

THE REFORMATION IN SCOTLAND

There are two conflicting stereotypes of the Scotsman: the fierce clansman, kilted and loyal to his chief perpetuated by the story of Bonnie Prince Charlie and the Scottish Regiments; and the other stereotype, the dour hard working Scot thrifty and religious: proper, prudent, practical and Presbyterian. The stereotypes are difficult to reconcile. Like all stereotypes they have limited application in reality yet they are not without justification. I have known brothers who have fitted the two images and sometimes they conflict in the one person. The explanation of these two images lies partly in the great shift in the ideas, attitudes and behaviour of Scots that goes under the name of the Scottish Reformation and that did so much to mould the character of modern Scottish history:

'It transformed the lowland Scot from a fierce feudal vassal, ignorant of all save sword and plough, into the best educated peasant in Europe, often plunged into solitary meditation and as often roused to furious argument on points of logic and theology which few Englishmen had the mental gifts or training to understand. Times and the Church have changed, but the intellectual and moral vantage-ground won by the Scot in that hard school has not yet been lost'¹.

The Reformation also contributed to the union between Scotland and England a relationship which if not always amicable has been an effective political arrangement.

The Reformation in Scotland was part of the movement of reform in Europe but the course of the Reformation and the institutions it gave rise to were uniquely Scottish.

Like the Reformation elsewhere the Reformation in Scotland had its origins in the Renaissance, a movement which though late in arriving in Scotland did not pass the country by. The establishment of universities in Edinburgh, St. Andrews, Glasgow and Aberdeen, and the encouragement of the arts under James III and James IV contributed to the desire for learning which led so many to question the practices in the Church of the day. For instance, the works of the poet Sir David Lindsay which were popular in the reign of James V satirised the Church and criticised the clergy unsparingly. The first printing press was established in 1508, at the beginning of the century that was to see the transformation of Scotland.

The Reformation in other countries also encouraged the movement of reform in Scotland. The Reformation in Germany under the inspiration of

¹ G. M. Trevelyan, *Illustrated History of England*, (London, 1926) p. 335.

Luther, in Geneva under the influence of Calvin, in the Netherlands, the Huguenots in France and in England under the rule of Henry VIII. The ideas from these countries were spread by travellers, churchmen, students, traders and were disseminated in schools, religious establishments and universities and in the busy towns that had grown up in Scotland as centres of trade.

Further, the movement of reform in Scotland as indeed the whole of Scottish history in the period must be seen against the background of the international politics of the time. There was conflict between Protestant powers and the Holy Roman Empire on the one hand and on the other hand conflict between the two powerful Catholic neighbours, Spain and France. England, always apprehensive of an alliance between Spain and France strove to keep Scotland out of the French sphere of influence.

The greatest impulse to reform, however, came from the Church of Scotland itself. Probably because of its isolation it had been relatively independent. In the 13th century the Church refused to submit to the Papal Legate of Clement IV. In 1487 James III obtained from Pope Innocent VIII the concession that his nominations to bishoprics and abbacies would be considered at the Court of Rome. This small loophole soon led to a flood of unsuitable appointments. For instance, in 1504 James IV obtained the primacy for his eleven year old illegitimate son Alexander. Many of the leading clergy were not suited for their positions and the licentiousness of the life style of many churchmen was notorious.

Although the progress of the Reformation was marked by political and military events the Reformation itself was a movement in the minds and consciences of the people and accordingly was greatly influenced by the personalities of those principally concerned. There were the great preachers: Knox, Willock, John Rough; the martyrs: Hamilton, Wishart, Kennedy and Milne; the great Lords: Lord James, the Earl of Arran, Glencairn; the Churchmen: Cardinals Beaton and Hamilton; the Kings and Queens and those who ruled in their name.

Finally the Reformation occurred at a time when Scotland was still a semi-feudal country still strongly influenced by the clan system where the powerful figures were independent nobles who shifted alliances as easily as patterns change with a turn of the kaleidoscope.

I propose, therefore, to tell the story of the Reformation from the Battle of Flodden in 1513 to the Treaty of Edinburgh in 1560. In preparation I have drawn heavily on an old but distinguished text: Patrick Frazer Tytler's, *The History of Scotland*, first published in 1828.

It is convenient here to give a brief sketch of the relationships between the Royal families of Scotland, England and France in this period.

King James IV of Scotland married Margaret Tudor, the sister of Henry VIII of England. Their son became James V of Scotland. In his second marriage he married Mary of Guise a powerful French family. Their daughter was Mary, known as Mary Queen of Scots. She married Francis who became Francis II of France but he died shortly after their marriage. She then married Lord Darnley and their son became James VI of Scotland and James I of England.

The Battle of Flodden is still remembered in Scotland as one of the darkest days in its history. Among the thousands of dead were King James IV himself and his natural son the Archbishop of St. Andrews, then aged about twenty. It is interesting that the young Archbishop had been a student of Erasmus, an early indication of the spread of ideas and reforms.

James V was an infant of about seventeen months when his father died. The Duke of Albany became Regent. James V was a devout Catholic and during his reign the spread of heretical ideas first came to alarm the Churchmen. Through his alliance with France and his personal conviction James V inclined to orthodoxy at a period when Reformist doctrines were making rapid headway in Europe. Henry VIII's declaration of his own supremacy over the English church in 1534 only served to confirm James' determination to take the opposite path to his uncle. Although he expected the Church to reform he did not hesitate to make five of his numerous bastards lay abbots at some of Scotland's richest abbeys. Caroline Bingham describes the state of the church in these words:

'The royal example was followed by noble families, which secured bishoprics and benefices for younger sons, most of whom did not have genuine vocations. In consequence, dioceses and monasteries lacked spiritual leadership and discipline. The wealth of the Church was creamed off by its dignitaries, leaving the parish clergy miserably underpaid, and as a result good recruits to the priesthood were few. Impoverished, ignorant and often immoral parish priests could neither nourish the spiritual lives of the people nor keep their respect. The situation grew worse as the reign of James V progressed, and so the seed-bed of the Reformation was well prepared'.²

There is evidence of the spread of Lutheran ideas in an act of Parliament of 1525 which provided that no merchants or foreigners should bring into the realm any such treatises on pain of forfeiture of their ships and cargoes.

The Church soon adopted sterner forms of repression.

An early victim of the counter-reformation was the first of the Scottish

² C. Bingham, *The Land of the Scots*, p. 84.

reformers, Patrick Hamilton. As a student he became interested in the reformed opinions. He travelled to Europe where he became a friend of Luther at Wittenburg and returned to Scotland where he preached briefly at St. Andrews. He was arrested by the Church and thrown into prison. At this stage he was twenty eight years of age. Attempts were made to induce him to retract his opinions or at least not to disturb the tranquility of the Church. He refused and defended his doctrines with such vigour that a Catholic priest who had visited him with a desire to shake his resolution became himself a convert to the captive. Hamilton was taken to the stake where in the words of Tytler:

'In the midst of his torments which, from the awkwardness of the executioner, were protracted and excruciating he ceased not to exhort those who stood near, exhibiting a meekness and unaffected courage which made a deep impression. Lifting up his eyes to heaven he exclaimed: "How long O God shall darkness cover this Kingdom? How long wilt thou suffer this tyranny of men?"'³

The conflict between the Pope and the King in England led to a more general and severe persecution when, in 1534 James himself completely clothed in judicial scarlet costume took his seat upon the Bench. Many were called to answer for their heretical opinions. Some recanted and publicly abjured their errors, some fled overseas but David Straiton, a gentleman and Norman Gourlay, a priest went to the scaffold and were burnt as heretics.

James first married Madeleine the daughter of the King of France. When she died he sent David Beaton to France to negotiate his marriage with Mary of Guise. The marriage took place in 1538 and in the following year David Beaton, now Cardinal Beaton, became Archbishop of St. Andrews the Primate of Scotland. His appointment was followed by renewed persecution of the Reformers particularly in the clergy. Four members of the clergy, including Dean Thomas Forret, were burned in Edinburgh and Kennedy, a youth of eighteen years of age and Russell, a gray friar, were burned in Glasgow. The effect of these burnings was to cause resentment and further the ideas of the Reformation.

The charges on which Forret was arraigned illustrate the state of the Church. Tytler describes the charges and the trial in this way:

'It gives us a low opinion of the purity of ecclesiastical judges before whom these early disciples of the Reformation were called when we find the bench filled by Beaton and Chisholme - the first notorious for his gallantry and licentiousness, the second ... the father of three natural children'⁴ 'Forret', continues Tytler, 'was accused of preaching to his parishioners, a duty then invariably abandoned to the orders of friars, and of exposing the mysteries of scripture to the vulgar in their own

³ P. F. Tytler, *The History of Scotland*, (Edinburgh 1828) Volume, 2, p. 342.

⁴ *Ibid*, Vol. 2, p. 363.

tongue. It was on this occasion that Crichton, Bishop of Dunkeld, a prelate more celebrated for his generous style of living and magnificent hospitality than for any learned or theological endowments, undertook to remonstrate with the vicar, observing with much simplicity, that it was too much to preach every Sunday, as it might lead people to think that the prelates ought to preach also: "Nevertheless", continued he, "when thou findest any good epistle or gospel which sets forth the liberty of the Holy Church, thou mayst read it to thy flock". The vicar replied to this, that he had carefully read through both the Old and New Testament, and in its whole compass had not found one evil epistle or gospel, but if his lordship would point them out, he would be sedulous in avoiding them. "Nay, brother Thomas, my joy, that I cannot do", said the bishop, smiling, "for I am contented with my breviary and pontifical, and know neither the Old or New Testament, and yet thou sees I have come on indifferently well; but take my advice, leave these fancies, else thou mayst repent when it is too late". It was likewise objected to Forret, upon his trial that he had taught his parishioners the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Creed, in the vulgar tongue; that he had questioned the right of taking tithes, and had restored them to the poorer members of his flock. His defence, which he grounded on Scripture, was received with insult; the Bible plucked from his hand by Lauder, who denounced as heretical the conclusions he had drawn from it, and himself and his companions condemned to the stake. The sentence was executed on the Castlehill of Edinburgh, on 31 February, 1538-9⁵.

James V was still a young man in November 1542 when, in the Battle of Solway Moss, a small English force defeated the Scottish army. Within a week of receiving this news James received news that his wife had given birth to a daughter, the future Mary Queen of Scots. He died shortly after, leaving Scotland in yet another period of uncertain government with another infant monarch.

One contender for the Regency was Cardinal Beaton. He claimed the King had appointed him in his will as Regent. It was believed that the dying King's hand had been guided on the document. Parliament confirmed James Hamilton, 2nd Earl of Arran, the next heir to the Crown after Mary as Regent. Beaton was seized and thrown into prison on the suspicion of treason.

In spite of the severe repression and cruel punishments the reformed ideas had continued to spread in Scotland during James V's reign. After his death on his person was found a scroll listing the names of three hundred and sixty nobility and gentry suspected of entertaining heretical opinions. The name of the Earl of Arran headed the list. Arran who has been described as

⁵ *Ibid*, Vol. 2, p. 363.

one of the most zealous Protestants in Europe kept in his service two celebrated preachers, Friar Williams and John Rough and at first his appointment as Regent seemed to favour the Protestant cause. The Parliament which confirmed him as Governor in 1543 also passed a measure that all might have liberty to read the Bible in an approved Scottish or English translation and under the protection of Arran the Bible was studied very generally throughout Scotland and led to a rapid spread of the ideas of the Reformation.

Meanwhile, in England Henry VIII conceived the idea of a marriage between his son Edward and the infant Queen and the unification of the two kingdoms. He demanded that the Queen be delivered immediately to England, that Scotland recognize his overlordship and surrender to him all its fortifications. A mission was sent to London to negotiate a treaty in more temperate terms which Parliament approved. But Henry's arrogance harmed the Protestant Party in Scotland.

Cardinal Beaton, who had escaped from custody, was soon able to represent the Protestants as enemies of Scotland nevertheless he attempted to win the Earl of Arran to his party. Soon after, Matthew Stewart, 4th Earl of Lennox, was brought over from France. While the Earl of Arran was next in title to the throne to the infant Queen he was the son of a second marriage and there was some question as to the legality of his father's divorce from his second wife. If the divorce were set aside Arran would not be the legitimate son of his father. In these circumstances Lennox was next heir. Beaton also held out the bait of marriage between Mary and Arran's eldest son. Further, Arran's illegitimate brother John Hamilton, abbot of Paisley, a strong Catholic and supporter of the Cardinal also prevailed on his brother. The result was a complete turn around in Arran's sympathies. On 28 August, 1543 he expressed to the English Ambassador, Sir Ralph Sadler, his entire devotedness to Henry VIII. Arran asserted that "no prince shall have my heart and service but Henry". But within a week on 3 September he met the Cardinal, resolved all differences and publicly abjured all Protestantism. He received absolution and renounced the treaties with England.

The Parliament which renounced the treaties with England appointed Cardinal Beaton Chancellor. A statute was passed which referred to the growth of heresy and enjoined all bishops to make inquisition within their dioceses and to proceed against heretics according to the laws of the Holy Church.

Beaton, as soon as he felt secure, made an ecclesiastical progress to Perth, a centre of reformed opinion, and commenced an inquisition which led to the hanging of four men and the drowning of a woman. In Tyler's words: 'Four men, Lamb, Anderson, Ranald, and Hunter, were convicted of heresy, on the information of Spence, a friar. The crime of Lamb was

his interrupting this ecclesiastic during a sermon, and his denying that prayer to the saints was a necessary means of salvation; his three associates were accused of treating with ignominious ridicule the image of St. Francis, and of breaking their fast, during Lent. A poor woman, also the wife of one of these sufferers, was dragged before the inquisitorial tribunal on a charge, that, during her labour, she had refused to pray to the Virgin, declaring she would direct her prayers to God alone, in the name of Christ; and, notwithstanding the utmost intercession made to spare their lives, all suffered death. The men were hanged; and much impression was made on the people by the last words of Lamb, who, in strong language warned them against the abominations of Popery, and its voluptuous supporters - a denunciation to which the well-known profligacy of the Cardinal gave no little force; yet the chief sympathy was excited by the fate of the unfortunate woman. She entreated, as a last request, to be allowed to die with her husband; but this was denied, and, according to a savage distinction in the executions of these times, she was condemned to be drowned. "It matters not, dear partner", said she, "we have lived together many happy days, but this ought to be the most joyful of them all, when we are about to have joy for ever; therefore I will not bid you good night, for ere the night shall close we shall be united in the kingdom of heaven". She then gave the little infant, who still hung upon her breast, to the attendants, held out her hands to be bound by the executioners, saw without any change of countenance her feet secured in the same manner, and was cast into a deep pool of water, where her sufferings were ended in a moment. Such atrocious and short-sighted cruelty only strengthened the convictions which they were intended to extinguish".⁶

Henry VIII reacted forcibly to the renunciation of the treaty and in 1544 a fleet of two hundred English ships sailed up the Firth of Forth to Leith. Leith was sacked. There was courageous resistance by the people of Edinburgh but eventually they had to leave their city which was burnt. The English army returned to England by land looting and burning as it went. 'Henry had done too much for a suitor and too little for a conqueror'⁷.

There followed a period of intermittent warfare characterised by extreme savagery on both sides which is sometimes referred to as the "Rough Wooing". The effect of this on the Reformation was to weaken the position of the Protestants in Scotland.

Far more effective was the spread of ideas from England. When the Scottish Commission returned from the English court in 1543 after negotiating the terms of marriage they were accompanied by George Wishart,

⁶ *Ibid*, Vol. 3, p. 21.

⁷ *Ibid*, Vol. 3, p. 21.

a preacher who had previously fled from Scotland. He had been influenced in his youth by John Erskine of Dun provost of Montrose, one of the earliest enemies of the Roman Catholic Church. As a schoolmaster he taught his pupils Greek to enable them to read the New Testament in its original language. For this he was persecuted and fled to England.

In Bristol he preached against offering prayers to the Virgin Mary and was condemned for heresy. He recanted his opinion and burnt his faggot in the church of St. Nicholas. He taught in Cambridge before returning to Scotland in 1543. In Scotland he received the powerful protection of the Earls of Cassillis and Glencairn and the Earl Marshal and other nobles. He preached in the town of Montrose, Dundee, Perth and Ayr. He spoke with severity and eloquence and had an inspiring and dramatic effect on his congregation. In Dundee his preaching led to public riots and the sacking of the houses of the Black Friars and the Grey Friars.

When he was opposed by civil authorities he threatened them with denunciation of coming vengeance.

His sermons must have been strange spectacles. When he preached he was surrounded by mail clad barons and their armed retainers. A two-handed sword was carried before him by some trusted retainer. He preached for two years twice avoiding plots by Cardinal Beaton on his life. It should be remembered that it was during this period that Beaton tried and condemned the Perth martyrs.

While preaching in Dundee George Wishart was asked by the Earl of Cassillis to come to Edinburgh to dispute with the bishops. He accepted the invitation. Cassillis was not there when he arrived but protected by the Barons of Lothian he preached publicly at Leith and Inveress. It was in this period that John Knox then about forty years of age came under his influence. Beaton and the Governor arrived in Edinburgh. Cassillis had still not arrived.

Wishart preached his last service at Haddington and alluded once more to the miseries that were about to fall on the country. Knox pressed to his side and offered to carry the two-handed sword and was told "Nay return to your pupils one is sufficient for a sacrifice"⁸. That night the house he slept in was surrounded and he was arrested and later handed over to the Cardinal.

He was tried by an ecclesiastical court. He maintained in the face of his prosecutors: that the Bible was the sole authority, that he had the right to teach despite his excommunication, that anyone with faith and knowledge of the scriptures might be a teacher of the scriptures, that outward ceremonies were insufficient for salvation; he derided auricular confession and approved only

⁸ *Ibid*, Vol.3, p. 43.

the sacraments that were found in the scriptures. He approved of fasting, and the Lord's Supper. He condemned the invocation of saints and the doctrine of purgatory. He held that immediately after death the soul would pass into immortal life. The practices of the Church he described as: "pestilential, blasphemous, and abominable" and not proceedings from the inspiration of God.

Needless to say he was condemned and burned.

'On 28 March [1546] he was led from the prison, with a rope about his neck, and a large chain round his middle, to the place of execution, in front of the castle, which was the archiepiscopal palace of the cardinal. Here a scaffold had been raised, with a high stake firmly fixed in the midst of it. Around it were piled bundles of dry faggots; beside them stood an iron gate containing the fire, and near it the solitary figure of the executioner. Nor did it escape the observation of the dense and melancholy crowd which had assembled, that the guns of the fortress were brought to bear directly on the platform, whilst the gunners stood with their matches beside them; a jealous precaution, suggested, perhaps, by the attempt of Duncan to deliver the reformer Hamilton, and which rendered all idea of rescue in this case perfectly hopeless. On arriving at the place, Wishart beheld these horrid preparations, which brought before him the agony he was to suffer, with an unmoved countenance he mounted the scaffold firmly, and addressed a short speech to the people, in which he exhorted them not to be offended by the Word of God, by the sight of the torments which it seemed to have brought upon its preacher, but to love it, and suffer patiently for it any persecution which the sin of unbelieving men might suggest. He declared that he freely forgave all his enemies, not excepting the judges who had unjustly condemned him. The executioner came up to him at that moment, fell on his knees, and begged his forgiveness with much earnestness, as he was not guilty of his death. "Most willingly do I tender it" said Wishart, and kissed him. "Now be of good courage, my heart, and do thine office; thou hast received a token that I forgive thee". He then knelt down and prayed audibly: "O Thou Saviour of the world, have mercy on me; Father of heaven, into they hands I commit my spirit". Having thrice repeated these words, he arose from his knees, and declared without any perceptible emotion, that he was ready. The hooks were then fixed in the iron chain which was girt around his loins; and being raised on the gibbet, and the faggots kindled, he was first strangled by the rope, which was pulled tightly round his neck, and then consumed to ashes'.⁹

This action horrified the people and strengthened the resolution of

⁹ *Ibid*, Vol. 3, p. 44.

reformers and had the contrary effect to that intended, an effect specially disastrous to Cardinal Beaton.

George Wishart's influence on the Reformation was significant. By his preaching and example he influenced those who heard him. Indirectly he influenced those who heard of him from others. His death made him a martyr and a symbol of the repression and cruelty of the clergy but perhaps his greatest influence was the influence he had on the mind, conscience and subsequent behaviour of John Knox.

John Knox was born in 1505, the son of middle class rural parents who were sufficiently well off to send him to Glasgow University in 1521 to be educated. He was apparently a brilliant scholar who excelled in philosophy and scholastic theology.

It is not certain when he first embraced Protestantism but he did not emerge as a significant figure before his association with George Wishart.

Following the execution of Wishart, Cardinal Beaton attended the wedding of his natural daughter to whom he gave a dowry 'fit for a princess'. While at the celebration he was given warning of an attack by the English. He returned to fortify his castle at St. Andrews.

In a daring and carefully planned attack a small party seized the castle and assassinated the Cardinal. This remarkable story is best told in Tytler's words:

'On the evening of 28 May [1546] Norman Lesley came, with only five followers, to St. Andrews, and rode, without exciting suspicion, to his usual inn. William Kirkaldy of Grange was there already; and they were soon joined by John Lesley, who took the precaution of entering the town after nightfall, as his appearance, from his known enmity to Beaton, might have raised alarm. Next morning at daybreak the conspirators assembled in small detached knots in the vicinity of the castle; and the porter having lowered the drawbridge to admit the masons employed in the new works. Norman Lesley, and three men with him, passed the gates, and enquired if the Cardinal was yet awake? This was done without suspicion; and as they were occupied in conversation, James Melville, Kirkaldy of Grange, and their followers entered unnoticed; but on perceiving John Lesley, who followed, the porter instantly suspected treason, and springing to the drawbridge, had unloosed its iron fastening, when the conspirator Lesley anticipated his purpose by leaping across the gap. To dispatch the porter with their daggers, cast the body into the fosse, and seize the keys of the castle, employed but a few minutes, and all was done with such silence, as well as rapidity, that no alarm had been given. With equal quietness, the workmen who laboured on the ramparts were led to the gate and dismissed; Kirkaldy, who was acquainted with the castle, then took his

station at a private postern, through which alone any escape could be made; and the rest of the conspirators going successively to the apartments of the different gentlemen who formed the prelate's household, awoke them, and threatening instant death if they spoke, led them, one by one, to the outer wicket, and dismissed them unhurt. In this manner a hundred workmen and fifty household servants were disposed of by a handful of men, who closing the gates, and dropping the portcullis, were complete masters of the castle. Meanwhile Beaton, the unfortunate victim against whom all this hazard had been encountered, was still asleep; but awakening and hearing an unusual bustle, he threw on a nightgown, and drawing up the window of his bedchamber, enquired what it meant. Being answered that Norman Lesley had taken the castle, he rushed to the private postern; but seeing it already guarded, returned speedily to his apartment, seized his sword, and with the assistance of his page, barricaded the door on the inside with his heaviest furniture. John Lesley now coming up, demanded admittance. "Who are you?" said the Cardinal. "My name", he replied, "is Lesley". "Is it Norman?" asked the unhappy man, remembering, probably, the bond of manrent; "I must have Norman; he is my friend". "Nay, I am not Norman", answered the ruffian, "but John, and with me ye must be contented"; upon which he called for fire, and was about to apply it to the door, when it was unlocked from within. The conspirators now rushed in; and Lesley and Carmichael throwing themselves furiously upon their victim, who earnestly implored mercy, stabbed him repeatedly. But Melville, a milder fanatic, who professed to murder, not from passion, but religious duty, reproved their violence. "This judgment of God", said he, "ought to be executed with gravity, although in secret"; and presenting the point of his sword to the bleeding prelate, he called on him to repent of his wicked courses, and especially of the death of the holy Wishart, to avenge whose innocent blood they were now sent by God. "Remember", said he, "that the mortal stroke I am now about to deal is not the mercenary blow of a hired assassin, but the just vengeance which hath fallen on an obstinate and cruel enemy of Christ and the Holy Gospel. On his saying this, he repeatedly passed his sword through the body of his unresisting victim, who sank down from the chair to which he had retreated, and instantly expired.

The alarm had now risen in the town; the common bell was rung; and the citizens with their provost, running in confused crowds to the side of the fosse, demanded admittance, crying out that they must instantly speak with my Lord Cardinal. They were answered from the battlements that it would be better for them to disperse, as he whom they called for could not come to them, and would not trouble the world any longer. This, however, only irritated them the more, and being urgent that they would speak with him; Norman Lesley reproved them as unreasonable fools, who desired an audience of a dead man; and

dragging the body to the spot, hung it by a sheet over the wall, naked, ghastly, and bleeding from its recent wounds. "There", said he, "there is your god; and now that ye are satisfied, get you home to your houses"; a command which the people instantly obeyed'.¹⁰

After the assassination the conspirators were joined by other Protestants including Knox who thought their lives could be in danger following the death of Beaton. There followed an extraordinary siege of the castle which indicated the strength of a well fortified castle in feudal times. The Archbishop had attended to its fortifications and provisions before his death.

At this time there was a temporary peace between England and France and Scotland. The Governor and Queen Regent called a convention of the nobility. There was compromise on both sides. The Governor and Queen were able to turn their full attention to the conspirators in the castle. There was an ineffectual attempt to negotiate and a Parliament was convoked in which the conspirators were declared guilty of treason.

There can be little doubt that the conspirators acted with the knowledge and concurrence of Henry VIII and to him they now looked for support. St. Andrews directly overlooks the sea and could be provisioned by the English fleet.

The Governor divided the kingdom into four great districts and the military strength of each district was brought to bear on the castle in succession but without success. By December the castle had still not surrendered.

Eventually a truce was arranged, the castle would be surrendered in return for a free pardon and absolution from the Pope. Neither side was sincere. The Castilians, as those in the castle were known, wrote to England for assistance and the Governor appealed to France.

Meanwhile within the castle there were extraordinary extremes of behaviour which reflected the motives and circumstances which had brought the various individuals there. on the one hand the garrison had abandoned themselves to 'flagrant excesses ravaging the country and behaving themselves in a brutal and licentious manner to the poor victims who fell into their hands'.

On the other hand the sincere studied scriptures and held religious services. John Knox catechised the young sons of some of those in the castle. It was while in the castle that John Knox was called into the ministry of the reformed opinions. He at first refused the entreaties of the small congregation

¹⁰ *Ibid*, Vol. 3, p. 46.

but at the conclusion of a sermon John Rough, who had formerly been in the service of the Governor Arran, turned to Knox unexpectedly and said "Brother, I charge you in the name of God in the name of His Son and in the name of the congregation who now call upon you with my mouth that you take upon you the office of preaching and refuse not this holy vocation as you would avoid heavy displeasure"¹¹. Knox burst into tears and retired from the assembly. After a few days he assumed the public office of the preacher, an event of great significance to the Reformation.

The castle was at last reduced by a squadron of sixteen armed galleons sent from France. The conspirators were sent to France to captivity in dungeons in Brittany. Some including Knox were kept chained aboard the galleys and under the most harsh treatment.

The death of Henry VIII and the accession of his son Edward VI occurred during these events. Somerset the English Protector resumed the "Rough Wooing" on behalf of Edward, then nine years of age. The Scots sustained a devastating defeat at the battle of Pinkie in September 1547. They rallied, largely under the leadership of Mary of Guise the Queen Mother, with support from the French. In the course of these hostilities in 1548 the young Queen Mary was sent to France for her education and protection. The tide of battle swung and the French and Scots drove out the English. Peace was proclaimed at Edinburgh in April, 1550.

The Parliament of 1551 in seeking to reform the habits of the people gives some indication of the life style of the times. An act was passed against 'scandalously common' sins: adultery, bigamy, blasphemous swearing, and indecent behaviour during public worship; and a vain attempt was made to repress gluttony:

'No archbishop, bishop, or earl was permitted to have more than eight dishes of meat at his table; to the abbot and prior six were allowed; barons and freeholders were restricted to four; and wealthy burgesses to three, with one kind-of meat in each'.¹²

Mary of Guise now sought French support to become Regent herself. Arran was compensated with the Duchy of Châtellerauld and confirmed as second in succession to the throne. Parliament appointed Mary as Regent in April, 1554. She had as her main three objects: the attaining of supreme power in Scotland for herself, the marriage of her daughter to the Dauphin of France and the bestowal on the Dauphin of the crown matrimonial of Scotland and the title King of Scotland. For these objects she required the support of the Protestant faction in Parliament. In the beginning of her Regency she adopted a tolerant approach to the reformed opinions and the new doctrines

¹¹ *Ibid*, Vol. 3, p. 52.

¹² *Ibid*, Vol. 3, p. 72.

spread rapidly.

Edward VI interceded with the French king on behalf of John Knox who was released from the galleys and greatly welcomed in England. He was appointed Chaplain in ordinary to the King and worked closely with Cranmer in furthering the reform of the Church of England. It was during this period that the Book of Common Prayer was introduced as the approved form of service. While in England he refused an offer of the Bishopric of Rochester. On the death of Edward on 6 July, 1553 and the accession of Mary Tudor, Knox fled to Europe where he became friendly with John Calvin in Geneva, a relationship of great significance in shaping the future of the Church in Scotland.

For a while he preached to the English exiles in Frankfurt but a dispute arose over the use of Edward VI's prayer book which John Knox now opposed and he returned to Scotland visiting Geneva on the way. John Knox brought with him the doctrines of Calvin, more rigorous and ascetic than the doctrines of Luther. A belief in predestination in particular, which declared that some men were eternally elected for salvation and the rest were irretrievably damned, gave believers the conviction of election and a sense of moral ascendancy which contributed to that peculiar blend of spiritual meekness and political arrogance which characterised the future behaviour of the Protestants in Scotland.

When Knox returned to Scotland in 1555 he found a great change. The reformed opinions had spread being held by many of the nobility but most strongly by the middle classes and tradesmen.

Some preachers had fled from persecution in England under Mary. These included John Willock, and Harlowe who assembled a congregation in Ayr. Willock appears to have been particularly influential in his relationships with the nobility including Mary of Guise. He gave a great impulse to the Reformation. Knox wrote "The images were stolen away in all parts of the country and that great image called St. Giles was first drowned in the North Lock and then burned".

Despite the destruction of the image of St. Giles the Queen Regent and clergy insisted that the usual procession for the Saint's Day be held. Another image was procured and fixed to a wooden barrow carried on men's shoulders. The cavalcade was led by the Regent herself surrounded by priests and canons and trumpets and tabors. The procession proceeded down High Street to the Cross. It inflamed the Protestants who as soon as the Queen departed caught hold of the barrow and broke the image. Again in the words of Knox: "the priests and friars fled faster than they did at Pinkiecleuch: down go the crosses, off go the surplices, round caps coronets with the crowns. The Grey Friars gaped, the Black Friars blew the priests panted and fled and

happy was he that first gat the house, for such a sudden fray came never among the generation of Antichrist within this realm before"¹³.

However, Knox while gratified at the spread of reformed opinion was horrified at the failure of the Scottish Protestants to break with the Catholic Church. He convinced the leaders of the Protestant Party of the need to do so. He developed a strong following and influenced many of the leading persons of his time. Eventually the Catholic clergy summoned him to appear before an ecclesiastical convention. He went to Edinburgh for this purpose but to his astonishment found the pulpit surrounded not by his accusers but by crowds of affectionate and zealous disciples to whom for a short period he was permitted to preach without interruption or disturbance. It is probable that he owed this liberty to the toleration of the Queen Regent.

Just at the time when his influence in the movement was growing he was called by the reformed congregation of Geneva to be their pastor and taking his family he left Scotland in 1556. He has sometimes been criticised for this action. Tytler for instance says 'While his writings at this season had all the impassioned zeal, his conduct betrayed some want of the ardent courage of the martyr'¹⁴, but perhaps Knox was more far-sighted than his critics. His leaving Scotland had an immediate effect. The Church became bolder in its counter measures. Knox was condemned in his absence and was burned in effigy at the Cross in Edinburgh. Before leaving he had exhorted his followers to continue in their beliefs and their work and assured them that if they needed him he would return. Other preachers were found including John Douglas, a converted Carmelite friar, and Paul Methven, a tradesman who taught in Dundee. Others spoke in different parts of the country and the Catholic clergy persuaded the Queen Regent to summon some of the preachers to answer for their conduct.

They arrived for their trial accompanied by a large number of gentry especially from the west of Scotland who were in their congregations. The Queen Regent ordered all who had not had an express exemption to go to the Borders. They refused to leave. one of the barons said: "We know Madam that this is a device of the bishops who now stand beside you. We have vowed to God we shall make a day of it. They oppress us and our poor tenants to feed themselves: they trouble our ministers and seek to undo them and us all. We will not suffer it. any longer"¹⁵.

The Regent revoked the proclamation and said she meant no violence against their teaching and would herself be the judge of the controversy. Encouraged by their success, the leaders of the Protestants then called on Knox to return and Knox obeyed. But when he arrived at Dieppe he was met

¹³ *Ibid*, Vol. 3, p.82.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, Vol. 3, p. 84.

¹⁵ John Knox, *History*, p. 103.

by letters which stated that the zeal of the reformers had cooled, many preferred the state of toleration in which they were allowed to worship in private to the dangers of a public reformation. Knox wrote a strong reply and wrote individually to the leaders.

So effective was his correspondence that on 3 December, 1557 the famous Covenant which united the Protestants in one great association was drawn up and signed by the principal supporters of the Reformation. It was the first of several Covenants. It created a unified association where previously there had been separate congregations and private believers. The Covenant stated that its signatories entered into a solemn promise in the presence of 'the Majesty of God and his congregation' to set forward and establish 'with their whole power and substance his Blessed Word', to labour and have faithful ministers to defend them at the peril of their lives and goods against all tyranny. It concluded by denouncing 'the superstition, idolatry and abomination of the Roman Catholic Church. It was signed by Glencairn, Argyll, Morton, Lord Lorne, Erskine of Dun and many other leading Protestants. The Covenant was an open declaration of war against the established religion.

Terming themselves the Congregation the signatories of the Covenant then passed a resolution that in all parishes the prayer book of Edward VI should be read weekly on Sundays and other festival days with lessons from the Old and New Testament. If the curates of the parish were qualified they were to read the lessons but otherwise the most qualified in the parish would take their place. The Lords of the Congregation put these principles into practice in places under their power and sent a second invitation to Knox.

The clergy were alarmed and protested to the Queen Regent but the marriage between Mary and the Dauphin had not been fully agreed to and so the Regent still required the support of the Protestant nobles.

The church, however, was in no mood for toleration. Walter Miln was a parish priest who had been seized and condemned as an heretic in the time of Beaton. He escaped and hid in his native country. Encouraged by the leniency of the Queen Regent he once again had openly preached but the threats of the clergy had forced him to go into hiding again. He was discovered, tried for heresy and condemned to be burned. Because of his feebleness and age (he was over eighty) it was thought he would say little in his defence.

It would be hard to imagine an act so calculated to inflame the Protestants as the execution of this feeble old man. But the clergy had also underestimated the strength of character and eloquence of their victim. At first no secular judge could be found to pass sentence but a retainer of the Archbishop performed the function and in April, 1558 Walter Miln was led to the stake amid tears and sympathy of an immense multitude. He confessed his

faith even when surrounded by the flames “As for myself I am four score and two years old and cannot live long by the course of nature; but a hundred better shall rise out of the ashes of my bones and I trust in God I am the last that shall suffer death in Scotland for this cause”.¹⁶

He was the last.

News of the execution was spread throughout Scotland. The Congregation sent speakers across the country and remonstrated with the Queen Mother who denied any part in the proceedings.

The Lords of the Congregation called for a reformation in church and state including the following reforms:

Congregations to be allowed to meet in public or private.
 Congregations to be allowed to hear a common prayer in the vulgar tongue.

It to be lawful for any one present who was well qualified in knowledge to interpret the obscure passages in the scripture.

The baptism and communion to be administered in the vulgar tongue.

The behaviour of the clergy to be reformed.

However, the Lords of the Congregation recognised the Queen as the sole constituted authority.

By this time Mary had been married to the Dauphin but the Queen Regent still required the support of the Protestant Lords for the bestowal of the crown matrimonial and the title of the King of Scotland for the Dauphin of France.

She received the proposals with respect, promised to consider them and in the meantime promised that the Protestants should have her protection. She advised against provoking dissension at this time and gave her assurance that in a brief season all their wishes would be accomplished. The Lords of the Congregation agreed not to force the issue through Parliament and withdrew their articles, but made instead a strong statement in Parliament.

Parliament conferred on the Dauphin the Crown Matrimonial and the title King of Scotland. Mary of Guise had succeeded in all her objectives: she had supreme power in Scotland, her daughter was married to the Dauphin and the Dauphin had the title King of Scotland. In the meantime Elizabeth had succeeded to the throne in England and restored the Reformation. France saw the danger of a Protestant Scotland; her objectives achieved, and strongly under the influence of France, Mary of Guise changed her policy towards the Protestants.

¹⁶ P.F. Tytler, *History of Scotland*, Vol. 3, p. 84.

The Queen Regent issued a proclamation for conformity in religion and all were commanded daily to go to mass. She advised the Protestants of the danger they stood in and warned them to give up their beliefs. Some of the most distinguished ministers were summoned to appear at Stirling to defend themselves. The Lords of the Congregation protested and reminded her of her promises "Promises", she replied, "ought not to be urged on princes unless they can fulfil them".¹⁷

But it was one thing to give commands; another to have them obeyed. She ordered the provost of Perth to suppress the heresy in the town. He replied that while she had power over the bodies of the people she had no power over their consciences. She commanded Dundee, Montrose and other places to return to the mass and again she commanded the ministers to appear at Stirling.

It was at this critical time on 2 May, 1559 that Knox returned to Scotland. The movement had gained strength since he had left. He at once went to Dundee and announced his intention of defending his faith with the other ministers in Stirling. The leaders of the Congregation decided to accompany the preachers to Stirling. They met at Perth and Erskine of Dun went to Stirling to speak to the Regent. The Regent, somewhat alarmed at the numbers, agreed that if the people would disperse the preachers would be unmolested, the summons discharged and new proceedings taken which would remove all grounds of complaint. The people dispersed but the Regent went back on her promise and denounced the ministers who did not appear as heretics.

Following this incident Knox preached a sermon in Perth which was followed by violence: the statues were smashed in the church and the "rascal multitude" rushed to the monasteries of the Black Friars and Grey Friars and sacked them.

The Regent vowed vengeance and swore to raze the town of Perth and sow it with salt. She advanced towards Perth on 18 May with a strong army confident of success but Glencairn arrived at the head of an army of two thousand men and changed the balance. Hostilities were averted, Knox preached throughout Fife and his sermons led to repeated acts of violence against the churches and religious houses. The worst violence occurred at St. Andrews where the Dominican and Franciscan monasteries were levelled to the ground. The Regent again assembled an army to march on St. Andrews but men rallied to the Protestant cause in such numbers that as Knox said "They seemed to rain from the clouds".¹⁸ They greatly outnumbered the Queen's force when they met at Coupar Moor. There were again negotiations.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, Vol. 3, p. 90.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, Vol. 3, p. 90

The Congregation marched on Perth and took the town on 25 June; then, when the Regent retreated to Dunbar, they entered Edinburgh in triumph on 29 June, 1559.

Both parties were now playing for time while seeking foreign support. The Queen Regent waited for support from France which she was confident of receiving. The Congregation looked to England but Elizabeth while aware of the dangers of a French dominated Scotland hated Knox; in particular she had not forgiven him for his book *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558). She had adopted the principles in government of avoiding war and practising strict economy in government expenditure. Neither of these policies suited the Protestants in Scotland at that time. Sir William Cecil wrote advising the Congregation to take the money they needed from the churches as Henry had done in England.

The expense of maintaining an army began to tell and there were desertions from the Protestant camp. Advised of the difficulties being experienced by the Protestants Mary advanced on Edinburgh. Following negotiations the Protestants left Edinburgh on condition that the inhabitants would be free to practise their own religion as they wished.

Eventually Knox persuaded the English to give material assistance and money was sent to the Protestant leaders which enabled them to prepare for war.

Preparations for war began in earnest. A thousand French troops were disembarked at Leith at the end of August 1559 and the Queen's party commenced to fortify Leith. On 15 October the Congregation assembled their force and occupied Edinburgh the following day. They appointed two councils: one for civil affairs and one for religious affairs. A meeting attended by all the nobles, barons and burgesses of the Congregation suspended the commission of the Queen Regent in the name of the Queen. The Duke of Châtellerauld had now joined the Protestant cause and Queen Elizabeth made a treaty with his party at Berwick by which she took the kingdom of Scotland under her protection and engaged to send assistance to the Duke's party so long as it recognised Mary as the Queen. It was promised by the Duke of Châtellerauld to join forces with the English Queen and he gave hostages for the performance of the agreement. Lord Grey entered Scotland on 2 April, 1560 at the head of a large army. He besieged Leith and the English ships opened fire on the fortified town of Leith.

Mary Guise the Queen Regent died in Edinburgh Castle while hostilities were still in progress. She called the Protestant leaders to her chambers and in an affecting scene asked pardon of all of whom she had in any way offended declaring that she herself freely forgave the injuries she might have received. In Tytler's words 'she then with an expression full of sweetness though her

countenance was pale and emaciated embraced and kissed the nobles one by one extending her hand to those of inferior rank who stood by as a token of dying charity. It was impossible that so much love so gently and unaffectedly expressed should fail to move those to whom it was addressed. The hardy barons who had lately opposed her with the bitterest rancour were dissolved in tears. They earnestly requested her to send for some godly and learned man from whom she might receive not only consolation but instruction and on the succeeding day she willingly admitted a visit from Willock. Mild in his manner but faithful to his belief the minister spoke to the dying Princess of the efficacy of the death of Christ and of the abomination of the mass as a relic of idolatry. To the first point she assured him that she looked for salvation in no other way than through the death of her Saviour; to the second she quietly declined to give an answer. On the succeeding day she expired full of faith and hope¹⁹.

There was opposition to any Catholic rites for her burial so 'her corpse was lapt in a coffin of lead and kept in the Castle from 10 June until 19 October at which time it was carried by some pioneers to a ship and transported to France'²⁰

After the death of Mary no one wanted to continue the war. The French realised that without her support it was impossible to continue the action against the Reformation. The English did not want to undergo the expense of a long siege of Leith which they admitted could withstand the siege of twelve thousand men. The Lords of the Congregation had achieved their objectives. Accordingly, Cecil himself came to Edinburgh to negotiate the treaty of Leith with the French. That treaty marked the end of any effective opposition to the reformed opinions in Scotland.

When Mary the young widowed Queen of France, Queen of Scotland and heir to the throne of England arrived in Scotland in 1561 she was a Catholic Queen entering a Protestant kingdom.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, Vol. 3, p. 120

²⁰ *Ibid*, Vol. 3, p. 120.

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

- 1505 Birth of John Knox
- 1513 Battle of Flodden
Death of James IV Regency duke of Albany
- 1523 Statutes against heresy
- 1525 Prohibition of importation of Lutheran literature
- 1528 Execution of Patrick Hamilton
- 1534 Execution of Straiton and Gourlay
- 1536 Publication of John Calvin's Institutes
- 1538 James V marries Mary of Lorraine (Mary of Guise)
- 1539 David Beaton appointed Archbishop of St. Andrews.
Renewed persecution of reformers
- 1542 Battle of Solway Moss
Birth of Mary Stuart
Death of James V
- 1543 Earl of Arran appointed Regent
Bible permitted to be read in translation
- 1544 Invasion by England sacking of Leith
Arran abjures Protestantism
- 1546 Execution of George Wishart
Murder of Cardinal Beaton
- 1547 Death of Henry VIII Accession of Edward VI
Knox accepts call to Ministry
Battle of Pinkie
Taking of St. Andrews Castle and the capture of Knox
- 1548 Mary Stuart taken to France
- 1550 Peace of Edinburgh
- 1551 Knox appointed chaplain to Edward VI

- 1553 Death of Edward VI Accession of Mary Tudor
Knox travels to Europe
- 1554 Mary of Guise appointed Regent
- 1555 Knox returns to Scotland
- 1556 Knox returns to Geneva condemned and burnt in effigy.
Cranmer executed at Oxford
- 1557 Knox recalled to Scotland writes from Dieppe Signing of the
Covenant
- 1558 Execution of Walter Milne
Marriage of Mary to Francis the Dauphin
Death of Mary Tudor Accession of Elizabeth I
Change of policy towards Protestants
- 1559 Accession of Francis II to throne of France
Knox returns to Scotland Riots in Perth Battle of Cupar Moor
Surrender of Perth Congregation enters Edinburgh and retreats
from Edinburgh French troops occupy Leith Congregation re-
enters Edinburgh Treaty of Berwick 1560 Invasion of English
army Death of Mary of Guise Treaty of Leith Death of Francis
II of France 1560 Mary returns to Scotland.

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