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THE COUNTER-REFORMATION IN SCOTLAND

THE BEGINNINGS

1560-1580

I

To appreciate aright the difficulties that confronted the Scottish Reformed Church at the outset of its career, and to understand fully the deep problems that face the Reformed Churches today in Scotland, one must study with attention what is known in history as the Counter-Reformation or Catholic Revival.

But either of these descriptions of a great and ambitious movement is misleading, inasmuch as the movement was neither the fruit of, nor was it characterised by, any reformation in doctrine, or impressive spiritual revival. Undoubtedly the Roman Catholic Church did put forth an effort at the Council of Trent to reform its discipline, administration and educational system. It also tried to define and clarify its doctrinal position, with the result that medievalism was more firmly entrenched in the Church than ever. But some glaring irregularities and abuses were removed.

Under influences set free by the Renaissance, and as a reaction from the impiety, irreligion and ignorance of both the secular and regular clergy, a form of mystic quietism originated in Spain which developed into an intense religiousness. Questions of property, jurisdiction, statecraft and state politics were added to compel Governments everywhere to share in the movement, to propagate, establish and maintain this "true religion" of the Counter-Reformation. Rome put forth remarkable energy in various directions; and at the conclusion of the Council of Trent, in 1563, the influences at work in the Council developed and coalesced into a mighty force to check the long series of victories won by the Reformation. If Rome was not to be everywhere victorious, it would everywhere vigorously challenge the new order, win back some of the lost ground, and even where it was unsuccessful, it would remain a menace to the Evangelicalism¹ liberated by the Reformation, but not yet firmly established

¹ Pollen, *Papal Negotiations* (S.H.S.), p. xliv.

in securely organised congregations. This movement aimed at nothing less than the complete overthrow of Protestantism, and the rehabilitating of the Roman Church as the universal Church, and as the world-governing temporal power. The religious spirit of this movement is plainly evident. Its religion was a religion without tenderness, which did not scruple over methods, provided they served to remove every obstacle to its progress. This is clearly illustrated by the Emperor Ferdinand's saying: "Better no population at all than a population of heretics." And he ruthlessly applied his maxim by reducing with sword and slaughter the Protestant population of Bohemia from 3,000,000 to 800,000, all nominally Roman Catholics.¹

Again, no one can look at the flag in the museum of Leyden, which was found in one of the wrecked ships of the Spanish Armada, without being impressed with the religious fanaticism that supplied such a flag to every ship of the fleet. On its faded linen background can still be seen clearly a large-sized figure of the crucified Lord, bleeding, sorrowful, appealing. These sailormen bowed before this picture as they went forth to battle calling on His name. But the frowning of the Lord on the enterprise, by letting loose the storms that utterly destroyed the Armada, was a solemn reminder to all of the truth of His own saying: "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

That, then, was the aim and that the spirit of the Counter-Reformation. It knew no compromise, and it made none. It is therefore an unwelcome compliment to the mighty Roman Church, that can proudly point to its own consistency enshrined in the phrase *semper eadem*, for complacent Protestantism to deck it with the smug and scanty draperies of an amiable, tolerant and attractive modern maiden. For its spirit never changes, and its aim today is the aim of the Counter-Reformation, even when political and social conditions are unfavourable for its harsher methods. But what matters it? Whether the Reformed Faith is smothered by the sword of Ferdinand or by the peaceful penetration of today, the result will be the same, and that is what matters to those on either side of the long controversy.

But there is some comfort for the disconsolate Reformed people in the facts set forth by the famous Dutch historian Fruin,

¹ Cf. Jessie Mothersole, *Czechoslovakia*, 1926, p. 50.

that in the struggle for the Reformed Faith in the Netherlands, the higher ranks of society were indifferent, the leaders of industry were willing to submit to bondage in the interests of gain, and the intellectuals mantled themselves in cold aloofness. In contrast, it was the rough and poor Beggars of Holland, who concealed beneath a common-place exterior a heroism for the faith, that saved Holland in its last extremities by the Relief of Leyden, and so rendered a victory for the Armada almost impossible, and saved Elizabethan rule for England.¹ Similarly, it was not the nobility nor the intellectuals of Scotland, but the robust faith of a stern and determined commonalty that defeated the early hopes of the Counter-Reformation in this country.

II

The weak Protestant groups in Italy and Spain soon succumbed to the application of the Inquisition, reorganised after the Spanish model on a universal scale by Caraffa, and approved of by Pope Paul III in 1542. In the Netherlands, France and Bohemia, the pathway to Roman recovery was strewn with the victims of this cruel instrument. The seat of the Inquisition was the monastery of the order, Dominican or Franciscan, to which the inquisitors belonged. Organised massacre was not unknown.

In Scotland, where papal nuncios twice advised slaughter,² the Roman faith was spared the shame, and the Scottish people the horror, of such an experience, not by the Christian charity of the Roman See, but by the humaneness and wisdom of Queen Mary. Among the potent instruments by which the movement was advanced in our own country, was the political ambition of Philip II of Spain, who sought to make of Britain an appanage³ of Imperial Spain, under his own or the Infanta's sovereignty. Scarcely subordinate to this ambition was his unquenchable desire for universal Romanism, which would issue, he believed, from such sovereignty. The dark plots and deep intrigues that found their stimulus in this ambition, reveal priests and ex-priests, papal dignitaries, and Scottish Roman Catholic nobles, consumed

¹ R. Fruin, *The Siege and Relief of Leyden in 1574* (Eng. trans.), 1926, *passim*.

² See p. 289.

³ Elder, *Spanish Influences in Scottish History*, 1920, p. 83.

with zeal for the Roman reaction. And the hapless Queen Mary, too, up to the hour of her tragic death, was the very heart of Roman Catholic aspiration, as Mendoza informed Philip of Spain.¹

In this Roman reaction few human instruments were more effective than the Jesuits who, with unwearied persistence, carried into effect the uncompromising anti-Protestant decrees of the Council of Trent. The Jesuits, doubtless, gave a much needed impetus to the awakened interest in the better and more systematic secular and religious education of a higher class of clergy, with a rigorous discipline, and the fostering of zeal for missionary enterprise.² At newly established seminaries like Douai Jesuits were specially trained for missionary work in Scotland. They were taught Greek and Hebrew that they might excel in theological disputations with Protestants. They were furnished with carefully studied explanations of scripture teachings to establish the dogmas of Rome. Elaborate rules for guidance in their mission work, complete subordination to the commands of their superiors, and intellects whetted by an intense study of scholastic theology, were their ample equipment for their task.³ Of the known morality and ethics of their society nothing so praiseworthy can be said.

We find that the decisions of the Council of Trent reacted on the policy pursued by the Scottish Reformers, particularly in the matter of the theological training of the ministry. After the General Assembly had fully considered the advisability of a more systematic training of aspirants to the ministry, the wish of the Assembly was carried into effect by Parliament enacting in 1579⁴ that the College of St. Mary's, St. Andrews, should be wholly devoted to theological studies, with a divinity faculty of five professors. Andrew Melville, much against his will,⁵ was transferred from Glasgow University to organise this new faculty of divinity, and secure suitable appointments to the proposed staff. Thomas Smeton and Andrew Melville, Dean and Principal respectively of the Glasgow University, doubtless with a view to save the Reformed Church from the scandal of an

¹ S.P., 1582, pp. 291, 323.

² Pollen, *Counter-Reformation*, p. 5.

³ Cf. Pennington's *Counter-Reformation in Europe*, p. 179.

⁴ *Acts Scot. Parl.* III, pp. 178-182.

⁵ Melvill's *Autobiography*, p. 83; *Booke of the Universale Kirke*, pp. 466, 471.

uneducated ministry, one of the fatal defects of the pre-Reformation Church, and to counteract the influence of the recently established Jesuit seminaries on the Continent,¹ sought for the most proficient scholars of known fidelity to the Reformed Faith and Presbyterian polity. They accordingly invited Thomas Cartwright and Walter Travers to accept appointments at St. Andrews. They were both eminently qualified for the work offered to them, of which Melville was aware, having Cartwright as a colleague with him at Geneva when he taught there. But both declined the offer. Cartwright, who had already refused a professorship at Leyden, felt constrained to continue his services to the congregation at Antwerp. Travers preferred to remain among his own countrymen in England, but afterwards he went to Dublin and, as Provost of Trinity College there, he exercised much influence in introducing Presbyterianism there. But both these ornaments of English Puritanism, and erudite anti-Romanists, were lost to Scotland, and the Reformed Church facing the Counter-Reformation suffered a grievous loss thereby.²

The statutes³ of the Provincial Synods of the pre-Reformation Church in Scotland afford ample evidence of the need of reform within the Church. They afford as ample a proof of the futility of any attempts at reformation. Statutes were enacted against the ignorant and impure by dignitaries who could not enforce their precepts by their example, which resulted in a mocking revulsion from clerical insincerity that was fatal to the Church. For in the words of an erudite Roman Catholic historian, "the reason why the Church eventually fell so suddenly and so completely was unquestionably the irregular state of her higher clergy, both secular and regular."⁴

The Reformation, which was consummated in Scotland in 1560, was accordingly bloodless, thorough, complete and comparatively easy. There were various reasons for this signal triumph of the Reformed Faith, and Father Pollen, already quoted, while frankly admitting the sudden and complete collapse of the Roman Church, attributes this with too firm an

¹ Melvill's *Autobiography*, p. 76.

² Cf. A. F. Scott Pearson, *Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism*, pp. 194, 196.

³ Cf. Dr. Joseph Robertson's *Statuta Ecclesiae Scoticanæ*; Dr. Patrick's *Statutes of the Scottish Church*.

⁴ Pollen, *Counter-Reformation*, p. 9. Dr. Hay Fleming puts the same truth more forcibly thus: "The Church was too rotten to be renovated." Cf. his *The Church from which the Reformation delivered Scotland*, 1922, p. 16.

emphasis to "the irregular state of her clergy." King Henry II of France sending information he had received from Scotland to Pope Paul IV, in 1559, writes dolefully of the situation in Scotland. He informs His Holiness of the "incredible disaster which has since befallen the realm of Scotland to our extreme regret, disgust and displeasure." He draws a dark picture of the corrupt customs, and the dissolute and depraved lives of all ranks of clergy. Almost all the higher nobility, and "the greater part of the people," are entirely infected by the "damnable errors and heresies" taught by the apostles of "the doctrine of Geneva." King Henry is thus more accurate in his diagnosis of the cause of the Reformation when he attributes it directly to the reformed doctrines of Geneva, than those who ascribe it largely to the impact of social and economic forces.¹ Clearly, it was the Evangel that made the Reformation. It was the Evangel that gave the Reformation its power, stability and success; and it was the Evangel that furnished it with its defences. Its marvellous success was asserted by no one more emphatically than by the accurate Pollen in his sweeping and candid admission that "Scottish Catholicism seemed hopelessly destroyed and in effect never rose again."² Nothing could prove this better than the pusillanimity and hopeless defection of the Scottish bishops, who unanimously refused to obey the Pope's command to them to attend the Council of Trent.³ They were entirely lacking in the fervour of firm convictions that guards with a stern jealousy spiritual possessions. Henry Sinclair, now comfortably seated in the chair of the president of the College of Justice in Edinburgh, was "positively vexed at being asked." "I do not thank you at all,"⁴ was his churlish reply to De Gouda's summons from the Pope. Surely these facts alone amply justify Knox's severe description of Bishop Henry Sinclair as "ane perfect Hypocrite."

In view of the wholesale defection of the higher clergy, it need not be surprising that throughout the length and breadth

¹ Dr. Hay Fleming in his *The Reformation in Scotland*, chaps. VII and I puts the "Word of God" as the primary cause, and "Clerical Depravity" as merely a secondary cause of the Reformation. The late Dr. McEwen in his *History of the Church in Scotland*, vol. II, pp. 4-9, lays too great a stress on municipal and social movements as forces contributing to the overthrow of Romanism. The Reformation was too mighty a spiritual force to need the "momentum and persuasiveness" of movements that had their genesis in merely social or economic evils.

² Pollen, *Counter-Reformation*, p. 17.

³ "No index can better point to the weak spot in the old Scottish Church than this faint-hearted answer of the episcopate to the summons to Trent." *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 21.

⁴ Pollen, *Papal Negotiations*, p. 134.

of Scotland the lower clergy disappeared from view almost as swiftly as hoar frost before the rising sun. It would appear as if there was no Roman Catholic Church remaining in Scotland for reformation or revival. But the leaders of the Counter-Reformation looked beyond the present and visible situation. For to them the Church "was still far from dead, and to hopeful souls it might seem that all could yet be restored."¹ G. K. Chesterton, the literary protagonist of the Roman reaction today, animadverting on the situation then, braces his co-religionists to action with the stimulus of his brave assurance, "that there is no real hope that has not once been a forlorn hope."²

III

The first heralds of the Counter-Reformation to reach Scotland were two Jesuit priests, Fathers Brouet and Salmeron. They arrived on our shores as early as 1542. They are said to have received at Stirling a letter of commendation to the Scottish people from King James V. They were nuncios of Pope Paul III, sent to Ireland on a mission of revival in response to the earnest request of Archbishop Wauchope of Armagh, generally known as the "Scotch Doctor." The directions given to them, as set forth by a recent historian of the Jesuits, cast a clear light on the methods and manners of the Jesuits. They were: "In the instructions for their manner of acting, Ignatius ordered that Brouet should be spokesman whenever nobles and persons of importance were to be dealt with. As Brouet had the looks and sweetness of an angel, whereas Salmeron was abrupt at times, the wisdom of the choice was obvious."³ They found Ireland too hot for their enterprise, and so they had to beat a hasty retreat to Rome, returning thither through Scotland.

Although their mission was abortive they brought with them valuable information about affairs in Scotland. This information, along with other available data, was closely studied in Rome, chiefly from the military point of view. Rome was deeply impressed, and arrived at the firm conclusion that Scotland was the pivot⁴ on which the fortunes of the Counter-Reformation

¹ Pollen, *Counter-Reformation*, pp. 17, 18.

² F. A. Forbes, *Leaders of a Forlorn Hope*.

³ Thomas J. Campbell, S.J., *The Jesuits, 1534-1921*, p. 40.

⁴ Pollen, *Counter-Reformation*, p. 12.

must turn throughout Britain and Ireland. For if the Reformation were weakened where it was most unyielding, and the vacillating nobles were detached; and if ground were won in Scotland, the reconquest of England, Wales and Ireland would inevitably follow.

This was not an unrealisable dream of fanatical visionaries, but a practical, and cleverly conceived plan, quite capable of achievement. For it was not the wealth of Scotland that was its most valuable asset, but its geographical position and the fighting propensity of its nobles. To these should be added the return of Queen Mary to Scotland in 1561 to be a rallying centre for the scattered forces of Roman Catholicism, and the ambitious political aims of Philip of Spain, aiming at a Spanish hegemony in western Europe, by having Queen Mary with a prince with Spanish sympathies reigning over England.¹ Should a sufficient number of Scots be attached to the large reactionary forces in England the plan would have a successful issue. Such considerations gave more than a semblance of justification to the cheery optimism of the leaders of the Counter-Reformation, who made Scotland and Queen Mary the pivot of their fortunes. Intrigues and bogus and real plots were set going in which Spanish ambassadors and papal dignitaries were inextricably mixed up.

The first real organiser of these aims of the Counter-Reformation in Scotland was Nicholas Floris from Gouda in Holland. He had the prestige of valuable services rendered at the Diet of Worms in 1557.² He was specially chosen as a Jesuit particularly fitted for the difficult task of initiating, through Queen Mary, means and methods to re-establish that form of faith in her kingdom on which Scotland had two years previously turned its back. De Gouda, as he is known, arrived in Leith in 1562, with the full credentials of a papal nuncio from Pope Pius IV, and charged to explore the ground and secure a strong base for future action. It was no easy matter for De Gouda to secure access to the Queen. She herself, however, six weeks after his arrival, cunningly arranged to receive him at the exact hour, on Friday, July 24th, 1562, at which her Protestant entourage were attending their own religious services. The movements of De Gouda, in various disguises, were not unknown, and the full significance of the coming of a papal legate was thoroughly

¹ R.P.C.S., I, p. 250; Elder, *Spanish Influences*, p. 46; *Cambridge Modern History*, II, p. 550.

² Pollen, *Papal Negotiations*, pp. li, lii; *The Catholic Encyclopædia*, VII, p. 152.

understood in Scotland. For Randolph, writing to Cecil,¹ discloses knowledge of the hiding-place of De Gouda in the house of Hay, baillie of Errol in Perthshire, and the further fact that Queen Mary was quite well aware that her people viewed his mission as an occasion for the subversion of the State, and such a real danger to her person that all the forces at her command could not withstand. Yet in face of this real danger to the country over which she ruled, and whose safety she professed to have at heart, she secretly arranged an interview with De Gouda.

The interview, of which a report² by De Gouda himself is extant, clearly reveals the firm attachment of Queen Mary to Rome, and the aims, although not the plans, of the Counter-Reformation in Scotland. The conversation moved around three main points. (1) The first was the Pope's brief, which De Gouda read to Queen Mary. Apologising for the small success that followed on her return to Scotland, she wished the "supreme Pontiff" to take "her ready will" for the deed. To cover up her apparent concessions to the Reformers she assured the Pope through his nuncio that it was in order "to save a spark of the old faith" she was obliged unwillingly to bear many things, which she would not otherwise have borne. And as a proof of this she assured him "that, for herself, she would rather die at once than abandon her faith." But De Gouda reminded her that the Pope would much prefer deeds to assurances of faithfulness, however sincere. In doing so De Gouda nakedly revealed the savage spirit of the Counter-Reformation he was initiating. And its repulsive character becomes revolting when it is suggested to this apparently devout young woman that the drenching of Scotland with the blood of heretics would be highly meritorious in the sight of God.

"For," said De Gouda, "the Pope exhorts you in defending the faith to follow the example of Queen Mary of England, now departed in Christ." But to her eternal credit, Queen Mary of Scotland, though then under twenty years of age, was wiser and more humane than to rival the notoriety of bloody Mary

¹ Randolph writing to Cecil at this time, said: "Word was brought to the Queen's grace, and for the time he (De Gouda) was secretly kept in the house of the 'Sheryffe of Arrel' (i.e. Megginch, near Errol in Perthshire, where the father of Edmund Hay, De Gouda's guide, was baillie), a fit host for such a guest. . . . Mar loth to remaining where any such person was received, who might be occasion of 'subverton' of the state, and of more danger to her person than all the force she had could withstand. . . . Yet she (Queen) knows by Lords of Mar and Erskine and the Justice Clerk my dislikings that any such man should be received gratefully in her country, who I have good cause to suspect was brought in by some papists to work mischief." C. Sc. P., I, p. 634.

² Pollen, *Papal Negotiations*, pp. 130-9.

of England, even for the promised reward of ultimately departing "in Christ."

(2) The second point was how to get the Pope's brief to the bishops who were summoned by the Pope to attend the Council of Trent. The Queen assured him that if he travelled unknown nothing harmful would happen to him. Therefore there was no need of a safe conduct, a fact which is creditable to the Reformers, then on the surge of a national revolution.

(3) The third point raised the practical question, how best to succour those of her people, "now so miserably led astray" ? De Gouda pressed on her that "the most easy and fitting method was that followed by the Emperor and most of the Catholic princes, secular and ecclesiastical, including her uncle, the Cardinal of Lorraine, viz., to establish a college where she would always have pious and learned men at hand, who might instruct in Catholicism and piety both the people and the young who were the hope of the Commonwealth." She expressed entire sympathy with the proposal, but she mildly protested that the times were not propitious for such a venture. One of the reasons urged by De Gouda in support of his proposal was an unintentional proof of the ignorance of the old priesthood. "Most of the bishops," he urged, "are destitute of the resisting powers requisite for meeting the foe and standing firm in the day of battle." "The few Catholic preachers there are" (and this suggests that there were priests in hiding) "do not venture to moot the questions that are now controverted, or are unable to explain them fittingly."

From De Gouda's point of view the aspect of religion was gloomy in the extreme. One day, close to where he lodged, he saw "three priests publicly abjuring the Catholic Faith." But even more mortifying still was the renunciation of the vow of chastity by a superintendent, a doctor of theology and a monk who, to enforce his belief by example, was publicly married at the age of seventy. But De Gouda was not overwhelmed by the outward and unfavourable aspect of things. On the contrary he was buoyed up with a firm belief in the eventual resurrection of his Church, and the introduction of the full programme of the Counter-Reformation, a Catholic king, good Catholic bishops, councillors, colleges, and a Spanish alliance.¹ Nor was his optimism without warrant, as the direct fruit of his visits proves.

¹ Pollen, *Papal Negotiations*, p. 138 ; Pollen, *Counter-Reformation*, p. 20.

On October 3rd, 1562, De Gouda left Scotland on a French vessel lying to in the Forth. There embarked along with him, Ninian Winzet, priest and schoolmaster at Linlithgow, a vigorous controversialist who was as unsparing in his criticism of the depravity of the priesthood and their negligence of the educational interests of the community, as he was uncompromising in his opposition to Knox.¹ But more important from the Roman Catholic point of view, and more serious from the Reformed standpoint, was the embarkation on the same ship of six highly connected youthful Scots, who were to be the hopefuls of the movement which De Gouda had inaugurated. They were Edmund Hay of the Megginch family, out of which sprang the Kinnoul Earls; William Crichton, a cousin of Hay; James Gordon, fifth son of the fourth Earl of Gordon; James Tyrie; Robert Abercromby, and William Murdoch. Soon afterwards these were joined by fourteen more Scots of kindred spirit. They all became members of the Jesuit Order. Colleges for such, and for other aspirants to the priesthood, were erected at Douai, Paris, Rome, and Madrid. In one or other of these the future priests of Scotland received their training and culture, of which we hear later in even the remotest Highland districts.

IV

Four years later, in 1566, Edmund Hay with William Chisholm, Bishop of Dunblane, returned from France to carry to Queen Mary the instructions of Pope Pius V through his nuncio, Vincenzo Laureo, Bishop of Mondovi, who was chosen for the Scottish nunciature. In 1565 Mary married her cousin, Lord Darnley, a Roman Catholic prince. The Earl of Murray, her half-brother, opposed the marriage, and he had to flee to England. Darnley wished to become a real king, but Mary refused to yield to his demand for royal authority. David Rizzio, her confidential clerk, an Italian Roman Catholic aided and abetted her. Rizzio was murdered brutally in Mary's presence on March 9th, 1566. Murray returned to Scotland. In her struggles Mary sent the Bishop of Dunblane to Rome to crave a subsidy to help her to suppress the Protestant lords. Pius V congratulated Mary and Darnley on their zeal. "We have heard," the Pope wrote, "with the utmost joy that you and his Highness, your husband,

¹ Hay Fleming, *Reformation in Scotland*, pp. 63, 94, 124, 130, 518; Bellesheim, III, pp. 35-53.

have lately given a brilliant proof of your zeal by restoring the due worship of God throughout your whole realm." Then proceeds the Pope temptingly: "Whereas you know the Lord has promised rewards for good holy deeds, not when begun, but when ended—therefore complete what you have commenced, and go on with the greatest diligence you can, weeding out completely the thorns and tares of heretical pravity."¹ This was, and the Pope intended it to be, a direct incentive to wholesale slaughter. On the Continent of Europe there existed papal leagues or, at least, a community of sentiment which was actively engaged in suppressing Protestantism. It was imbued with the spirit of the Council of Trent, and it was thoroughly intolerant of any kind of compromise with Protestants, politically or ecclesiastically. It was in that spirit that Pius V instructed his nuncio Laureo.

And Laureo was himself the very embodiment of that spirit. For at the commencement of his nunciature he conferred with the Duke of Savoy to reconquer Geneva, and so overwhelm Calvinism at its fountain-head.² It need not, therefore, be surprising to us to hear that he cruelly tested Queen Mary's own loyalty to the Counter-Reformation spirit by urging her to put to death the six miscreants, as he calls them, viz. the Protestant nobles Murray, Argyll, Morton, Lethingham, Bellenden, and a commoner McGill. Then, when these are summarily disposed of, he assures the Queen, and he was probably right; that "the holy Catholic and Roman religion could soon be restored with ease throughout the kingdom, as no leader of faction would remain."³ The Queen bravely refused to imbrue her hands in their blood. Her brave words were: "That she could not stain her hands with her subjects' blood."⁴ Thus a second time, her womanliness conquered the Roman Catholic in her.

V

Nowhere in Europe was the Reformation so orderly, peaceable and bloodless as in Scotland, chiefly because it had not run through political channels. Nevertheless, the dead Church was a fat carcass which attracted eagles and, after their manner, they quarrelled. Greedy nobles poised for personal advantage

¹ Pollen, *Papal Negotiations*, pp. 232-3.

² *Ibid.*, p. cviii.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. cx, 278.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. cxviii.

in the distribution of property. From another viewpoint the Reformation formed the basis for national independence, and it could not on that account be free of political and self-seeking influences. Indeed, for some time before and after the Reformation political influences are inextricably interwoven with ecclesiastical questions and interests. Interesting and powerful personages appear on the scene, and their activities, in both the political and ecclesiastical spheres, had as direct a bearing on the fortunes of the Reformation as on the development of the national life that emerged on its social or political side. Thus Murray, Morton, Lethington, Huntly and Lennox, in their various capacities, were important factors in the Reformed movement, and counter-movement of Rome. Thus, although Murray overwhelmed and destroyed the almost sovereign power of Huntly in the North of Scotland, the house of Gordon still survived as the great ally of Rome. Similarly, the murder of Rizzio, of which Darnley and the Protestant nobles were not innocent, reacted against Protestant interests. Further, the alleged complicity of Bothwell and Mary¹ in the murder of her husband, Darnley, in 1567, led to their unnatural marriage. Rome at first encouraged this marriage for, although Bothwell was already married and was licentious, he was only a nominal Protestant who was brave and martial, and if he would renounce Protestantism (as he did) by the devout Queen Mary's side, he might overthrow the Protestant cause. That was how the Spanish ambassador, Guzman de Silva, viewed the match.² But instead of this, the shameful marriage had the effect of rousing general hostility to Mary, and in consequence the sympathy of Roman Catholics in England and on the Continent was temporarily alienated from her. Protestants and Roman Catholics alike joined forces against her. She was defeated at

¹ In his posthumous work, *The Tragedy of Kirk O' Field*, 1930, p. 201 *et seq.*, Major-General R. H. Mahon leads us through the labyrinth of intrigue which resulted in the death of Darnley in 1567, and he shows that the real basis of that tragedy was the Counter-Reformation movement against the Protestant lords and the Queen, which was directed with tireless energy by the Jesuits, Edmund Hay and his cousin, William Crichton, Philip's envoy and the papal Nuncio. To all these regicide was a justifiable action. The real objective of the plot, although it was carefully concealed, was the removal of the Queen, the placing of the degenerate Darnley on the throne who, with his father heading a Roman Catholic revival and aided by Spain and Rome, would overthrow the Protestant lords and, with Scotland as a pivot, gradually strangle English power. Anyone with some knowledge of the previous history of Hay and Crichton can have no difficulty in believing them capable of conceiving so monstrous an intention.

² Writing to his master, Philip of Spain, Guzman de Silva said: "The Queen had indeed consulted two or three bishops on the matter before she married, and they gave it as their opinion that she could do so, because Bothwell's wife was related to him in the fourth degree . . ." But Mamerot, Mary's confessor, opposed the marriage. Pollen, *Papal Negotiations*, p. 520.

Carberry Hill on June 15th, 1567, and taken prisoner to Lochleven Castle, where she abdicated in favour of her infant son. Next year she escaped from Lochleven, fought with Murray's forces at Langside, but she failed. She escaped and threw herself on Queen Elizabeth's mercy.

James VI, her infant son, was crowned King at Stirling, on July 29th, 1567, John Knox officiating. Murray was made Regent. With the fall of Mary and the Regency of Murray, the future of Protestantism would seem to be free of anxiety. But the omens were not so propitious. For the power of Mary's remarkable personality was more effective for the aspirations of Rome, when she was incarcerated, than when she was free. Murray was assassinated in 1570, and in him fell a great Protestant and statesman. Lennox, Mar and Morton in turn succeeded him. The latter brought the whole of Scotland under his rule. Although ecclesiastically Anglican in his sympathies, and favoured by neither the Roman Catholics nor the more evangelical Reformers, he was nevertheless a strong buttress of Protestantism. But he fell from power and was executed in 1581.

The young king then began to rule in person. But then a sinister figure appeared on the scene. He was Esmé Stewart, Duke D'Aubigny. He was a cousin of the king, and came from France at the king's express wish.¹ D'Aubigny was French, and always Roman Catholic at heart, although ostensibly a Protestant. He was created Duke of Lennox, and was the first of the king's favourites. He came to Scotland with the avowed intention of re-establishing the Roman Catholic faith there. In neighbouring England the Jesuit missionaries were active, and they succeeded in reviving the Roman Catholic faith and in effectively organising the Roman Church there. The same could be done in Scotland. So the outlook in Scotland about 1580 appeared favourable to a Roman Catholic revival of power, which seemed, indeed, imminent.

Further, although 1560 marks the complete and final overthrow of the Roman Catholic Church throughout Scotland, and all its agencies and fabrics were extinct and in hopeless disorder, the new life that permeated Scotland was not coalesced into an active organism such as would render Protestantism immune.² For although the Reformed Faith was the national

¹ Forbes Leith, S. J. *Narratives of Scottish Catholics*, 1885, p. 138.

² Hume Brown, *History of Scotland*, II, p. 174 *et seq.*

religion, for many years after 1560, "the framework of the Roman Catholic System still pervaded Scottish Society, in the form of the secularised remains of the bishoprics, priories, nunneries, and other ecclesiastical institutions and dignities, with all the incrustations of life-interests and conveyance of right." "Ex-bishops, who were still bishops and drawing their temporalities, walked about." A vast number of "commendators" managed and drew the revenues of abbacies and priories. Deans, canons, prebendaries, who were no spiritual personages at all, but lay waifs of the Roman system, lived on benefices.¹ All such symbols of the Roman Church acted as strong incentives to Roman ambition to recover lost power in Scotland.

Queen Mary's own double policy also reacted favourably on Roman Catholic interests. The various enactments by Church and State from 1560 onwards, against Roman Catholics may appear, at this distance of time, harsh and severe. They forbade the hearing of mass under heavy penalties of imprisonment or confiscation of property for the first offence, exile for the second, and death for the third. In 1572 the extreme limit of severity was reached by the articles that made it legal for all subjects to "invoid" to death such as evaded the sentence of banishment. Yet no less a Roman Catholic authority than Bishop Leslie himself is witness to the fact that few Roman Catholics were exiled for their religion, fewer still were imprisoned, and none were put to death.²

VI

The very severity of these laws, even though they were in abeyance, suggests fear of danger or uncontrollable anxiety on the part of the Reformers. That there was real danger to the realm from Roman Catholic aspirations is clearly proved by such unmistakable signs and events as the excommunication of Queen Elizabeth in 1570, and the intrigues for her assassination to secure a Roman Catholic successor, the massacre of St. Bartholomew in 1572 brutally effected by the Guises and which received the fervid and cordial approval of the Pope, and the plotting of the Scottish Roman Catholic nobleman,

¹ R.P.C.S., III, pp. xx, xxi.

² Hay Fleming, *Reformation*, p. 437.

Lord Seton and others with the Duke of Alva to invade Scotland.¹

The long and solemn fasts ordered by the Reformers, in view of these grave perils, are indicative of how deeply real to them was the danger; and only a pure cynic will dare to ignore the significance of these spiritual exercises.

Mary's attitude to the Reformed Faith, in recognising the *status quo* in religion, and in giving repeated assurances of her intention to punish no man for his religion, is generally acclaimed as a rebuking example of splendid toleration to the Reformers. But in reality, it was only a clever political manœuvre to hide her inmost and unchanging desire to have the Roman faith re-established in Scotland by the aid of armed force, as her conversation with De Gouda already noticed, her scheming through Beaton, her ambassador in France, and through the Spanish ambassadors, amply prove.² Gueran de Spes, the Spanish ambassador, wrote to Philip in 1568 that a favourable opportunity presented itself to handle Scottish affairs successfully and "of restoring the country to the Catholic religion." Philip in consequence directed his generalissimo, Duke of Alva, to do the utmost he could to aid the proposed rebellion in Mary's interest. Her manœuvres were, at least, partially successful.

VII

It is important to observe here, as a sign of the times, how the Roman party was steadily growing in favour at Court. Under Lennox and Arran there was a steady increase of favour shown to the leading members of the old Marian party, who had been weakened during Morton's strong rule. Lord Maxwell was promoted Earl, and Lords Crawford, Doune, Ogilvie, and the ardent Roman Catholic, Lord Seton, were re-admitted to favour. Ker of Fernihirst and Sir James Balfour of Pittendreich, "two most darkly-dyed Marian offenders," were brought back from their exile and allowed to stay in Scotland. Sir Robert Melville, another "conspicuous Marian partisan," was

¹ On September 7th, 1570, Lennox wrote to Elizabeth that the Duke of Alva intended to land at Montrose, "where some strangers sounded the water. . . . These are expected by the adversaries to be here within fifteen days . . ." "Lord Seyton having lately sailed to Flanders" was understood to be one of the adversaries who encouraged the enterprise. Elizabeth is appealed to "to obviate the peril," Cecil was written to in the same strain. C. Sc. P., III, p. 334.

² Hay Fleming, *Mary Queen of Scots*, pp. 108, 110, 122-4; Elder, *Spanish Influences*, pp. 64-65; Pollen, *Papal Negotiations and Babington Plot* (S.H.S.), *passim*.

made Treasurer-Depute. It is highly significant, too, that when Bishop Chisholm, referred to by De Gouda, made a moving appeal to the king for help in his need, as he was brought to extreme poverty, and "for want of meit, claith, and uther necessaris" contracted an incurable disease, and could not "lang indure," ample provision was made for him at once by the king, in money and victuals for the rest of his lifetime, for "his bettir sustentation in his auld aige."¹ This must be admired on Christian and humanitarian grounds, but one sees clearly in all these tendencies the strong influence of Esmé Stewart, whose motives were always ecclesiastical and political rather than Christian and humanitarian.

While Mary professed tolerance for the Reformed Faith, as has already been noticed, she claimed for herself that "she finds no impiety in the mass, but that the same is well-grounded," and accordingly she insisted on having a confessor and mass at Holyrood, which all her retinue must be permitted to attend without molestation. At the same time she debarred any of her servants from attending the services of the Reformed ministers, which was not quite tolerant.

She had her infant son baptised with full Roman rites in circumstances of great splendour. She expressed the hope that this spectacular baptism of her son "might be the harbinger of a general return to Catholic observances." The papal nuncio, Laureo, who doubtless insisted on the Roman rite, reported that its observance "will be a good beginning."² All this was splendid propaganda among unstable Protestant nobles, when the religious views of not a few of them were in a fluid state.

But Mary's example, in open defiance of the laws of her realm in ordering mass at Holyrood and in attending it, was even more effective. The Pope on being told of this restoration of the mass in Scotland was so elated that he announced that "he was more pleased with that news than with his election to the papacy." Father Crichton, writing from Lyons to the vicar-general Borgia in 1566, said that "the state of religion was such that the King went to mass every day," that "the Queen ordered certain preachers to preach in her chapel, whither all the Catholics flocked to hear them, and there also they stayed."

¹ R.P.C.S., III, pp. xli, xlii, 357-8.

² "It is believed for certain," wrote Laureo, "that the baptism will be according to the ancient rite of the Holy Catholic and Roman Church, which will be a good beginning." Pollen, *Papal Negotiations*, pp. cxvii, 282.

"The bishops say mass in some of their monasteries without suffering for it." But he regrets to state that "the heretics preach throughout the country, though the Queen's praiseworthy wish to remove them continues."¹ Masses were said, apparently, with comparative freedom, for the penalties for their celebration seem to have been seldom inflicted. They were said at Paisley in May, 1563, without any serious result to Archbishop Hamilton.² The delinquents who transgressed at Congilton, Rosdew, Renfrew, Garscadden, Halket, Glasgow, Provan, Cathcart, Rutherglen, Neilston, Sanquhar, Barskeoch, Blairwhinochy, and Cambuskeith, suffered no severer penalty for their offence than to be cautioned.³

The Earl of Bedford, writing from Berwick on August 18th, 1565, reported that the Queen was getting many people to attend her mass, "and never so many as now there were at it on Sunday last."⁴ Father Edmund Hay, writing to Borgia from Paris on May 15th, 1566, intimated with certainty that over "9,000 persons publicly communicated this Easter in the queen's chapel," and that "many more did so in other parts of the country." Then, he proceeds with confidence, "one may easily gather with what little trouble the whole people might be recalled to its duty, and to the bosom of the church." Then, disclosing the sanguinary aims of the Counter-Reformation, he proceeded to show how easily this could be done, "if only the good queen, assisted by some external aid, could reduce a few tyrants to order."

De Silva, reporting to his royal master Philip of Spain, from London on July 26th, 1567, and no doubt anxious to make a good impression on the king, is even more precise. He stated on the authority of Mamerot, Mary's French confessor, a Dominican friar who attended the Council of Trent, that during the six weeks of Lent of that year 12,606 persons communicated "in the church of Edinburgh only, where the queen attends her services."⁵ These figures are almost incredible, unless Mamerot counted the same people repeatedly during Lent, for the whole population of Edinburgh in 1550 was only 30,000 and, seventeen years later, in the year 1567, when according to De Silva himself

¹ Pollen, *Papal Negotiations*, pp. 492, 495.

² Hay Fleming, *Reformation*, p. 434.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 442.

⁵ S.P. *Eliz.*, p. 663; Pollen, *Papal Negotiations*, p. 520.

“the greater part of the common people were heretics,” the population could not have been much larger. In any case the situation changed very seriously for Protestants from that which obtained six years earlier, and of which John Knox could truthfully and triumphantly say: “Papistis wer so confounded that none within the realme durst more avow the hearing or saying of messe than the theavs of Lyddesdaill durst avow their theft in presence of ane upryght judge.”¹ For the causes we have described above, it would appear, from the Roman Catholic viewpoint, that the time was opportune for the Jesuits’ first great assault on Scotland’s religious freedom.

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¹ Laing, *Knox's History of the Reformation*, II, p. 265.