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8. To 'solve the darkest Social Problems of our time': the Church of Scotland's entry into the British matrix of health and welfare provision, c.1880–1914

Janet Greenlees

Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Scottish society relied on an informal network of religious provision for many essential health and welfare services and to fill gaps in Poor Law provision. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, religious leaders from many denominations discussed co-ordinating and formalizing their charitable provision. In a swiftly changing urban landscape with rapidly growing inequalities, all denominations sought to be socially useful, but debated how best to do so. Of the Presbyterian sects that dominated the Scottish religious landscape, only the Established Church of Scotland decided both to broaden and formalize its health and welfare provision, and enter a welfare market in which other Christian denominations already had an established presence. In 1891, it began providing nursing services for the poor in the slums of the Pleasance District of Edinburgh. Shortly thereafter, in 1894, the church opened the Deaconess Hospital in Edinburgh to train missionary deaconesses and to provide healthcare for church members and the poor of the Pleasance. By 1904, the General Assembly agreed 'That the Church must not shrink from taking her full share in Social and Rescue Work; and that, as the National Church, she ought to lead the way in demonstrating that the Gospel of Jesus Christ can meet the direst needs of human Souls, and solve the darkest Social Problems of our time'.¹ To that end, it formed a Committee on Social Work to research and co-ordinate service provision. This essay examines why, after centuries of informal provision, the Established Church of Scotland decided to enter the formal health and welfare market, particularly when other Presbyterian groups did not; what services it provided and why these were chosen; and where such provision fitted within the existing mixed economy of the Scottish health and welfare market. By the onset of the Great War, the Church of Scotland was an established provider of institutional welfare in Scottish cities, particularly Glasgow. This essay argues that the decision to

¹ *R.C.S.W.G.A.C.S.*, May 1904, pp. 1200–3; and *R.C.S.W.G.A.C.S.*, 1905, p. 1211.

undertake welfare work was influenced by economic, social, political and cultural circumstances, and driven forward by dynamic individuals. The services provided were the church's response to moral anxieties about the threat that urbanization and industrialization posed to community and family values.

The significance accorded to the Church of Scotland's welfare provision by contemporaries is not reflected in the current historiography. Twentieth-century Scottish voluntary health and welfare provision has attracted surprisingly little scholarly attention, with the exception of pre-N.H.S. voluntary hospitals.² Yet local philanthropic services have been found to be significant contributors to English health and welfare provision within their area,³ and recent studies have highlighted the continued importance of the voluntary sector, including religious charities, in English and Welsh welfare provision during the twentieth century.⁴ Scotland was much more dependent on charity provision than England and Wales because of both tradition and Poor Law deficiencies, yet scholarly emphasis remains

² Notable exceptions include: A. Nuttall, 'Maternity charities, the Edinburgh maternity scheme and the medicalisation of childbirth, 1900–25', *Soc. Hist. of Med.*, xxiv (2011), 370–88; L. Mahood, *The Magdalenes: Prostitution in the 19th Century* (1990); O. Checkland, *Philanthropy in Victorian Scotland: Social Welfare and the Voluntary Principle* (Edinburgh, 1980); J. Greenlees, 'The peculiar and complex female problem: the Church of Scotland and healthcare for unwed mothers, c.1900–48', in *Western Maternity and Medicine, 1880–1990*, ed. J. Greenlees and L. Bryder (2013), pp. 47–64; S. Al Gailani, 'Teratology and the clinic: monsters, obstetrics and the making of antenatal life in Edinburgh, c.1900' (unpublished University of Cambridge Ph.D. thesis, 2010). For voluntary hospitals, see, e.g., J. Stewart, 'Sickness and health', in *A History of Everyday Life in 20th-Century Scotland*, ed. L. Abrams and C. G. Brown (Edinburgh, 2010), pp. 228–53; *The NHS in Scotland: the Legacy of the Past and the Prospect for the Future*, ed. C. Nottingham (Aldershot, 2000); J. Jenkinson, *Scotland's Health, 1919–48* (Bern, 2002); J. Stewart, 'The National Health Service in Scotland, 1947–74: Scottish or British?', *Historical Research*, lxxvi (2003), 389–410; and *Improving the Common Weal: Aspects of Scottish Health Services, 1900–84*, ed. G. McLachlan (Edinburgh, 1987).

³ E.g., S. J. Seligman, 'The Royal Maternity Charity: the first 100 years', *Medical History*, xxiv (1980), 403–18; L. Marks, *Metropolitan Maternity: Maternal and Infant Welfare Services in Early 20th-Century London* (Amsterdam, 1996); L. Marks, 'Mothers, babies and hospitals: "The London" and the provision of maternity care in East London, 1870–1939', in *Women and Children First: International Maternal and Infant Welfare, 1870–1945*, ed. V. Fildes, L. Marks and H. Marland (1992), pp. 48–73.

⁴ England and Wales have received greater attention than Scotland. In relation to unwed mothers, see P. Thane and T. Evans, *Sinners? Scroungers? Saints? Unmarried Motherhood in 20th-Century England* (Oxford, 2012); see also P. Thane, *Happy Families: History and Family Policy* (2010), pp. 18–21 and L. Black, 'There was something about Mary: the National Viewers' and Listeners' Association and social movement history', in *NGOs in Contemporary Britain: Non-State Actors in Society and Politics since 1945*, ed. N. Crowson, M. Hilton and J. McKay (2009), pp. 182–200.

largely focused on the foundations of the welfare state, an emphasis which has limited our understanding of voluntary provision in England and Scotland.⁵

Interwoven within both Scottish religious charity and Poor Law welfare providers were consistent themes of discrimination based on whom providers deemed worthy, and individual and family obligations to kin. Such beliefs remained well into the inter-war years, as did conservative attitudes towards responsibility for relief.⁶ Historians examining the Church of Scotland's motivation for entering the formal welfare market tend to argue either that the church sought to re-engage with the working classes,⁷ or that social work was an initiative designed to recast the missionary endeavour. Here, the belief was that both individuals and social structures could be reformed, alongside creating a Christian society.⁸ Moreover, historians also emphasize the importance of factional struggles between Presbyterians in influencing the social reform agenda.⁹ This essay extends these arguments by examining how and why voluntary bodies engaged with an increasingly complex Scottish welfare market. It provides a more nuanced understanding of the interaction between the state and the voluntary sector, and the changing position of religious charity in Scottish and broader British society, as well as the developing relationship between church and state concerning social policy. Lastly, it shifts the focus of understanding about Scottish religion and voluntarism

⁵ M. A. Crowther, 'Poverty, health and welfare', in *People and Society in Scotland, 1830–1914*, ed. W. H. Fraser and R. J. Morris (Edinburgh, 1990), p. 286.

⁶ C. Macdonald, *Whaur Extremes Meet: Scotland's 20th Century* (Edinburgh, 2009), p. 137.

⁷ C. G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707* (Edinburgh, 1997), esp. ch. 6; D. J. Withrington, 'The churches in Scotland, c.1870–c.1900: towards a new social conscience', *R.S.C.H.S.*, xix (1975–7), 155–68; and D. J. Withrington, 'Non-church-going, church organisation and "crisis in the church" c.1880–c.1920', *R.S.C.H.S.*, xxiv (1990–2), 199–236; C. G. Brown, *The Social History of Religion in Scotland since 1733* (1987), p. 191. Stewart adds the church's ideological approach to social concerns (J. Stewart, "'Christ's Kingdom in Scotland": Scottish Presbyterianism, social reform, and the Edwardian crisis', *Twentieth-Century British History*, xxii (2001), 1–22).

⁸ L. Orr Macdonald, *A Unique and Glorious Mission: Women and Presbyterianism in Scotland, 1830–1930* (Edinburgh, 2000), pp. 64–6.

⁹ Brown, *Religion and Society*, ch. 6; C. G. Brown, "'To be aglow with civic ardours": the "Godly Commonwealth" in Glasgow 1843–1914', *R.S.C.H.S.*, xxvi (1996), 169–95; S. J. Brown, 'Reform, reconstruction, reaction: the social vision of Scottish Presbyterianism, c.1830–1930', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, iv (1991), 489–518; M. McCabe, 'The tears of the poor: John Glasse, Christian socialist (1848–1918)', *R.S.C.H.S.*, xxviii (1998), 149–72; and D. C. Smith, *Passive Obedience and Prophetic Protest: Social Criticism in the Scottish Church 1830–1945* (New York, 1987), ch. 10. This is not to imply that these authors adopt the same analysis.

away from existing debates about how the new social theology contributed to the gradual secularization of Scottish society.¹⁰

The early twentieth-century initiatives of the Church of Scotland's Committee on Social Work highlight how the church sought to capitalize on its central role within Scottish society to address issues of social reform, while also retaining its core position within the social fabric of a rapidly changing Scottish industrial landscape. The church believed social reform was entwined with social policy. Social reform prioritized reinvigorating Christian morality and values as part of the solution to social and economic inequalities. By addressing social problems surrounding poverty, the church hoped to influence public policy on issues including housing, welfare, education and unemployment. Activities in these areas reflected church efforts to be the primary shaper of Scottish social values while securing to the hierarchy civic and medical recognition, and political influence, without disrupting the centuries-old parish traditions of informal charity. Philanthropy was also an act of authority because it created a dependent, albeit sometimes only temporary, relationship between the rich and the poor. Church social welfare, as with all social welfare, was a political act.¹¹ As such, it reinforced the hierarchy's desire to 'create a comprehensive social service worthy of a National Church'.¹² The church sought to influence social change and social reform in order to secure and retain its position as the National Church in Scotland, with the associated political benefits.

The aim to establish the Church of Scotland as *the* National Church grew out of the rapidly changing make-up of religious organization in the late nineteenth century, which paralleled urban growth and high poverty levels, particularly in Glasgow. Earlier Presbyterian rifts¹³ meant that the new United Free Church (U.F.C.), a 1900 union of the United Presbyterian Church and the Free Church, formed the greatest rival to the Established Church for members and influence in Scotland's cities. The growing poverty levels in urban centres highlighted to the General Assembly the social need to address issues surrounding poverty.¹⁴ In 1901, half the Scottish population

¹⁰ Brown, *Religion and Society*, esp. ch. 6; Brown, 'Reform, reconstruction, reaction'; Stewart, "Christ's Kingdom"; C. G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain* (Abingdon, 2001); H. McLeod, *Religion and Society in England, 1850–1914* (Basingstoke, 1996), esp. ch. 4.

¹¹ For more on the relationship between philanthropy and political motivations, see M. Ignatieff, 'State, civil society and total institutions: a critique of recent social histories of punishment', in *Social Control and the State*, ed. S. Cohen and A. Skull (Oxford, 1983), p. 102.

¹² L. Cameron, *Opportunity my Ally* (Cambridge, 1965), p. 233.

¹³ For a brief summary of these rifts, see Brown, *Social History*, pp. 34–41.

¹⁴ Dr. Theodore Marshall argued the case for social work to the General Assembly (*The*

lived in one or two rooms. In 1911 20 per cent of Scots resided in one-room single-ends in multi-storey tenements with five or more people, providing a haven for disease.¹⁵ State assistance through the Scottish Poor Law helped only the poorest and most helpless members of society. Moreover, the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1845 had effectively taken the direct responsibility for the care of the poor out of the hands of the church. With its social and economic function declining, the church sought a new role. Addressing social problems was core to the evangelicalism characteristic of the Free, Established and United Presbyterian churches, as well as the Methodist and Congregational churches.¹⁶ Evangelical welfare initiatives in Scotland operated alongside those of other charities active throughout Great Britain, including the Charity Organisation Society, the Church of England, the Y.W.C.A. and the Salvation Army, as well as the extensive, and little-documented, neighbourly charity. At the same time the Catholic Church had extended its outreach and welfare provision among the growing working classes, focusing predominantly on the new Irish immigrants. By the late nineteenth century, in addition to the Magdalene Home for unwed mothers established in 1805, the Catholic Church in Glasgow operated industrial schools for both girls and boys and institutions for the aged poor, orphans and incurable children.¹⁷ Yet of all these providers, it was the other Presbyterian groups that the Established Church considered the greatest threat to its goal of becoming *the* National Church.

Nevertheless, the Established Church of Scotland's formal entry into social work was not spontaneous. Rather, it was the culmination of decades of study and debate about the extent and causes of social problems and the nature and scope of existing provision. Dr. Archibald Charteris (b. 1835) directed the attention of the church towards increasing its Christian social work. Son of a schoolmaster, Charteris ascended rapidly through church ranks. In the mid nineteenth century, after serving the ministry in Ayr and at Park Established Church, Glasgow, and despite facing much criticism from conservative church elders, he persuaded the General Assembly to

Layman's Book of the General Assembly of 1904, ed. Revd. H. M. B. Reid (Edinburgh, 1904), p. 117).

¹⁵ Many families also had a boarder (L. Abrams, *The Orphan Country: Children of Scotland's Broken Homes from 1845 to the Present Day* (Edinburgh, 1998), p. 6; *Report of the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Industrial Population of Scotland Rural and Urban* (Parl. Papers 1917–18 [C. 8731], xiv), p. 106 (as cited in Macdonald, *Whaur Extremes Meet*, p. 124)).

¹⁶ For more on women's mission work, see Orr Macdonald, *A Unique and Glorious Mission*, esp. ch. 2 (quotation at p. 43); Brown, *Religion and Society*, pp. 116–21.

¹⁷ *Catholic Directory for Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1911–12), pp. 187–91, 32–3; for more on the Magdalene Home, see Mahood, *The Magdalenes*.

form the Committee on Christian Life and Work in 1869, with the aim of increasing voluntarism and evangelism.¹⁸

The Church of Scotland's debates about social reform were further influenced by Glasgow's second medical officer of health, Dr. James Burn Russell, who was appointed in 1872. Early in his career, Russell had worked at the Glasgow Royal Infirmary, the City Poorhouse and as physician superintendent of Glasgow's fever hospitals. His experiences in these institutions convinced him that better living conditions were essential to improving the health of the city. He argued his case in an 1888 lecture, 'Life in one room', delivered to the literary society of Park Established Church, Glasgow, Charteris's former parish. The lecture, which was subsequently published and secured a wide readership, provided a detailed account of the overcrowded housing in which over a quarter of Glasgow's population lived. The Park Church minister, Donald Macleod, added a religious dimension to Russell's interpretation by pointing out how in Glasgow, a close correlation existed between poor housing and non-churchgoing.¹⁹ These arguments convinced the Church of Scotland's Glasgow Presbytery to commission a report on *The Housing of the Poor in Relation to their Social Condition*, published in 1891, which examined the relationships between housing, poverty and non-churchgoing.²⁰ These early questions about the nature and extent of existing church provision fuelled discussions about the future shape of church voluntarism. However, the need for formal Christian charity did not go unchallenged.

By the eighteen-eighties, the role of voluntarism was being debated throughout Britain. The philosophy of social progress by individual action that had characterized earlier Christian charity was gradually being overtaken by the collectivist action of the state. Indeed, in Glasgow, the Presbytery's investigations were followed by a series of Glasgow Corporation reports on the relationship between housing and poverty which prompted pioneering civic housing reforms.²¹ State initiatives expanded in the early years of the twentieth century with the introduction of National Insurance and old-age pensions, the medical inspection of school children, and expanding

¹⁸ L. L. L. Cameron, *The Challenge of Need: a History of Social Service by the Church of Scotland, 1869–1969* (Edinburgh, 1971). pp. 12–14.

¹⁹ D. Macleod, *Non-Church-Going and the Housing of the Poor* (Edinburgh, 1888), p. 13 (cited in Brown, 'Reform', p. 498).

²⁰ *Presbytery of Glasgow: Report of Commission on the Housing of the Poor in Relation to their Social Condition* (Glasgow, 1891).

²¹ Mitchell Library, Glasgow Corporation papers, *City Improvement Department Report on Proceedings at a Conference on Cheap Dwellings* (Glasgow, 1901); *Subcommittee Report on Uninhabitable Houses* (Glasgow, 1906); *Better Housing – Will They Pay* (Glasgow, 1899); *Housing of the Working-Classes* (Glasgow, 1900); *Backlands and their Inhabitants* (Glasgow, 1901); C. Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of London* (1889).

municipal ownership of utilities. Moreover, new initiatives in social and political action were being undertaken by trade union leaders, social intellectuals and the new labour politicians. Such schemes also coincided with broader British social investigations into poverty, including those of Charles Booth and Seebohm Rowntree, as well as the Royal Commissions on Housing and the Poor Law.²² Such extensive civic and religious debates about the causes of social problems, and the moral principles of permitting their continuation, convinced the General Assembly that poverty, insanitary and overcrowded housing and ill-health were all immoralities. The church had to respond to such social injustices out of social and civic duty, and to retain its position as the National Church with the associated political influence.

In Glasgow, a small band of Presbyterian Christian socialists emerged and led the drive towards social work rather than social reform. In 1895, the Revd. Donald Macleod, having left Park Church in 1888 to become the convener of the Home Mission Committee, was elected moderator of the General Assembly. Known for his scepticism about evangelicalism, he used his moderatorial address to urge the church to develop a new social conscience to meet the challenges of organized labour. Yet, while Brown argues that the challenge of labour was the key motivator for action,²³ other events suggest that this was only one of a number of motivating factors. For half a century, one of the main architects behind both the new Social Christianity and the strategy of the Committee on Social Work was David Watson. Watson had become interested in social work while minister from 1886 to 1928 of St. Clement's Church, a poor working-class congregation in the east end of Glasgow. From its inception in 1904, Watson was the vice-convener of the Committee on Social Work. He was a prolific author and preacher on social reform, being highly critical of the existing social order.²⁴ Both Watson and Macleod took up Charteris's cry for the Church of Scotland to engage in a social mission, tackle poverty and make the gospel message more relevant to all of Scottish society. Yet Watson and other church leaders, including John Glasse, minister of old Greyfriars Church in Edinburgh and arguably the most famous Christian socialist clergyman

²² B. S. Rowntree, *Poverty: a Study of Town Life* (1902); and *Royal Commission on the Housing of the Poor in Relation to their Social Condition, 1888–91*. For an overview of housing in Glasgow, see J. Melling, *Rent Strikes: Peoples' Struggles for Housing in West Scotland, 1890–1916* (Edinburgh, 1983).

²³ Brown, *Religion and Society*, pp. 131–2.

²⁴ Watson's best-known works are D. Watson, *Social Problems and the Church's Duty* (1908); *Social Advance – its Meaning, Method and Goal* (1911); and *The Social Expression of Christianity* (1919).

in Scotland, were divided on strategy.²⁵ Rejecting the primacy of religious conversion and morality as the outcomes of social reform, Watson favoured practical social work. Glasse was opposed, arguing that social work would deter the church from tackling the evils and injustices in the existing social order (true Christian socialism rather than practical Christian socialism). While social work, or practical Christianity, became the prevailing church strategy, Watson's ideological split with Glasse was representative of broader rifts within the church concerning social strategy. The conservative church hierarchy worked within the existing social order rather than try to reform it. From the outset, the Committee on Social Work prioritized helping the deserving poor (social work) rather than tackling broader social and economic inequalities (social reform). This choice limited the church's social influence but raised its political profile.

The Established Church of Scotland was not alone among religious denominations in debating whether and how best to address social inequalities in Scotland, though not all arrived at the same understanding about service provision. From 1900, the General Assembly of the U.F.C. also debated its social responsibilities. In 1902, in response to Rowntree's study on the condition of the poor in York, John Smith, convener of the General Assembly, argued that the church 'cannot simply avail herself of these studies. She has her own point of view'.²⁶ By 1904, the assembly concluded that: 'the problem of poverty can only be solved by getting back to the moral foundations on which all human well-being can alone rest'.²⁷ He argued that while civic authorities were responsible for regulating housing and addressing poverty, the church maintained responsibility for morality because:

Social conditions and moral habits react on each other. To provide better houses, and to attempt to enforce habits of cleanliness, will be to a large extent to throw effort away, unless moral reformation goes hand in hand with sanitary legislation. The homes are dirty because the dwellers are drunken, and filthy because the tenants are foul ... The social question is at bottom the religious question. Little progress towards reclaiming the sunken masses will be made, unless there be betterment of their surroundings and conditions of life. But, on the other hand, new and healthy houses will do little lasting good, unless the tenants are reformed in character – made new men and women by the grace of God.²⁸

²⁵ Smith, *Passive Obedience*, pp. 338–9, 302.

²⁶ *R.G.A.U.F.C., 1902* (Edinburgh, 1902), p. 3.

²⁷ *R.G.A.U.F.C., 1904* (Edinburgh, 1904), p. 4.

²⁸ Report of the Committee on Church Life and Work (*R.G.A.U.F.C., 1906* (Edinburgh, 1906)), p. 5.

Increasingly, the U.F.C. tried to pressurize civic authorities to act rather than join the extensive, religious voluntary welfare market. Nevertheless, by 1908, the U.F.C. recognized a need to co-operate more closely with existing providers.²⁹ By 1912, it realized that 'sooner or later' it would need to appoint a 'specially equipped department' for practical Christian service.³⁰ The U.F.C.'s slow response to growing social and religious criticism of the social order, combined with its continued moral and evangelical priorities, distanced the church from the working classes and decreased its political and civic influence. Moreover, declining membership convinced the church hierarchy to focus on uniting the U.F.C. and the Established Church, rather than on its social mission. The Church of Scotland's increasing centrality in the religious fabric of Scottish society thus made it well placed to address health and welfare issues, and to influence policymakers.

In a complex welfare market in which the state, family and voluntary bodies were established and important players, the Church of Scotland sought to avoid duplicating existing social services. It surveyed local charitable provision throughout Britain and overseas,³¹ examining projects run by the Church Army and Salvation Army, and smaller initiatives, including the Scottish Labour Colony in Dumfries, the Glasgow Mission to the Friendless, the Water Street Mission in New York, and others.³² The Committee on Social Work concluded that it should emphasize localized social and rescue work, with institutions organized by professionals and controlled by the centre (the church hierarchy), rather than through the congregational mainstream.³³ The church's charitable work of earlier centuries was now formalized and it did not study social questions or advocate social reform.³⁴

Recognizing that decent accommodation formed part of the solution to many of Scotland's health and social problems, in 1905 the church opened two homes for men and one for boys. This provision soon expanded to include a variety of hostels, boarding houses and homes for young men and women in Scotland's cities, particularly Glasgow.³⁵ Young people were a particular concern as they were susceptible to temptation, frequently

²⁹ Report on Church Life and Work, app. (*R.G.A.U.F.C., 1908* (Edinburgh, 1908)), p. 30.

³⁰ Special Committee on Social Problems (*R.G.A.U.F.C., 1911* (Edinburgh, 1911)), p. 9.

³¹ *R.C.S.W.G.A.C.S., 1904*, pp. 1186, 1179.

³² *R.C.S.W.G.A.C.S., 1904*, app. 1, pp. 1188–206.

³³ *R.C.S.W.G.A.C.S., 1904*, pp. 1203, 1179.

³⁴ Smith, *Passive Obedience*, p. 338.

³⁵ See, e.g., *The Layman's Book of the General Assembly of 1911*, ed. Revd. H. M. B. Reid (Edinburgh, 1911), pp. 146–7; *Layman's Book of the General Assembly of 1913*, ed. Revd. H. Smith (Edinburgh, 1913), p. 123.

having only recently left the moral constraints of their parents in rural communities, and had limited urban housing options. As healthy, able-bodied members of society, these groups were often overlooked by existing charities. Most urban private and local authority boarding homes prioritized ability to pay over personal circumstance. While some of these homes were well run and in good repair, others were not. Overcrowding was also a common problem. The church sought to ensure that its accommodation provided moral surroundings. To this end, it employed married couples or matrons to provide a 'family' atmosphere and moral supervision. Such homes catered only for the respectable working poor, or those thought capable of being redeemed.³⁶ By 1906, the Committee on Social Work was operating two labour homes in Glasgow which had admitted 380 men over the previous the year.³⁷ These numbers were comparable to the Church Army's homes in the east end of London.³⁸ They also operated men's homes in Edinburgh and Dundee, both of which had admitted over 100 men the previous year. Their Humbie Farm Home took fifty-three boys, while their Glasgow Home for Lads accepted fifty-one. The committee also commenced women's work, taking over the running of Glasgow's Industrial Home for Destitute Women and Children on Watson Street, which could accommodate 100 residents, and opening a home in Morham Vale which could accommodate twenty 'wayward' women.³⁹ These figures suggest that the Church of Scotland hoped to become a major player in the welfare market. It was aided in this goal by the shortage of quality accommodation in Glasgow.

Alongside the church's efforts, Glasgow Corporation was also improving and expanding available short-term accommodation. A 1904 report by the Corporation of Glasgow noted that there were now sixty-seven model lodging houses in the city, seven of which belonged to the corporation. The others were operated by private individuals, presumably for profit. Fifty-one of these were for men and sixteen for women.⁴⁰ These model lodging houses replaced earlier lodging houses that were in poor repair and subject to serious overcrowding, and where religious and social observers believed immoral conduct was commonplace. Yet the corporation did not provide the important moral supervision the church desired.

³⁶ *R.C.S.W.G.A.C.S., 1905*, pp. 1199–205 and *The Layman's Book of the General Assembly of 1905*, ed. Revd. H. M. B. Reid (Edinburgh, 1905), pp. 47–9.

³⁷ *R.C.S.W.G.A.C.S., 1906*, p. 1161.

³⁸ *The Layman's Book of the General Assembly of 1906*, ed. Revd. H. M. B. Reid (Edinburgh, 1906), p. 103.

³⁹ *R.C.S.W.G.A.C.S., 1906*, pp. 1153–65.

⁴⁰ Cited in *R.G.A.U.F.C., 1906* (Edinburgh, 1906), p. 9.

As with much early twentieth-century charitable provision, Church of Scotland services soon prioritized women. Discussions with the Y.W.C.A., the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, the Salvation Army and others had highlighted the difficulties in dealing with fallen women and those 'not yet confirmed in immorality', but on what was seen as the slippery slope.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the boundaries between health and morality were vague and easily manipulated to meet changing priorities. In 1906, the Committee on Social Work agreed a four-pronged strategy of hostels, boarding houses and 'preventive' and 'rescue homes' in the Scottish cities of Glasgow, Dundee and Paisley. Hostels and boarding houses provided Christian accommodation. The 'preventive' homes offered accommodation, a 'kindly supervision', 'affection, and wise guidance, and spiritual atmosphere' for adolescent girls from 'respectable' homes who were believed at 'particular risk' from the perils of city life. The admittance policy was fairly liberal, only requiring that the girls or their families were church members. However, provided there was space, the homes accepted 'any young girl' living in unhealthy lodgings, and motherless girls. The only groups specifically excluded were 'weak-minded girls' and prostitutes.⁴²

'Rescue' homes sought to save girls either homeless or estranged from their families, and 'just entering upon the downward path', or who were first time offenders in the Police Courts.⁴³ Strict rules were implemented to restore these women to 'self-respect and social efficiency'.⁴⁴ Residents were expected to stay for a maximum of two years, to escape old associations, bury the past, and learn work from which they could make an honest living. This included laundry work, mattress-making, sewing projects, homework, including plain cookery, garden work for farm service, and domestic service.⁴⁵ In 1909 the church operated three homes for women. Viewpark Women's Home was a rescue home for women and their children in Uddingston, near Glasgow, and replaced the Watson Street Home. Between May and December 1909, the home admitted seventy-three women. The average number in residence was forty. A new Women's Receiving Home in Glasgow had provided trial accommodation for 105 women and girls over the previous year, up to eighteen being accommodated at a time. The women moved on either to Viewpark or a situation, or to other destinations such as friends' or other homes, or simply left. Another home at Morham

⁴¹ *R.C.S.W.G.A.C.S.*, 1905, pp. 1215–17.

⁴² *R.C.S.W.G.A.C.S.*, 1914, pp. 747–8; see also *R.C.S.W.G.A.C.S.*, 1933, p. 304.

⁴³ *R.C.S.W.G.A.C.S.*, 1916, pp. 517–18; *R.C.S.W.G.A.C.S.*, 1922 (Edinburgh, 1922), p. 474.

⁴⁴ *Life and Work*, xxxiv, 7 (June 1912), 215.

⁴⁵ *R.C.S.W.G.A.C.S.*, 1906, pp. 1161–2; *Life and Work*, xlvii, 12 (Dec. 1925), 269; Mahood, *The Magdalenes*, p. 73.

Vale, East Lothian, accommodated women for up to two years, with twenty-seven admitted in 1909.⁴⁶ These three homes were regularly full and the girls were reported to be devoted to the matrons in charge, often visiting after they left.⁴⁷ Middle-class social reformers believed the homes provided a service worthy of a National Church by offering the same moral and physical supervision found in a good Christian home.⁴⁸ The church had successfully entwined health and morality, securing its position in the British social work matrix while distancing itself from broader social reform. Such projects provided opportunities for evangelism, but this was not the primary objective, as it was for much British and Irish religious charity.⁴⁹ The moral behaviour of residents was a greater priority. Conversion was the outcome of social reform, not the cause.⁵⁰

While the church had started social work as an experiment, by the First World War it was a powerful and co-ordinated provider. Indeed, in 1913 its men's, lads' and women's homes together admitted nearly 2,000 people, in addition to those accommodated in their seven hostels, four of which were located in Glasgow (see Table 8.1), while Miss Mary Hill, the Edinburgh Police Court sister, and her assistant, Miss B. R. M'Lean, worked with the court to provide help and advice for young, female, first-time offenders.⁵¹ The church's success in social work provision stemmed from several factors. First, public authorities, including the medical officer of health, and the community recognized the Church of Scotland's quality accommodation and efficient organization.⁵² While residents could leave at will, many found attractive the comfortable, affordable housing in an urban landscape with an acute shortage of such provision. Perhaps unsurprisingly, by the First World War, most of the church's homes were full and any vacancies quickly filled. Moreover, while provision and quality of municipal housing had increased since the late nineteenth century, the associated social problems remained. Institutional provision was, however, more successful at raising the church's political profile than in addressing poverty. Indeed, there was a convergence of much, though not all, of the social policy agenda of the Scottish Protestant and Catholic churches and the emerging labour movement. Christian socialism and

⁴⁶ *R.C.S.W.G.A.C.S., 1909*, pp. 990, 992.

⁴⁷ *R.C.S.W.G.A.C.S., 1911*, pp. 821–5.

⁴⁸ The church's 'rescue and preventive work on behalf of girls appealed to all who were interested in the welfare of their country' (Miss Balfour of Whittingehame on visiting a church home (*Life and Work*, xxxiv (Oct. 1912), 311)).

⁴⁹ P. Thane, *Foundations of the Welfare State* (2nd edn., 1996), p. 21.

⁵⁰ Brown, *Religion and Society*, p. 136.

⁵¹ See also *Church of Scotland Yearbook, 1914* (Edinburgh, 1914), pp. 84–5.

⁵² *Life and Work*, xxxiv, 7 (June 1912), 215; Church of Scotland, *Report of the Committee on Christian Life and Social Work to the General Assembly* (Edinburgh, 1943), p. 217.

Table 8.1 Church of Scotland institutional social work, 1913

	In home Dec. 1912	Admitted during 1913	Left for situations	Restored to friends	Transferred to other homes	Left to look for work	Left without assigning any reason	Remaining in home at 31 Dec. 1913
6 men's homes	163	898	397	26	5	176	194	176
5 lads' homes	85	109	19	26	9		36	79
4 women's homes + Edinburgh Police Court sister's work with discharged prisoners	78	841	185	198	380	24	26	80
<i>Total</i>	<i>326</i>	<i>1848</i>	<i>601</i>	<i>250</i>	<i>394</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>256</i>	<i>335</i>

Other destinations were for small numbers, including apprenticeships, enlisting, hospital admittance, death and dismissal. This is only a partial list of their service provision. Figures are unavailable for all homes, including hostels, of which there were six for girls and one for elderly women in Scottish cities. There is an erratum in the original where the total remaining in Church of Scotland Homes in December 1913 is given as 339. Source: *Report of the Committee on Social Work, 1914*, p. 761.

political socialism were becoming complementary.⁵³ The Catholic Church, however, remained committed to reformatory and industrial schools, rather than branching into other institutional provision.⁵⁴ Indeed, social work, combined with indications that the Established Church of Scotland and the U.F.C. would soon unite as one 'National Church', contributed to church leaders and middle-class members being elected to a number of civic posts and government committees, including Glasgow Corporation and advisory councils to the Scottish secretary of state, particularly those concerning health and welfare matters.

Notwithstanding growing self-confidence within the Church of Scotland regarding the potential of social work to aid its social and political agenda, it was clear that new health and welfare services were necessary if the church was to maintain its authority in Scotland's matrix of health and welfare. Church influence was declining in Glasgow's hospitals, a traditional area of religious involvement. While the Deaconess Hospital served as a focal point for healthcare provision in Edinburgh, the church did not open a hospital in Glasgow. Instead, it had an established relationship with existing city hospitals. Since the opening of Glasgow Royal Infirmary in 1794, the church had played a prominent role in funding the hospital. Glasgow and West of Scotland parishes were regular early subscribers; sufficiently so that by 1806 the Hospital Board of Managers permitted each Glasgow Church of Scotland minister annually to nominate two patients for admission to the infirmary. This gave the church influence on hospital management, appointments and patient admissions.⁵⁵ Throughout the nineteenth century, the Glasgow Kirk sessions remained regular donors to hospital funds, especially in times of crisis, such as epidemics.

In contrast, there were no recorded, comparable hospital donations from Roman Catholic parishes; nor did the Catholic Church have formal representation on the hospital board.⁵⁶ Moreover, there was a long-standing mistrust between management of the Royal and Catholic chaplains who visited the infirmary. While there were occasional instances of religious discord,⁵⁷ it was a sectarian controversy that erupted in the newspapers

⁵³ For more on interdenominational relations, see Brown, *Religion and Society*, p. 139.

⁵⁴ The Catholic Church operated a reformatory school for boys in Glasgow, three industrial schools for boys and one for girls in Glasgow, and another for girls in Aberdeen (*The Catholic Directory for Scotland, 1913-14* (Edinburgh, 1914), p. 46).

⁵⁵ J. Jenkinson, M. Moss and I. Russell, *The Royal: the History of the Glasgow Royal Infirmary, 1974-94* (Glasgow, 1994), p. 24

⁵⁶ Jenkinson, Moss and Russell, *The Royal*, p. 78.

⁵⁷ For more on earlier instances of religious discord, see Jenkinson, Moss and Russell, *The Royal*, pp. 78-80.

in 1877 that damaged both the hospital's reputation and the relationship between it and Church leaders. The papers claimed that the Royal employed a large proportion of Catholic nurses, with a corresponding favouring of Catholic patients. Despite the lack of evidence, the West of Scotland Protestant Association supported the accuracy of these allegations of sectarianism. A formal investigation revealed that the 'scandal' was a product of rumours. Few Catholics were employed by the hospital and none in senior positions. Yet the extensive press coverage meant that the damage had been done. In the highly charged political climate of the late nineteenth century, the Royal certainly lost some subscriptions and legacies.⁵⁸ Because the hospital had always prided itself on its 'non-sectarian principles',⁵⁹ the Board of Managers of the infirmary, seemingly led by physicians on the board, was determined that religious leaders should be excluded from running the hospital. The building of a new hospital in 1910 provided the ideal opportunity. The board formed a new constitution and reconfigured its membership. This was to include women, together with greater representation from working men and the town council. Privilege memberships were removed, including members of parliament and the Church of Scotland.⁶⁰ Formal representation from church leaders to remain on the board failed, despite support from some members. The infirmary refused to reinstate church representation, being adamant that the board should be secular.⁶¹ Exclusion from traditional healthcare structures only strengthened the church's resolve to develop further its own health and welfare services, independent of existing provision, to ensure a leading, sustained and specifically Presbyterian presence in Glasgow's health and welfare market. Not to do so would severely curtail, and possibly end, the church's political and religious influence on decisions surrounding health and welfare provision in Scotland.

Voluntary bodies provide charitable services for many reasons, not all of which are client focused. Religious provision is often designed to address particular religious concerns about society and/or to serve political agendas. This essay has highlighted how voluntary providers are rarely motivated to

⁵⁸ The Royal had been involved in sectarian controversies erupting in the 1830s and 1840s. For more on the scandal of 1877, see Jenkinson, Moss and Russell, *The Royal*, pp. 121–3.

⁵⁹ *North British Daily Mail*, 27 Sept. 1877 (cited in Jenkinson, Moss and Russell, *The Royal*, p. 122).

⁶⁰ Glasgow, Mitchell Library, N.H.S. Greater Glasgow and Clyde Archives, HB14/1/25, records of the Glasgow Royal Infirmary, minutes of meeting of managers of Glasgow Infirmary, 13 Oct. 1910.

⁶¹ Mitchell Library, CH2/171/28, records of Glasgow Presbytery, 26 Oct. 1910, 30 Nov. 1910, 21 Dec. 1910, 28 June 1911; Mitchell Library, HB14/1/25, minutes of Glasgow Infirmary, special meeting of managers, 8 Nov. 1910; meeting of contributors, 9 Nov. 1910.

take action quickly, or by one sole issue. Examination of the development, dynamics and significance of the social work of the Established Church of Scotland offers a more nuanced explanation of how and why the church formalized health and welfare provision and how it differed from other providers. Entering a complex, mixed economy of provision was neither a sudden nor a rash decision; nor a response to one particular influence or person; nor was it purely an attempt to counter the labour movement, as Brown has argued. Concerns about religious competition, social reform, moral behaviour, political aspirations and the changing position of the church within traditional health and welfare provision, all influenced the hierarchy of the Church of Scotland to enter formal social work in the early twentieth century, prompted by dynamic individuals. While such services did not connect with the congregational mainstream, they filled important gaps in Scotland's urban health and welfare market and helped to secure the Established Church of Scotland's goal of becoming *the* National Church. Nevertheless, in the decades before the First World War, and despite increases in charitable donations, religious, voluntary and political leaders all acknowledged that charities made but a small dent in the problem of either urban or rural poverty.⁶² The Church of Scotland is a core example of this. Its main successes lay in incorporating a moral agenda into politics, not in initiating social reform or addressing social policy issues. In so doing, the church was able to withstand the threat to the national religion, at least for a short time. This contrasts with England where the gradually encroaching state increasingly threatened religious voluntary provision.⁶³ The advent of war in 1914, however, was to bring a more serious challenge to the social policies and political aspirations of the Church of Scotland, as it was to the wider role of state and voluntary bodies in health and welfare provision.

⁶² Thane, *Foundations*, pp. 59–60.

⁶³ See F. Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain: the Disinherited Spirit* (Oxford, 2006), ch. 6, esp. p. 151.