually translated into English as "Grand Pensionary". The position was similar to that of a Prime Minister.

gave a free hand to the Calvinist Counter-Remonstrants who ousted the Arminians from churches and from civic positions in early 1618.

Planning for the Synod of Dordrecht began shortly after the Counter-Remonstrant victory in March 1618. The Synod met for one hundred and fifty-four sessions, lasting from 13th November 1618 until 9th May 1619. It included invited delegations from Britain, Switzerland and Germany.⁵⁹ Formal condemnation of Arminian theology was issued at the one hundred and thirty-seventh sitting of the Synod in March 1619,⁶⁰ with the Arminian Remonstrants being described as “heretics, disseminators of false doctrine, and *perturbateurs* of state and Church”.⁶¹

Following the Synod the Arminian Remonstrant preachers were expelled from the national Church and civic positions. Some of the Arminians who then left the Reformed Church in Rotterdam joined a Remonstrant Church and a number joined the Lutheran Church.⁶² However, a large number forsook any semblance of a Reformed confession and swelled the already large ranks of the city’s Roman Catholics.⁶³

The tide gradually began to turn against the Calvinists during the following decade, however. In Rotterdam, where Calvinist sentiment was weak, the authorities refused to suppress Remonstrant (Arminian) meetings⁶⁴ and Remonstrant leaders participated enthusiastically in a campaign in favour of tolerating Arminianism. The outcome of the Great Dutch Toleration Debate of the late 1620s was a confessionally fragmented country with broad toleration of disparate religious groups. This was apparent from 1630 in Rotterdam, and developed in many

⁵⁹ The French King Louis XIII forbade an invited Huguenot delegation to attend the Synod.

⁶⁰ Whilst the “Synod of Dort” is popularly remembered for its comprehensive refutation of Arminianism, it is worth recalling some of its other achievements. The meetings addressed matters such as Church-State relations, procedures for appointing preachers, and relations with the Lutheran Church. The Synod also requested the States General to commission the first Dutch Bible to be translated out of the original languages (rather than being a Dutch translation of existing translations in other languages). The States General eventually acceded to the Synod’s request in 1626 and the *Statenvertaling* [State Translation – comparable to the English Authorised Version of 1611] was published in 1637.

⁶¹ J. Israel, *ibid.*, p. 462.

⁶² J. W. Pont, *Geschiedenis van het Lutheranisme in de Nederlanden tot 1618* (Haarlem: De Erven F. Bohn, 1911), p. 551.

⁶³ *Archief aartsbisdom Utrecht*, Vol. xii, p. 209.

⁶⁴ *Gemeentearchief Gouda*, OA 9. fo. 92 (5th October 1627).

other parts of the United Provinces through the following two decades.⁶⁵ In Rotterdam Roman Catholics made up 20% of the population in 1662 and the Lutheran presence had also grown; Remonstrants represented 15% of the city's inhabitants around the same time. Smaller religious groups included Anabaptists, Jews, and three English-language congregations (English Presbyterians, Church of England, and Quakers), as well as other congregations which had a distinct linguistic background such as the French-speaking Walloon Church.⁶⁶ Such religious diversity and tolerance of heterodoxy was in stark contrast to the Scottish experience, unchanged since 1560, where there was a single national protestant Church of Scotland, established by law, teaching Calvinistic doctrine, and with Presbyterian Church government (apart from the period of Episcopacy imposed by the House of Stuart from 1618 to 1638).

4. Establishment of the Scots Church, Rotterdam

The records of the Scots Church are headed "The actes and procedinges of the Session of the Scots Kirk at Roterdame from the beginning therof".⁶⁷ They begin by formally recording the process leading to the founding of the Church and the appointment of its first minister, Alexander Petrie. "The creation of a kirk in faoueres of the Scotcs dwelling within this towne, & seamen resorting hither was by them petitioned of the Vroedschape,⁶⁸ who sent unto the States General & obtained of them the libertie & a stipend therunto: & they as also the brethren of the Consistorie & the forenamed supplicantes sent their seueral letters unto the Presbyterie of Edinburgh crauing of them that they wold be pleased to send a Minister for the beginning of sik [such] a work. They sent hither Mr Alexander Petrie. All these particulares ar to be seen by the authentical actes."⁶⁹

⁶⁵ G. J. Mentink, A. M. van der Woude, *Demografische ontwikkeling te Rotterdam en Cool in de 17e en 18e eeuw* (Rotterdam, 1965), p. 44; N. W. Posthumus, *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis van de Leidsche textielnijverheid* (6 vols.; 's-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1910-22), Vol. 3, p. 880.

⁶⁶ The Walloon Church consisted of French-speaking Calvinists originating from the Spanish Netherlands and northern France, driven into exile largely due to persecution by the Roman Catholic Church and its political allies.

⁶⁷ GAR/SCR/1, p. 1 (1643).

⁶⁸ The *vroedschap* was the council of a Dutch town. It "consisted of up to forty members and each held his seat for life. Councillors were chosen by the regents, an elite group of wealthy families which dominated civic affairs." G. Gardner, *The Scottish Exile Community in The Netherlands 1660-1690* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2004), p. 99.

⁶⁹ GAR/SCR/1, p. 1 (1643).

This excerpt is a highly truncated version of a complex process involving meetings and petitions from the Scots to the Dutch authorities, fundraising by migrants and seamen, the concurrence of the Rotterdam municipal authorities and the Dutch national authorities, agreement between the Dutch Reformed Church and the Church of Scotland's Presbytery of Edinburgh, and the willingness of a Perthshire minister to become the first pastor of a newly formed city congregation overseas.

The Scots experienced intense official scrutiny when they made known their desire to have their own Church. Apparently this was due to a recent experience with the city's English Calvinist Church which had become independent in terms of Church government.⁷⁰ Rotterdam's Dutch Reformed Church and the civic authorities jointly decided in 1642 (with concurrence of the Church of Scotland) that the planned Scots Church would become an official part of the Dutch Reformed Church,⁷¹ a model replicating the situation of Amsterdam's English Presbyterian Church.⁷² However, given the Erastian tendencies of Arminianism (the prevailing theological viewpoint of the Rotterdam elite and a large number of Reformed Church clergy and members in the city) this decision has the appearance of an Erastian "directive" to the Dutch Church.⁷³

The Scots Church was allowed to send commissioners to sit in the local *Classis*⁷⁴ of the Dutch Reformed Church.⁷⁵ In theory this

⁷⁰ D. Catterall, *ibid.*, p. 245. For reasons that are not clear, the famed Rotterdam toleration of religious diversity did not extend to an independent English congregation.

⁷¹ GAR/NHG/1 (4th December 1641) [NHG is the GAR's abbreviation for *Archieven Hevorme gemeente Rotterdam*]; K. L. Sprunger, *Dutch Puritanism: A History of English and Scottish Churches of the Netherlands in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), pp. 167-78.

⁷² W. Steven, *ibid.*, pp. 272-80.

⁷³ Further evidence of the Erastian influences is seen in the following observation: "The state [. . .] had the power to approve the Dutch Reformed Church's ministers, determine when its synods met, and ensure that it did not meddle with overtly political matters." Nevertheless, the Dutch Church exercised spiritual independence in other matters, as the state "could not, however, interfere with ceremonies or teachings. In other words, within certain limits, each side [. . .] was free to promote its particular views at the local level in the Republic's towns and villages." D. Catterall, *ibid.*, p. 240.

⁷⁴ *Classis* is the Dutch word for *Presbytery*. Of Latin derivation, it appears in the Westminster Assembly Documents – *The Form of Presbyterial Church Government and of Ordination of Ministers* which was approved by the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland (1645): the section dealing with Presbyteries is entitled *Of Classical Assemblies*, printed in *Westminster Confession of Faith* (repr. Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1994), pp. 406-409. The Rotterdam Reformed Churches belonged to the regional *Classis* of Schieland.

⁷⁵ "Mathew Paton is chosen to goe with the Minister unto the Classis convening the morne, & crave that this kirk be inrolled in their Societe as a member thereof." GAR/SCR/1, p. 3 (13th November 1643).

arrangement would have been beneficial to the congregation during various periods of difficulty. However, the *Classis* of Schieland overturned the 1642 decision⁷⁶ and declined to grant the Scots a place in the *Classis*.⁷⁷ This was in line with its refusal to police foreign congregations within its jurisdiction, and the magistrates respected this position.⁷⁸ This effectively left the Scots Church as a Presbyterian body without a court of appeal in the Dutch Republic. In reality, therefore, the Rotterdam Church became virtually an independent body as the Presbytery of Edinburgh was too geographically distant to be of use and there were no presbyterial links to other Scots congregations in the Netherlands.⁷⁹ This caused problems when the Consistory had to deal with difficult matters of practice and discipline.

This paper has already noted the extent of Scots migration and the increasing maritime and mercantile links with Rotterdam. The size of the city's Scots population in 1643 is not known with certainty though in 1642 the *Classis* of Schieland estimated the number of "churched" Scots at between 300 and 400.⁸⁰ This would appear to be a reasonable estimate from my examination of "The names of Communicantes in this Congregation"⁸¹ which lists the names of newly professing adults at each communion.⁸² The numbers are high on each quarterly sacramental occasion from the first communion in January 1644 through to the communion in January 1645, probably reflecting the ongoing accession of members previously attending other churches.⁸³ However, the roll does not differentiate between established migrants, new migrants and

⁷⁶ GAR/Classis Schieland/5 (14th October 1642).

⁷⁷ GAR/Classis Schieland/5 (20th June 1644).

⁷⁸ D. Catterall, *ibid.*, p. 246.

⁷⁹ It seems the Church of Scotland did not consider establishing a Presbytery of Scots congregations in the Netherlands: the congregations remained a part of the Presbytery of Edinburgh.

⁸⁰ GAR/Classis Schieland/5 (14th October 1642).

⁸¹ GAR/SCR/47, pp. 77-8.

⁸² The list records the new communicants by the district they inhabited, confirming the preponderance of addresses in the south-western area of the city. Of course, non-professing adults and children do not figure on the list.

⁸³ From April 1645 onwards the additions at each communion were generally in single figures or the low teens, probably indicating that the influx of existing migrants enrolling in the new Church had ended, and subsequent additions were from new migrants. In passing, it may be noted that not all Scots in Rotterdam transferred membership to the new Church: a small number of Scots appeared before the Consistory of the Dutch Reformed Church up till 1690 (D. Catterall, *ibid.*, p. 203, fn. 61).

transient visitors.⁸⁴ It should also be noted that the roll does not account for people who left Rotterdam or died. A small number on the communion roll were noted to be “English,” or “Englises”. Once an allowance is made for children and non-communicant adults, the figure supports the 1642 Dutch estimate.⁸⁵ It is believed that the congregation grew to 600 members by 1646.⁸⁶

The Scots migrant community and seamen collected funds for the foundation of the Church. The monies exceeded requirements and the newly formed Consistory decided “that out of that which remains satisfaction be given unto James wardlaw for his seruice in conueening or calling the brethren togeder often since the supplicationes wer presented for erection of the kirk”. Despite the surplus, the Consistory was concerned that their representatives “shall collect from others who haue not giuen their part of that contribution, & deliuer what they shall receiue unto any whom the Session shall appointe”.⁸⁷ The Rotterdam magistrates generously assisted the congregation from the outset, paying the stipend annually (550 guilders *per annum*) from the public purse.⁸⁸ Approval for this was granted at the highest level of the Dutch Government: the States General gave prompt approval to the proposal.⁸⁹ By way of comparison, Dutch Reformed Church ministers earned widely disparate salaries, depending on their location.⁹⁰ In 1632 urban ministers earned

⁸⁴ There is an exception: some men are described as “shippers” or “schippers”, a designation which implies they were neither established migrants nor new migrants.

⁸⁵ The *Classis* likely included children and non-communicant adults in their estimate, counting baptised individuals (*doopleden* – baptised members) as members of the visible Church. This remains Dutch practice to the present day when numbering a congregation. The Consistory record refers to many hundreds assenting to the Confession of Faith and subsequently subscribing the communion roll: “The Confession is expounded in the publick sermone, & after sermone many hunders swear unto it by solemne lifting up of their handes & by subscriuing it, as is to be seen in the Register appointed for that & other roles,” GAR/SCR/1, p. 4 (6th January 1644), with subscribing members listed in GAR/SCR/77-8.

⁸⁶ D. Catterall, *ibid.*, p. 26.

⁸⁷ GAR/SCR/1, p. 2 (1st October 1643).

⁸⁸ Approximately equivalent to £55 sterling or 660 Scots pounds.

⁸⁹ “On a proposition of the Lords of Rotterdam, after mature deliberation, it was found good, that, within said city, there shall be erected and instituted, a church for the Scottish nation; and their Noble Great Mightinesses, for carrying on the same, agreed to, and agree by these, that there shall yearly be paid, in behalf of the States, for a salary to the minister of that church, the sum of five hundred and fifty guilders.” Wiltens, *Kerk-Plakaat-boek*, 4to, Vol. 2, p. 351 (reference quoted in W. Steven, *ibid.*, p. 2 (footnote)).

⁹⁰ G. Groenhuis, *De predikanten. De sociale positie van de gereformeerde predikanten in de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden voor 1700* (Dissertation: University of Groningen, 1977), pp. 136-9.

700 guilders whereas rural ministers earned less than 400 guilders, and in some cases less than 300 guilders.

5. “They sent hither Mr Alexander Petrie”

The records imply extensive correspondence passing from the Netherlands to the Presbytery of Edinburgh: “They [the States General] as also the brethren of the Consistorie⁹¹ & the forenamed supplicantes sent their seueral letters unto the Presbyterie of Edinburgh crauing of them that they wold be pleased to send a Minister for the beginning of sik a work.



Alexander Petrie, first minister of Scots Church, Rotterdam (from an engraving in W. Steven, The History of the Scottish Church, Rotterdam).

They sent hither Mr Alexander Petrie. All these particulares ar to be seen by the authentional actes.”⁹² However, there are no extant records of either the “authentional actes” or the correspondence with the Edinburgh Presbytery which resulted in their prompt choice of Alexander Petrie, minister of Rhynd, a charge in the Presbytery of Perth. The Edinburgh Presbytery strongly recommended him as being every way qualified to the work in Rotterdam, and the General Assembly harmoniously agreed to his translation.⁹³

Printed publications as well as the consistory records furnish considerable details about Petrie’s life from the time he settled in Rotterdam until his death there on 16th September 1662. However, comparatively little is known about his earlier life in Scotland. The year of his birth in Montrose is given as *circa* 1594 and he was the third son of a merchant burgher of the same name. Petrie’s university education took place at St. Andrews where he graduated M.A. in 1615. There is no indication of Alexander Petrie’s activities for the next five years until he

⁹¹ The Consistory did not exist, of course, until after the Church was founded.

⁹² GAR/SCR/1, p. 1 (1643).

⁹³ W. Steven, *ibid.*, p. 3.

became master of the Grammar School of his native town from 1620 to 1630. He was ordained the minister of Rhynd after 18th July 1632, during the time of Episcopal ascendancy.⁹⁴ Petrie was a staunch supporter of the Covenant during these dark years and was appointed a member of the memorable Glasgow General Assembly of 1638 and the Assembly of 1639.⁹⁵ He was also elected Clerk to the Synod of Perth and Stirling on 8th October 1639. The next recorded information about Alexander Petrie is his translation to Rotterdam in 1643, aged about forty-nine, where he was minister for nineteen years until he died aged about sixty-eight.⁹⁶

Alexander Petrie's family accompanied him to Rotterdam. His wife's name features on the list of members of the congregation as "Nicolas [*sic*] Durie, spouse to the present Minister". The names of four of Petrie's five children appear on the list of members.⁹⁷

Petrie had a major influence in shaping the Rotterdam congregation and ensuring that it adhered to orthodox doctrine, worship and practice during these nineteen years of his ministry which ended

⁹⁴ In the consistory records, Petrie gives an indication that he may have been a minister elsewhere before Rhynd. "I haue been many times in Kirksessions, both wher I was minister, and wher other ministers haue been: I haue been in sundrie Presbyteries, and in the synodes of bishopes, and in the Provincial synodes of Perth and Sterlin and Fife, and I haue been in fyue general assemblies." GAR/SCR/1, p. 44 (26th December 1650). However, it is conceivable that he could have written this based on his work as a minister and Synod clerk, which exposed him to various Church courts.

⁹⁵ The Glasgow Assembly was the first to meet for twenty years. It abolished the office of bishop and other trappings of Episcopacy. The Assembly declared the Prayer Book and other liturgical innovations unlawful, and went on to re-establish Presbyterian government in the Church of Scotland. This challenged the absolutism of Charles I and led to the "Bishops' Wars" of 1639 and 1640 in which the Covenanters were victorious.

⁹⁶ H. Scott, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanæ. The succession of ministers in the Church of Scotland from the Reformation. Volume IV. Synods of Argyll, and of Perth and Stirling* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1923), p. 243.

⁹⁷ All five children remained in the Dutch Republic. Alexander Petrie (jun.) became minister of the British Congregation in Delft in 1645. He was called to a charge in Scotland in 1668 but returned to Delft within three months. By then another minister had been settled in the congregation but on his translation to the British Presbyterian Church in Amsterdam, Petrie was reappointed minister by the Delft consistory in 1669 (without any formal reinvestiture) until his death on 2nd June 1683. George Petrie became a merchant and apothecary in Rotterdam. Christian (named Cristin in the register of members) married Andrew Snype, who was minister of Veere from 1664 to his death in 1686. Isabel (or Isobel) Petrie first married William Wallace, a Rotterdam merchant, and after he died she married Robert Allan, also a merchant. The fifth child Elspeth Petrie married George Murray in Rotterdam: though two other women of this name are on the list of members, her name does not feature. For details, see H. Scott, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanæ. Volume IV*, p. 243; W. Steven, *ibid.*, pp. 294-7; GAR/SCR/47, pp. 77-8.

in his death in 1662. It is worth considering the two main religious controversies which Petrie had to confront at an early stage in the congregation.

The first controversy in 1644 gave Petrie an opportunity to defend a practice of the Church of Scotland against opponents in the congregation. It centred on the office of reader in the congregation. The First Book of Discipline (1560) recommended the appointment of readers in vacant congregations: “To the kirks where no ministers can be had presently, must be appointed the most apt men that distinctly can read the common prayers [from the Genevan Book of Order, also known as Knox’s Liturgy] and the scriptures, to exercise both themselves and the kirk, till they grow to greater perfection.”⁹⁸ Scottish Session records note that the reader was essential “for comforting of the people by the reading of holy scripture every Sabbath before sermon”.⁹⁹ Over time the function of a reader changed when ministers were more numerous and they read publicly the scriptures and portions of the “Confession of Faith”¹⁰⁰ which (along with singing of psalms) invariably preceded sermons.¹⁰¹

Despite long established practice in Scotland and the Consistory’s unanimity in appointing a reader in 1643,¹⁰² the custom of reading met with considerable opposition in Rotterdam one year later. This led to unseemly confrontations in the Consistory between the minister and some members of the congregation who opined that the practice “bordered on Brownism or Papistry”.¹⁰³ In vain did Alexander

⁹⁸ *First Book of Discipline (1560)* (repr.: Edinburgh: Covenanters Press, 2004).

⁹⁹ National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh, CH2/32/1, f. 33 (Kirk Session minute book, Belhelvie); CH2/264/1 (Kirk Session minute book, Menmuir); CH2/521/6, f. 87 and CH2/521/7, p. 281 (Kirk Session minute books, Perth); CH2/266/1, f. 5v (Kirk Session minute book, Mid-Calder (St John’s Kirk)); CH2/716/2, f. 49 (Kirk Session minute book, South Leith).

¹⁰⁰ The term “Confession of Faith” was used to refer to “The Confession of Faith of the Kirk of Scotland: or, The National Covenant” rather than the Westminster Assembly’s *Confession of Faith* which was not yet in existence: the Westminster Confession was approved by the Church of Scotland’s General Assembly at Edinburgh on 27th August 1647.

¹⁰¹ W. Cowper, *The Workes of Mr Williã Cowper late Bishop of Galloway Now newly collected into one volume Whereunto is added a comentary on the Reuelation neuer before published* (London: Robert Allott, 1629), pp. 680, 682. Quoted in M. Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 68, fn. 175.

¹⁰² “It is also concluded by consent of all, Minister, Elders & all others here present, that a qualified Reader shalbe chosen.” GAR/SCR/1, p. 2 (1st October 1643).

¹⁰³ Multiple entries in GAR/SCR/1 (1644).

Petrie attempt to quell dissent by referring to the Church's historical procedure and the Books of Discipline. The contentious elders and deacons tendered their resignations, which were immediately (and somewhat unexpectedly) accepted: new office-bearers were promptly appointed.

The strife ended when Mr. Petrie received and “readeth [publicly] a letter written by the Commissioners of the Kirk of Scotland lying now at London¹⁰⁴ wherin they declare that the exposition of a chapter at once is not only lawfull, but since the Reformation hes been alwyse practised in some of the Kirkes in Scotland & now is appointed by the Synode at London [Westminster Assembly] to be a parte of the Vniformitie of diuine seruice in all the kirkes of the thrie kingdomes; And also aduising us to use discretion in receiuing Communicants”.¹⁰⁵ The advice to use discretion indicates that the Commissioners recommended granting membership only to those who were wholeheartedly sympathetic to the position of the Church of Scotland, even in what might appear an obscure matter of Church practice.

The second religious controversy which Petrie addressed in his first year in Rotterdam was a threat to the Church of Scotland's teaching. This involved a number of the congregation who were swayed by the premillenarian Fifth Monarchist opinions of Robert Maton, an English author.¹⁰⁶ Maton's book had appeared in 1642 and Petrie became aware of the views circulating in the congregation shortly after his induction. In 1644 he published a 71-page booklet which countered this pernicious doctrine.¹⁰⁷ The preface is inscribed “To the worthie and his beloved, the Scotcs and Englishes of the Scots congregation at Roterdame; Alexander

¹⁰⁴ This refers to the Scottish Commissioners to the Westminster Assembly of Divines. The ministers were: Alexander Henderson of Edinburgh, Robert Douglas of Edinburgh (never attended), Samuel Rutherford of St. Andrews, and Robert Baillie of Glasgow. The elders were: John Earl of Cassilis (never attended), John Lord Maitland, Sir Archibald Johnston of Warriston, Robert Meldrum (in the absence of Johnston), John Earl of Loudon, Sir Charles Erskine, John Lord Balmerino (in place of Loudon), Archibald Marquis of Argyll, and George Winram of Libberton (in place of Argyll). A. F. Mitchell, *Minutes of the Sessions of the Westminster Assembly of Divines* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1874), p. lxxxiv.

¹⁰⁵ GAR/SCR/1, p. 14 (25th November 1644).

¹⁰⁶ R. Maton, *Israel's Redemption, or the propheticall history of our Saviours Kingdome on earth; that is, of the church catholicke and triumphant: with a discourse of Gog and Magog, or The battle of the great day of God Almighty* (London: Frere, 1642).

¹⁰⁷ A. Petrie, *Chiliasto-mastix, or, The Prophecies in the Old and New Testaments concerning the Kingdome of our Saviour Jesus Christ, Vindicated from the misinterpretationes of the Millenaries and specially of Mr. Maton in his book called Israels redemption* (Rotterdam: Waesbergen, 1644).

Petrie wisheth constancie in the faith which wes once delivered”, and the booklet staunchly supports the postmillenarian position.¹⁰⁸

These were the first of a number of controversies in which Petrie participated over the years. Besides dealing with difficult matters of doctrine, practice and discipline within the congregation, he also addressed issues in the wider community not directly affecting the Scots Church. For example, he supported Jacobus Borstius, a Calvinist preacher in Rotterdam, by publishing pamphlets in support of Trinitarian doctrine against the Socinian heresy which was making inroads in the Dutch Remonstrant and Anabaptist communities.¹⁰⁹

Petrie’s preaching also touched on subjects of religious and political concern to the Dutch Republic. The year 1648 saw the Peace of Westphalia which marked the end of two wars involving the Netherlands – the Eighty Years’ War (the Dutch War of Independence, 1568-1648) and the Thirty Years’ War (1618-48). A treaty (the Peace of Münster) was arranged between the Dutch Republic and Habsburg Spain resulting in the United Provinces being recognised as an independent country. Petrie preached two sermons in the Scots Church in the run-up to the treaty being signed and these were printed in Dutch for circulation.¹¹⁰

Petrie also devoted time to collecting material for a scholarly history of the Christian church, which he dedicated to the Prince of Orange.¹¹¹ It is likely that he spent many years researching original manuscripts and old publications before the 1169-page folio tome was published in 1662, shortly before he died. One aspect of the work which particularly commends itself to the historian is that it contains copious extracts from Records of the General Assembly of the Church of

¹⁰⁸ The preface to Petrie’s book is quite seriously mis-transcribed as “To his beloved Scotese and Englishe of the wortheie the Scots congregation” in W. Steven, *ibid.*, p. 12. This is one of a number of instances where Steven is not a reliable source of information.

¹⁰⁹ A. Petrie, *Parænesis, ofte Vermaninge om te vermijden de Sociniaenrije. Gestelt tegen het onzedigh ende Goddeeloos Antwoordt van N.N. sich valscheijck noemende (gelijck hier bewesen wordt) een Gereformeert Hollander* (Rotterdam: Leers, 1655); A. Petrie, *Replycke van A.P.S.R. Bediener des Godlijcken Woordts, op d’Antwoordt van N.N. een vermomt Sociniaen, onder den naem van een Gerformeert Hollander* (Rotterdam: Van Waesberge, 1655).

¹¹⁰ A. Petrie, *Vande volkomen vrede, tusschen den coninck van Hispanien, ende de Vereenichde Nederlandsche Provincien. Twee predicatien, ghepredickt inde Schotsche kerck binnen Rotterdam, op den 10. juny 1648. By A.P.* (Delft: Stael, 1648).

¹¹¹ A. Petrie, *A compendious History of the Catholick Church, from the year 600 until the year 1600, shewing her Deformation and Reformation; together with the Rise, Reign, Rage, and Begin-fall of the Roman Antichrist, with many profitable Instructions, gathered out of divers writers of the several times, and other Histories, by Alexander Petrie, Minister of the Scots Congregation at Rotterdam* (’s-Gravenhage: Vlaek, 1662).

Scotland. The originals were destroyed in various mishaps including the great fire in the Lawnmarket, Edinburgh in 1701 and Petrie's book has become one of the primary sources for their study.¹¹²

Alexander Petrie was an able and pious minister, esteemed alike by his congregation and by the Calvinistic Dutch Reformed ministers of Rotterdam. He was well versed in the doctrines and practice of the Church of Scotland and sought to maintain these "old paths". This was difficult in a cosmopolitan city where a variety of religious opinions circulated, and in a country whose laws and customs (even in religious matters) differed from his native land. He had to contend with divisions and dissent in his own congregation, where the members were not necessarily as well versed in (or sympathetic to) the principles and practice of the Church in Scotland. In perusing the Consistory records during his ministry it is easy to concur with Steven's observation that Petrie was "of a hasty and warm temperament" and "made little allowance for the uneducated persons with whom he acted".¹¹³ Yet he was a loving pastor who cared passionately for the welfare of souls and it is clear that Petrie's adherence to the witness of the covenanted Church of Scotland never wavered. When the first banished Covenanters arrived in Rotterdam in 1661-2, a few months before his death, they could aver that they found in Petrie a like-minded minister who was "dissatisfied with the times [prevailing in Scotland under Charles II]".¹¹⁴

6. "The house of the Winestriet appointed by the Lordes of the towne"

The first building granted to the Scots Church in 1643 was a former wine warehouse belonging to Adriaen Ambrosius on the appropriately named *Wijnstraat* [Wine Street] in the *Wijnhaven* [Wine harbour] district. It was relatively convenient for the majority of the congregation who mostly

¹¹² D. Shaw, *The General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland 1560-1600: Their Origins and Development* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1964), pp. 1-12.

¹¹³ W. Steven, *ibid.*, p. 22.

¹¹⁴ Robert McWard, who succeeded Petrie as minister in Rotterdam, was banished from Scotland by Parliament and arrived in the city at the end of 1661. In a letter to Lady Kenmure he wrote: "I have occasion now and then to preach at Rotterdam, where we have an old Scots minister, who is dissatisfied with the times." Quoted in T. Lockerby, *A Sketch of the Life of the Rev. John Brown, sometime Minister of the Gospel in Wamphray: containing many of his interesting letters hitherto unpublished, with illustrative notes, and a historical appendix; exhibiting a full view of the times and sufferings of the covenanters* (Edinburgh: Thornton & Collicie, 1839), p. 57.

lived in the nearby *Leuvehaven* district.¹¹⁵ It remained in use until numbers outgrew its capacity and the congregation then moved to a less conveniently situated chapel in *Lombardstraat*.

The municipal authorities owned all church buildings in the city – even the converted former wine warehouse – and granted their use to individual congregations. Hence, maintenance of the churches had to be approved and undertaken by these authorities. The former warehouse in *Wijnstraat* was not in a state of good repair, so in November one of the elders was “appointed to goe the morow unto the Fabrik Master of the town, & require him to reparaire the kirk in the slates & other thinges needfull”.¹¹⁷

7. The opening of the Scots Church

Alexander Petrie began preaching in Rotterdam on 2nd August 1643 and was formally confirmed as minister on 30th August at a service jointly conducted by William Spang, minister of the Scots Church at Veere, and senior ministers from the Dutch Reformed Church in Rotterdam: “The sayd Mr Alexander Petrie began to preach in the house of the Winestriet appointed by the Lordes of the towne, on the second day of August 1643: an edict was formed in name of the Classis on the 16 & 23 & 30 dayes of August; & by deputation giuen by the Classis unto

¹¹⁵ The Consistory records mention this as “the house of the Winestriet appointed by the Lordes of the towne”. GAR/SCR/1, p. 1 (undated preface, 1643).

¹¹⁶ The congregation then shared the *St. Sebastiaanskapel* [St Sebastian Chapel] in *Lombardstraat* [Lombard Street – named after the Lombard houses which were controversial pawn-banks] with a French Protestant congregation until 1662. The *St. Sebastiaanskapel* had originally been built for the Society of Crossbow-men, and named in honour of their “patron saint”. Continued enlargement of the Scots congregation led to the Rotterdam authorities building a new church for the Walloons and granting the Scots sole use of the chapel in 1662. Whilst more commodious, the church was located at some distance from the Scots quarter of the city at *Schiedamsedijk*, and was inconvenient for visiting seamen. Subsequently, a gallery had to be built to accommodate increasing numbers. The congregation eventually outgrew even the modified *Lombardstraat* accommodation when there were a thousand members and in 1695-7 they built a new church on *Vasteland*, in the historic Scots quarter of the city. (Extensive German aerial bombardment of central Rotterdam destroyed the *Vasteland* church on 14th May 1940. Following the Second World War, a new church was built on *Schiedamsevest*, not far from the *Vasteland* site, and opened in 1952.) The *Lombardstraat* church building was eventually demolished in 1911. Post-war redevelopment obliterated the old streets and landmarks: the uncommemorated location of the *St. Sebastiaanskapel* building on the former *Lombardstraat* is now on *Meent*, between *Binnenrotte* and *Botersloot*.

¹¹⁷ GAR/SCR/1, p. 3 (1st November 1643).

Mr William Spang¹¹⁸ Minister at Campheer he was confirmed the sayd 30 day in open presence of the Congregation: Dominees¹¹⁹ Regnerus Berkelius,¹²⁰ & Johannes Heidanus¹²¹ Ministers of the Dutche kirk, & Heeren [Messrs] Paulus Verschure and [BLANK] elders wer sent in name of the Dutche kirk to be assistentes at the confirmation.”¹²²

Two weeks later the Dutch ministers and elders returned to the Scots Church to help Petrie conduct the election of elders and deacons. After conclusion of that business, Ds. Berkel “in name of the Classis & Consistorie declares, that now this Scottish kirk is established, & these elders & deacones being receiued this is a free congregation in itself as any other, & The Consistorie therof is absolute as the Consistorie of the Dutche kirke is”.¹²³ This conveyed to the Scots Church identical benefits enjoyed by the Dutch Church and its ministers in respect of immunity from the State and the city, without producing any changes in the Scottish Presbyterian form of worship.¹²⁴ Ds. Berkel also brought official confirmation that the Scots congregation should be perpetually exempted both from the observance of religious “holidays” (Christmas, Easter, Whitsun, observed by Protestants and Roman Catholics alike in the United Provinces) and from the formularies of the Dutch Church.¹²⁵ This allowed the Scots Church complete freedom to use the Subordinate Standards of the Church of Scotland in place of the three Dutch formularies.¹²⁶

¹¹⁸ Spang was a cousin of Principal Robert Baillie of Glasgow. He had been a *doctor* [teacher] in the High School of Edinburgh before being appointed Minister of the Scottish Church at Campvere (Veere) on 27th January 1630. *Register of the City of Edinburgh*, vol. xiv, fol. 152; *Records of the Convention of Royal Boroughs in Scotland*, vol. v. ff. 236-7. (References quoted in W. Steven, *ibid.*, p. 5 (footnote)). Incidentally, Baillie, together with George Gillespie, paid an unscheduled visit to the Rotterdam church in 1645 when a storm blew their ship into the Maas when they were *en route* to the Westminster Assembly in their role as Scottish Commissioners. Baillie and Gillespie helped Petrie in a disciplinary case before the Consistory.

¹¹⁹ *Dominee* is the Dutch for Minister. It is derived from the Latin word *dominus* [master] and hence is abbreviated to Ds. when applied to a named minister.

¹²⁰ The Latinized form of Ds. Rein Berkel, who was the most senior minister of the Dutch Church in Rotterdam. W. Steven, *ibid.*, p. 6.

¹²¹ The Latinized form of Van der Heiden (or Heyden).

¹²² GAR/SCR/1, p. 1 (undated preface, 1643).

¹²³ GAR/SCR/1, p. 1 (13th September 1643).

¹²⁴ W. Stephen, *ibid.*, p. 7.

¹²⁵ G. van Reyn, *Geschiedkundige beschrijving der Stad Rotterdam en beknopt overzicht van het Hoogheemraadschap van Schieland* (Rotterdam: Wed. Van der Meer & Verbruggen, 1832), Vol. 1, p. 324.

¹²⁶ The formularies are known in Dutch as *De Drie Formulieren van Enigheid* [The Three Forms of Unity], a collective name for *De Belijdenis des Geloofs* [The Belgic Confession]

Alexander Petrie made full use of the liberty to establish the Rotterdam church in complete conformity to the practice of the Church of Scotland. He took decided steps to ensure that the congregation was fully acquainted with the relevant acts of the General Assembly: “It is appointed that since this Kirk is granted to be erected according to the discipline of the kirkes of Scotland the actes of the late general assemblies there shalbe sighted [viewed] on thursday [. . .], that sik [such] actes as ar expedient to be made knowen at this tyme may be marked, & thereafter intimated publikly.”¹²⁷ However, with the passage of time (and especially in the light of changing religious and political situations in Britain and the Netherlands), implementing this principle proved problematic. This would become particularly evident with increasing numbers of members who did not identify themselves closely with the Church of Scotland, either by prolonged absence from Scotland or because they had a different religious background.¹²⁸

8. The Consistory of 1643

In keeping with the practice of the Church of Scotland, an immediate necessity was to elect elders and deacons in accordance with Presbyterian principles. The respective duties of elders and deacons were laid out in Chapters VI and VIII of the Second Book of Discipline.¹²⁹ The principal duty of elders was “to hold assemblies with the pastors [. . .] for establishing of good order, and execution of discipline”.¹³⁰ The other duties of elders may be summarised as follows: to watch diligently over the flock so that no corruption of religion or practice might enter, to seek after fruit following on the pastor’s teaching, to assist the pastor in his work of examining intending communicants and visiting the sick, to ensure that the acts of the General Assembly were implemented, and to admonish [exhort] members of the congregation regarding their duty.

(1561), and *De Heidelbergse Catechismus* [The Heidelberg Catechism] (1563), and *De Dordtse Leerregels* [The Canons of Dort] (1618-19).

¹²⁷ GAR/SCR/1, p. 1 (27th September 1643).

¹²⁸ In addition to English members, there were communicants of other nationalities and religious backgrounds. The first non-British name occurs in the roll for 1647 where the note “East Frieslander” is appended to the signature of one “Gerard plec”. GAR/SCR/47, p. 78 (25th January 1647).

¹²⁹ *The Second Book of Discipline*, in *The Confessions of Faith and the Books of Discipline of the Church of Scotland, of date anterior to the Westminster Confession* (London: Baldwin and Cradock, 1831), pp. 63-106.

¹³⁰ *The Second Book of Discipline*, *ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

In contrast, the work of deacons related solely to the temporal affairs of the congregation, namely “the collection and distribution of the alms of the faithful, and ecclesiastical goods”.¹³¹

The first election of elders and deacons took place on 13th September, two weeks after Alexander Petrie was formally installed as minister. The process was overseen by the same two Dutch Reformed ministers and two Dutch elders who had been present at the induction service. The candidates were chosen from twelve men who had obtained their demission from the Dutch Church the previous week. It is a sign of the abundance of suitable men in the congregation that the minute records that twelve was considered a small number and consequently thirteen other men were allowed to vote as they had lately been members of other congregations.¹³² Two elders and two deacons were duly elected.¹³³ Following the election it was “appointed, that these names shalbe proclaimed two seueral sabbothes, that if any hath obiection against them, another election may be made, & otherwyse, them to be receiued”.¹³⁴ In the absence of objections, ordination of the elders and deacons took place two weeks later: “After preaching, & the intimation of the election of the Elders & deacones being made (as is sayd before) the seueral dayes, & no impediment being obiected, in presence of the people William muire and Mathew paton are receiued & giue their promise of fidelitie & diligence in the office of Elder; and Andro delap & Robert burt¹³⁵ giue their promise of fidelitie & diligence in the office of deacones.”¹³⁶

That day the Consistory of minister, elders and deacons met following the afternoon service and they resolved to meet on a weekly basis: “It is appointed that the Session shall from this furth conueen on

¹³¹ *The Second Book of Discipline*, *ibid.*, p. 86.

¹³² In order to ensure that the electorate was orthodox in matters of faith, the twenty-five voters were examined on their religious knowledge after the election and were commanded “to conueen on thursday at twa after noone To giue declaration of their faith and be examined in the heades of religion.” GAR/SCR/1, p. 1 (27th September 1643).

¹³³ In common with contemporaneous practice in the Church of Scotland, appointments were for one year, renewable annually by election within the consistory if the office-bearers were willing to be reappointed.

¹³⁴ GAR/SCR/1, p. 1 (13th September 1643).

¹³⁵ Paton was a merchant, and Burt was both a merchant and broker. In the 1640s and 1650s he became guardian to five sets of children whose fathers were unable to support them (two of the fathers being at sea). D. Catterall, *ibid.*, p. 125.

¹³⁶ GAR/SCR/1, p. 1 (27th September 1643).

friday at thrie afternoone weekly.”¹³⁷ This must have been potentially inconvenient to the secular work of the members, but there is nothing in the records to suggest that the agreement was anything other than harmonious. However, an entry in December refers to a plan to impose financial penalties on late attenders, and this may suggest that regular punctual attendance had become a problem by then: “It is aggried, that whosoeuer from this furth shalbe late or tarde in coming into the Session shall pay 6 st [stuivers] & who is absent shall double it.”¹³⁸ Financial penalties for absence were the norm in most Scottish Kirk Sessions.¹³⁹

The need for weekly Consistory meetings indicates the care for the spiritual and temporal wellbeing of the congregation. The work of the elders will shortly be considered in relation to admitting new members to the roll of the congregation and in Church discipline. The deacons assisted with catechising but their main duty related to the financial affairs of the congregation. It became quickly obvious that the large congregation needed more than two deacons. Alexander Petrie consulted past General Assembly decisions and ascertained that the Session had the power to elect further members: “[. . .] the Session consider that their number is with the smallest, wherupon the Minister reades the act of the assemblie at Edinburgh 1642 anent the election of a Session: & therby it is found, that this Session has power of electing moe members: wherupon a liet [list] of four persones is made, & two of them by pluralite of voices [votes] ar chosen to be deacones, towit, Patrik gibbison and Robert forgun,” making a total of four deacons.¹⁴⁰

Collections for the poor and disbursement of the income are first mentioned on 6th October 1643: “Seueral persones who had gathered the almes at the Kirkdoor, brought in their accountes: wherof the summe since August 2 till this Sunday last extendes to 155 gild. 19 stiu. wherof had been giuen unto indigent persones 36 gild 13¹/₂ st. & there remains 119 gild. 6 sti. or therby: which is giuen to Robert burt one of the deacones, who is appointed to buy a kirk boxe [money chest].”¹⁴¹ After this date the weekly income and expenditure of the congregation feature

¹³⁷ GAR/SCR/1, p. 3 (8th November 1643).

¹³⁸ GAR/SCR/1, p. 3 (4th December 1643).

¹³⁹ M. Todd, *ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁴⁰ GAR/SCR/1, p. 2 (4th October 1643).

¹⁴¹ GAR/SCR/1, p. 2 (6th October 1643). The guilder was the basic unit of currency, consisting of 20 stuivers. The terms are variously abbreviated in the minutes, and the abbreviation *f* (florin) for guilder also appears.

regularly in minutes, and many later minutes record finance as the sole business of the weekly meetings.

9. Membership of the congregation

As the congregation began *de novo*, the Session had to ensure that the many new members had a credible profession of faith adorned by consistent practice. Furthermore the Session wished to ascertain that new members were fully in sympathy with the doctrines and practice of the Church. This was particularly important when members had no previous connection with the Church of Scotland: “Because some Englishes craue to be receiued members of this congregation, it is concluded that whosoouer craues this benefit, coming from any other place, shall bring an attestation by write from the parish wher they haue been before, witnessing of their lyf and conuersation; & failing herof, that they bring sufficient witnesses of knowen men in this town for the same effect, And then they shalbe examined before the Session, & if they shalbe approued, they shall subscriue the Confession.”¹⁴²

It is not surprising that Church privileges were tied to an acceptance of the National Covenant of 1638 in view of Alexander Petrie’s staunch covenanting principles: “It is also aggried, that the couenant or Confession of the Kirk of Scotland shalbe read from the pulpite on Sunday, To the end, that all may know it, & after consideration therof all the members of this congregation who ar received or ar to be receiued hereafter at any tyme shall subscriue it.”¹⁴³ To avoid overburdening the congregation on that occasion, a second diet of public reading was appointed, with the requirement that the entire congregation attend in order to hear the remaining acts of the Assembly: “Lykewyse some actes of the general assemblies ar read, & because a long tyme is alreadie spent, others ar delayed, & all here present ar required to be present on Sunday in the after noon for reading them.”¹⁴⁴ On that appointed day “the Confession was read publickly before noone, and intimation made as is written before: and the actes of the general

¹⁴² GAR/SCR/1, p. 4 (1st January 1644).

¹⁴³ GAR/SCR/1, p. 2 (1st October 1643). The National Covenant contains references to certain matters which were distinctively Scottish. Seemingly the English communicant members had no difficulty with unreservedly subscribing the Covenant.

¹⁴⁴ GAR/SCR/1, p. 2 (1st October 1643).

assemblie anent weekly catechizing¹⁴⁵ & familie-exercise [family worship]¹⁴⁶ wer publickly read & intimated”.¹⁴⁷ Once Petrie was sure that the congregation understood the Confession, he preached on it just before the first communion. The large congregation then affirmed their acceptance of it publicly in a most solemn manner and this was followed by appending their signatures to a written copy: “The Confession is expounded [expounded] in the publick sermone, & after sermone many hunders swear unto it by soleme lifting up of their handes & by subscriuing it.”¹⁴⁸

A period of catechetical instruction and examination was offered to aspiring communicants: “[. . .] as also that it be intimated for nixt sunday, that all others who desire to be receiued into communion of this kirk shall come-in therafter into the catechizing two dayes of the week wednesday & thursday at two after noone as they shalbe required weekly, & to begin the catechizing at the south end of Skidamdyke by families at once.”¹⁴⁹ When it was found that their knowledge was satisfactory, an opportunity was given to the congregation to raise any objections to granting membership: the Session “appointed that these who shalbe approuen on thursday for their knowledge, shalbe publickly proclamed the nixt sunday, & that all be required to giue-in their obiectiones (if they haue any) against their conuersation why they may

¹⁴⁵ Calvin’s Catechism was used until the General Assembly approved Westminster Assembly’s Catechisms for use in 1648. It was first published with the *Forme of Prayers* in 1556 and thereafter with each edition of the *Book of Common Order* – see M. Todd, *ibid.*, p. 76.

¹⁴⁶ “The Assembly, considering that the long-awaited for fruits of the gospel, so mercifully planted and preserved in this land, and the reformation of ourselves and families, so solemnly vowed to God of late in our covenant, cannot take effect except the knowledge and worship of God be carried from the pulpit to every family within each parish, hath therefore appointed that every minister beside his paines on the Lord’s day, shall have weekly catechising of some part of the paroch, and not altogether cast over the examenation of the people till a little before the communion. Also, that in every familie the worship of God be erected where it is not, both morning and evening, and the children and servants be catechised at home by the masters of the families, whereof account shall be taken by the ministers and elders assisting him in the visitation of every familie.” Act of General Assembly, 1639, quoted in H. Bonar, *Catechisms of the Second Reformation* (London: James Nisbet and Co., 1866), pp. xxxvii-xxxviii.

¹⁴⁷ GAR/SCR/1, p. 2 (4th October 1643).

¹⁴⁸ GAR/SCR/1, p. 4 (6th January 1644). W. Steven laments that “this Register, unfortunately, is not now to be found” (*ibid.*, p. 6, fn. 3). However, he seems to have overlooked the register which is part of a larger volume, whose title (“Register of baptism and marriages 1643-1711”) does not hint at a register of members – GAR/SCR/47.

¹⁴⁹ GAR/SCR/1, p. 1 (27th September 1643).

not be receiued into communion; and if any haue any obiection against any of them, that they compear [appear] the nixt sunday before the Session to declare the same, to be considered".¹⁵⁰

In due course the Session followed the steps outlined above: "Those who wer appointed to be examined did conueen, wer examined in the heades [principal doctrines] of religion, and ar allowed [approved] for their knowledge by the Minister, Elders and deacones, & the commune testimonie of all here present. [. . .] & by uniforme consente it is aggried, that the names of these persones who ar now examined, shalbe proclamed on sunday, With certification, that if none shall then object against them, they shalbe receiued into the communion & unto the sacrament, when occasion shalbe ofered."¹⁵¹

This set the pattern for the future acceptance of members. First there was examination of scriptural knowledge and confirmation that their lives were consistent with their profession. This was followed by public intimation of their names and an opportunity for any objectors to state the grounds of any opposition to granting membership. Finally the names of new communicants were added to the roll of members.

In the middle of November it was decided that catechising would take place on Mondays as well as the customary two days, and hence "till the celebration of the Lords Supper, ther shalbe thrie dayes of examination weekly, towit, moonday, wednesday & thursday".¹⁵² The process of admitting such a large number of new members was not concluded until December, reflecting the seriousness the Kirk Session accorded the work. As the year ended Alexander Petrie then enjoined all Session members to meet "to consider what order shalbe taken before the administration of the Communion".¹⁵³

Finally in noting the privileges of Church members in Rotterdam, membership conferred more than simply the right to communicate at the Lord's Table. The Scots Church assumed responsibility for providing financial help to its own members, in place of the Dutch Church or civic authorities. Membership was also a prerequisite before the Church granted marriage, baptism, and access to the Kirk Session. This was announced by public intimation from the pulpit, lest there be any doubt

¹⁵⁰ GAR/SCR/1, p. 1 (27th September 1643).

¹⁵¹ GAR/SCR/1, p. 1 (1st October 1643).

¹⁵² GAR/SCR/1, p. 3 (15th November 1643).

¹⁵³ GAR/SCR/1, p. 4 (27th December 1643). The first celebration of the Lord's Supper took place in January 1644.

about the matter: “It is appointed that on the next Lords day intimation be made, that whosoever shall not resort unto the catechizing on the day when they are required, shall not be reputed members of this Kirk, nor shall have any benefite of marriage nor baptisme of their children, nor their complaints be heard before the Session.”¹⁵⁴ Albeit membership gave entitlement to the sacrament of baptism for their children, the parents were obliged formally to apply to the Minister before the baptism could take place: “[. . .] these who have children to baptize, shall come unto the Minister any day before the baptisme.”¹⁵⁵

10. Discipline in the congregation

It has been noted that the principal duty of the elders concerned “establishing of good order, and execution of discipline”.¹⁵⁶ Even though hundreds had solemnly given their hearty subscription to the Confession of Faith, Alexander Petrie and his elders were soon confronted with the need to exercise discipline in the congregation. Between the opening of the Church and the end of the year the Session dealt formally with four cases of discipline and one request for an attestation of upright conduct. These five cases will be considered in turn.

(i) Discipline in a case of fornication

The first disciplinary case was heard in October 1643 and was the only case relating to sexual misconduct that year.

A woman widowed eight years previously had arrived from Montrose and was noted to be pregnant, *prima facie* evidence of fornication. She appeared before the Session and named the putative father: “Elspeet volume coming lately from Scotland, & being warned [summoned] to compear [appear before the Session] at this tyme for that she is with childe, compeares & declares that she hes committed fornication with Daud Macken burgess [freeman of the burgh] of Montrose in Scotland: & being further examined wes willing to giue her oath that she knew [i.e., knew carnally] no other man since the death of her husband eight years since: & she offeres to make any satisfaction that the Session will enjoyne her.”¹⁵⁷ As it happened, other inhabitants of

¹⁵⁴ GAR/SCR/1, p. 3 (15th November 1643).

¹⁵⁵ GAR/SCR/1, p. 3 (8th November 1643).

¹⁵⁶ *The Second Book of Discipline*, *ibid.*, p. 79.

¹⁵⁷ GAR/SCR/1, p. 2 (21st October 1643).

Montrose were available to help with the Session's enquiries: "The Session appointes that Andro delap shall try [enquire] of the merchantes of Montrose who ar in toun what they knowe of her, & of this her fault: & report unto the Session."¹⁵⁸ However, the merchants were unable to provide information: "[. . .] he had asked the merchantes of Montrose, & they know her not, nor heard any thing of her fault. It is appointed that the Minister write unto the Minister of Montrose concerning her & try her fault there."¹⁵⁹ It may be noted that this course of action respected that Elspet Volume was not properly under the jurisdiction of the Rotterdam Session, as she was not a member of the congregation. It is implied that her stay in Rotterdam would be brief and that her own minister could deal with the matter in due course upon her return home to the jurisdiction of the Montrose Session.

(ii) Three cases of verbal abuse

The three other disciplinary cases all related to scolding and slandering, and it is interesting to note how the minister and elders handled these cases in the differing circumstances of each instance.

The first case concerned Elspet Paterson who had used unseemly language to another woman, Cristin Baron, offensively highlighting that Baron's father had died by hanging (presumably as a judicial act, although suicide cannot be excluded): "Robert foster & his wyf Cristin baron complain on Elspet paterson spouse to James Anderson, that she had abused the sayd Cristin with vile language, & especially that she had called her a hanged mans child."¹⁶⁰ Elspet Paterson failed to respond to two summonses, whereupon the Session raised the prospect of referral to a civil court: "Elspet paterson is called, & compeares not. Mathew paton is appointed to deal with her, that she come on sunday afternoone, With certification that if she refuse, the Session will delate [accuse] her to the Vreedemakers."¹⁶¹ With this ultimatum of referral to a more public arena, Elspet Paterson did appear before the Session and denied the offence. This satisfied Cristin Baron: "Elspet paterson compeares, & denyeth that she had spoken sik a word. Cristin baron is contented, that

¹⁵⁸ GAR/SCR/1, p. 2 (21st October 1643).

¹⁵⁹ GAR/SCR/1, p. 3 (1st November 1643).

¹⁶⁰ GAR/SCR/1, p. 3 (22nd November 1643).

¹⁶¹ GAR/SCR/1, p. 3 (4th December 1643). The *vreedemakers* [literally, peacemakers] officiated in a petty court for settling issues such as personal disputes by mediation. They were known as Lord Peacemakers in English – D. Catterall, *ibid.*, p. 16.

she hes denied it here.” However, the matter did not rest there as “the husbandes of both women compear & doe regrate [express sorrow] that their wifes ar lewd speakers: the women ar admonished sharply, & commanded that they keep themselues from scandalous speches, Vnder paine, that if any of them be found guilty againe, they shall not be admitted to receiue any benefite in this kirk, till they acknowledge that fault openly befor the Congregation, & lykwise pay 40 st. for the first fault. They both consent unto this act: & ar reconciled.”¹⁶²

The case of Elspet Paterson raises several points of interest. Firstly, for Dutch citizens such incidents would normally have involved the *vredemakerskamer* [chamber or court of the *vredemakers*] rather than a Church court. The *vredemakerskamer* was a petty court which attempted reconciliation rather than handing out punishment. Robert Foster and Christin Baron chose to bring the complaint to the Kirk Session, in keeping with Scots practice. Further, the Session sought reconciliation between the women and the question of punishment did not arise.¹⁶³ The Session proposed involving the *vredemakers* only when it seemed that Elspet Paterson would not submit to the jurisdiction of the Session. This seems a curious mingling of ecclesiastical process with the option of referral to a non-ecclesiastical court of reconciliation. It is also notable that the eventual reconciliation was preceded by a broader consideration of the context of the offence, and the Session rebuked both women equally for their unchaste words. Finally, it is of interest that the penalties threatened for continued offence were suspension and two peculiarly Scottish sanctions – public denunciation from the pulpit and fines were unknown in the Dutch Reformed Church. In accommodation to the host culture, these sanctions soon fell into disuse in the Scots Church.

The second case of personal verbal abuse concerned a grievance of “Helen berrihill spouse to Daudid michel [who] complaines on Nans anderson spouse to Francis cochran, that she had called her whoore”.¹⁶⁴ However, Helen Berrihill failed to appear before the Session to pursue her allegation and inevitably the complaint was dismissed: “Helen

¹⁶² GAR/SCR/1, p. 3 (6th December 1643).

¹⁶³ Catterall refers to what he denominates “the (Reformed) ritual of reconciliation” on many occasions in *Community without borders*. His anthropological view of religious reconciliation in the Scots Church in Rotterdam ignores the scriptural basis on which the Session sought reconciliation between parties, namely the injunction to forgive one another summarised in the Lord’s Prayer and its exposition by the Saviour (Matthew 6:12, 14, 15).

¹⁶⁴ GAR/SCR/1, p. 3 (22nd November 1643).

berrihill compeares not: therfor it is appointed that she shall not be heard again in this cause.”¹⁶⁵

The complaints raised by Cristin Baron and Helen Berrihill involved personal slights. The third case concerned Cristin Broun and Nans Davidson, two women who had publicly denigrated the Scots Church, Alexander Petrie and the elders. Proceeding to deal with such a case in the Session was fraught with difficulty, as the Session could not act as an impartial judicial forum when it was the aggrieved party raising a complaint.

In this instance the two elders took the offence sufficiently seriously to involve the *schout*,¹⁶⁶ apparently without reference to the Session, and he intervened in a very decisive fashion: “Mathew paton and Andro delap shew that they had complained yesterday unto the Schout on Cristin broun spouse to Ro: walace & Nans dauidson spouse to John smyth for their scolding & reproachfull wordes against the Scots Kirk, Minster and Elders, & that the Schout had soucht [searched for] them, & put Cristin broun into prison, & the other had fled; & they require to be directed what shall further be done with them.”¹⁶⁷

The Session’s deliberations allude to previous informal interventions, as recommended by the Second Book of Discipline, namely private admonition given to Cristin Broun who was a member of the congregation. The position relating to Nans Davidson was more difficult as she did not attend the Scots Church. The Session therefore concluded that the two elders had taken an appropriate course of action in involving the *schout*: “The Session considering that complaintes wer giuen before against Cristin broun, & that the Minister had dealt with her priuatly many tymes, & now she is become more impudent; As also considering that the sayd Nans comes nether to preaching nor catechizing, allow what the brethren had done; & so much the rather that they hope, the punishing of these may serue for the terrour [deterrence] of others; and ordaines that the same two brethren shall insist in searching for Nans dauidson, & persue them both according to iustice.”¹⁶⁸ Nevertheless, the aim of ecclesiastical discipline (namely, the

¹⁶⁵ GAR/SCR/1, p. 3 (4th December 1643).

¹⁶⁶ The word is pronounced with “ch” as in the Scots word “loch”. There is no exact English equivalent for *schout*. He was a local official appointed to carry out administrative, law enforcement, and prosecutorial tasks.

¹⁶⁷ GAR/SCR/1, p. 3 (13th December 1643).

¹⁶⁸ GAR/SCR/1, p. 3 (13th December 1643).

recovery of the offending party) was still in view as the Session considered their action in that they decided that the elders “use moderation as [= in measure as] they shall see these malicious persones inclining to repentance: and it is appointed, that none of these two persones be receiued into the communion of this kirk till they giue manifest declaration of their repentance.”¹⁶⁹

(iii) A request for an attestation of good character

The final case before the Session in 1643 dealt with a request for assistance in an impending court case. This was initiated by William Rosse, a resident of *Schiedamsedijk*, due to appear in court on an unspecified charge. He wished confirmation from the Session that Margaret Bickertoun, a Scotswoman called to testify against him, was not a member of the Scots Church. This had the clear implication that the Session’s attestation would undermine or even negate her evidence, particularly in view of her known irreligious and ill-tempered behaviour which included her history of verbal abuse to him: “William rosse complaines that he was wronged by Margaret bickertoun spouse to Daudid betone with reproachefull wordes; & neuertheles that [BLANK] does use her as a witsnesse against him in a cause before the Baliew:¹⁷⁰ & therfor he craues that the Session wold giue him attestation that she is not a member of this kirk, To the end that he be not more wronged by her.”¹⁷¹ The Session was happy for the minister to provide an attestation to William Rosse’s past upright conduct as well as confirmation that his nemesis was not a member of the Scots Church. Of course the Session were unable to deal with a woman who was not a member and they issued a declaration *in absentia* based on her reputation: “The Session considering that the said William is of blamelesse conuersation, & the sayd Margaret resortes nether to this kirk nor to any other kirk, & that she is scandalous by her frequent scolding, Grantes his petition, & ordain the Minister to write an attestation accordingly.”¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ GAR/SCR/1, p. 3 (13th December 1643).

¹⁷⁰ The *baljuw* was a magistrate, approximately equivalent to a Scots baillie.

¹⁷¹ GAR/SCR/1, p. 4 (20th December 1643).

¹⁷² GAR/SCR/1, p. 4 (20th December 1643).

11. The offices of reader, precentor, and church officer

In 1643 the consistory attended to certain other matters relating to the worship of God in the Scots Church. This included the appointment of a reader and precentor. Furthermore, the management of the Church property and Church business required appointment of a church officer. These appointments will be considered briefly in turn.

The office and functions of readers in the Church of Scotland have been mentioned earlier in this paper. The Rotterdam Consistory agreed unanimously to appoint a reader at the beginning of October 1643, with the stipulation that the reader would employ a precentor and pay him from the his own salary: “It is also concluded by consent of all, Minister, Elders & all others here present, that a qualified Reader shalbe chosen, who shall haue for his seruice 300 guilders yeerly, and this shalbe payed by contribution by all the ablest men of the congregation in so far as shall not be allowed by the Lordes of the towne. after voicing [voting] all aggrie that Mr Alexander Petrie younger shalbe Reader, if he will accept: whilk [which] acceptation is given unto his deliberation till Sunday nixt, prouiding alwayes that if he will accept, he shall employ another man to take-up the psalme upon his charges.”¹⁷³ This offer was promptly accepted: “Mr Alexander Petrie younger [. . .] accepts the condition to be Reader both for the quantitie of the meanes, and prouiding a precentor.”¹⁷⁴ The congregation assembled at least half an hour before the preacher entered the pulpit. The reader either read a portion of scripture illustrative of the forthcoming sermon, or else read regularly through a particular book of the Bible, selected by the minister.¹⁷⁵

The minute records that the reader was obliged to pay for the services of a precentor to lead the unaccompanied (“*a capella*”) congregational singing of psalms in the public worship of God. It was customary to appoint a named individual to be precentor in a congregation. The Consistory were content with the sole candidate before them: “James anderson had this day giuen triall of his skill in this point, all who ar present ar content that he be employed in this seruice, & that the Reader satisfy [pay] him.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ GAR/SCR/1, p. 2 (1st October 1643).

¹⁷⁴ GAR/SCR/1, p. 2 (4th October 1643).

¹⁷⁵ W. Steven, *ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁷⁶ GAR/SCR/1, p. 2 (4th October 1643).

The final appointment made by the consistory was the church officer. From the very outset the minutes almost invariably use the Dutch word *koster* (usually in an anglicized spelling “coster”) instead of “church officer” or “beadle”.¹⁷⁷ A decision on remuneration was deferred, however: “James wardlaw¹⁷⁸ is chosen coster: the quantitie of his fee is delayed.”¹⁷⁹ The duties of the coster included cleaning the church and acting as an officer of court for the Consistory, summoning individuals to meetings, and conveying the decisions and requests of the Consistory to members of the congregation.

Conclusion

Scottish migration to the Netherlands extended over many centuries and was largely based on commerce and military service. The growing Scots migrant population in seventeenth century Rotterdam sought permission to establish a Church where they could worship God in their mother tongue and according to the forms of the Church of Scotland. This was granted by the civic and national authorities, who helped the nascent congregation to secure the translation of an able Perthshire minister, Alexander Petrie. His faithful adherence to the doctrines, worship and practice of the Church of Scotland helped to ensure that the Scots Church was established on a sound footing in 1643.

Rotterdam at that time was a bustling city with a diverse religious composition and a reputation for heterodoxy. Thanks to the vigilance of Alexander Petrie and his Consistory, the Scots Church remained faithful to its principles. Migrants and itinerant visitors to the city therefore found a Scottish Presbyterian Church which not only maintained and defended the doctrines and practice of the Church of Scotland but also opposed error. Just eighteen years later Rotterdam would welcome a new type of Scottish migrant, those who adhered to the National Covenant of 1638 and opposed the imposition of Episcopacy. Their principled

¹⁷⁷ *Coster* is one of approximately thirty Dutch words which appear in the minutes in the period up to 1690. A number of the Dutch words have no English equivalent, but *coster/koster* is one of the words where the Dutch word is used in place of a well-known English word. The repeated occurrence of this word in the records probably reflects longstanding familiarity of the migrants with the Dutch Reformed Church. (The rarely used 16th/17th century Scots word “coster” refers to a piece of land and has no ecclesiastical connotation.)

¹⁷⁸ Wardlaw was a licensed translator into English or Scots. He also acted as a guardian for Scots children. D. Catterall, *ibid.*, pp. 125, 199.

¹⁷⁹ GAR/SCR/1, p. 1 (27th September 1643).

maintenance of Second Reformation attainments resulted in years of banishment or enforced exile from their native land. These religious exiles would find a congenial church in their new and strange surroundings. Future papers will consider various aspects of the Scots Church during the exile decades from 1660 to 1690 (DV).

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Glossary of Dutch words

<i>baljuw</i>	a magistrate, similar to a Scottish baillie
<i>classis</i>	presbytery
<i>Ds (Dominee)</i>	Minister
<i>Gemeentearchief</i>	Municipal archive
<i>gulden</i>	guilder – a coin, the primary monetary unit in the Dutch Republic
<i>koster</i>	church officer, beadle
<i>Raad(s)pensionaris</i>	Grand Pensionary, similar to Prime Minister
<i>schout</i>	a local official appointed to carry out administrative, law enforcement, and prosecutorial tasks
<i>Stadhouder</i>	Head of State
<i>Staten Generaal</i>	States General – the Dutch legislature
<i>stuiver</i>	a coin with a value of one-twentieth of a guilder
<i>vredemaker</i>	peacemaker (literal translation), known in English as Lord Peacemaker
<i>vredemakerskamer</i>	chamber (or court) of the Lord Peacemaker
<i>vroedschap</i>	town (or city) council