

THE REFORMATION IN SCOTLAND: A REJOINDER

Letter from Neil Morrison to Elizabeth Bonner, Sydney 16 June 1993:

Dear Elizabeth,

I enclose a corrected copy of my talk on the Reformation. I have amended it in accordance with Dr. Gwynne Jones' helpful comments, for which I am very grateful. I have also read again your paper on the Reformation.

My paper was a narrative and was not intended to be polemical. I suppose, however, that my comment that 'the Reformation was a movement in the minds and consciences of the people', was the expression of an opinion. Furthermore, I remain stubborn in my espousal of what you obviously regard as false doctrine.

I have not had the opportunity of addressing your arguments [in writing] before, but I believe you underestimate the changing world view of the times and the seriousness and literacy of the Scottish lowland peasantry and urban dweller. The Reformation was to permeate every aspect of Scottish life and thought. It was much too far reaching to be based on the shifting quicksands of contemporary politics.

The census of supporters, or lack of them, you cite relies on what little physical evidence remains of their numbers after the passage of years, and if some people were reluctant to be counted after such horrid examples as the deaths of Hamilton, Wishart and Miln, it is scarcely surprising. The important thing is they were there when it mattered; when "they seemed to rain from the clouds".

Between the times of Patrick Hamilton and John Knox a great change had occurred in the thinking of the people. This change may be measured by the public response to the two preachers.

Whatever use may have been made of the Reformation for political purposes, it could not have taken place, and Mary of Guise's authority could not have challenged, without strong support from the general populace.

My best regards,

Neil.