

School of Ministry

Week 10 – Reformation Church Hist. – Scotland and Presbyterianism

Reflection

What are the main differences between the Presbyterian Church and the Anglican Church today?

Introduction

The Scottish Reformation was a combination of both Calvinism and particular Scottish forces – the result, Presbyterianism was born! It was truly the ‘people’s reformation’.

What is Presbyterianism?

In contrast to the Episcopal and hierarchical nature of the Church of England (top-down), Presbyterianism has no official hierarchy and governs itself through a system of elderships – made up of elected lay and clerical members (bottom-up). The name ‘Presbyterian’ comes from the representational form of church government called ‘a presbyterian’. In Presbyterian churches, governing authority is given to elected lay leaders known as “elders” (or “presbyters”), who work with the congregation’s ordained minister.

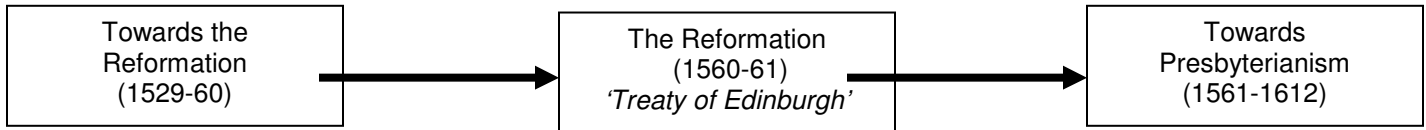
Chronology of Scottish Presbyterianism (1509-1561)

1509		Birth of John Calvin
1514		Birth of John Knox
1523	Aug	Jean Vallière, first French Protestant martyr, is burned at the stake
1534		John Calvin flees to Basel, Switzerland
1536		John Calvin begins work in Geneva, Switzerland
1546	Mar	George Wishart burned at the stake in Scotland by Cardinal David Beaton, Archbishop of St. Andrews.
1546	May	Protestants murder Cardinal Beaton and fortify themselves in St. Andrews castle.
1547	July	St. Andrews castle falls to Catholics; John Knox and others are sentenced to slavery in the French galleys.
1547		Battle of Pinkie (England defeats Scotland)
1548	Jan	John Knox released from galleys by English intervention. Works as a preacher in England, especially at Berwick-upon-Tweed.
1556-58		John Knox pastors English exiles in Geneva.
1558	Nov	Elizabeth I ascends to the throne of England – England goes Protestant.
1559	Apr	Mary (of Guise) calls a conservative church council to stamp out Protestant heresy
1559	May	John Knox returns to Scotland – and stirs reformation into action
1559	May	Synod of the French Protestant church in Paris chooses Reformed theology over Lutheran and draws up a confession of faith.
1560	Spring	English troops assist Scottish Reformers in overthrowing the Catholic government.
1560		Mary of Guise (Regent) dies
1560	July	<i>The Treaty of Edinburgh</i> forged – forcing the French to withdraw from Scotland
1560	Aug	<i>Scots Confession of Faith</i> is adopted, Papal jurisdiction abolished and Mass outlawed.
1561		<i>Book of Discipline</i> (which restructured church government and life) adopted the national church.
1572	Nov	John Knox dies.
1582		<i>Second Book of Discipline</i> completed
1587		Mary, Queen of Scots Executed
1592		Parliament accepts Presbyterianism (as reflected in the Second Book of Discipline) – short-lived
1646		The Scots Confession superseded by the <i>Westminster Confession of Faith</i>
1690		The Scottish Church finally accepted as Presbyterian

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We will consider the Scottish Reformation in three movements – towards the reformation, the reformation, and the movements toward Presbyterianism.



Towards the Reformation (1529-60)

It was the forging of the '*Treaty of Edinburgh*' that brought about the Presbyterian reformation settlement. There were 3 main forces operating to bring it about.

1) Politics

Whereas in England the reformation was driven by the state, in Scotland it was the people who were desperately trying to hold on to what they had left of Scotland. The Scottish Royals has nominal power and ruled only at the goodwill of the nobility and that was largely due to a) the extensive clan structures of Scotland's nobility and b) the fact that the nobility controlled the military power.

Because historically, Scotland had fought and lost to England, they had aligned themselves with France in an attempt to hold on to their independence. This famously led to the proposed union of Mary Stuart (to be Queen of Scots) to Francis (to be King Francis II of France).

For a Protestant reformation to happen in Scotland the alliance with Catholic France would need to be broken, but the Scots had to be careful so as to not deliver themselves into the hands of England. Further the Scottish nobility were being supported by the English (who were becoming more Protestant). The issue came to a head in the *Battle of Pinkie* (1547), where England defeated Scotland convincingly and then set about supporting the nobility thus making Scotland more Protestant.

2) Catholic Reform

The Catholics had not done themselves any favours as they were perceived (rightly or wrongly) as morally and financially corrupt. Attempts had been made (from within) to reform the church. Archbishop of St Andrews **John Hamilton** led the reform attempting to address the morality issues by enforcing old canon law. More was needed and to address the ignorance of clergy, a) vicars and curates were examined on their knowledge and dismissed if they were found wanting (even though no education standard was set for clergy), b) plans were made to groom preachers and, c) Hamilton produced a Catechism (1552). The problem for the Catholics with the catechism was that it gave too much ground to the Protestants. Although the reforms were needed, they only served to weaken the Catholic Church and were too late to reverse some of the Protestant trends that were becoming popular. Furthermore the real abuses such as financial mismanagement were not addressed.

3) The growth of Protestantism

There were four key factors in the in the growth of Protestantism (as per the PTC Notes)

a) Lutheran Preachers

- Although Lutheran writings were banned (from Jul 1525), there were notable preachers. **George Wishart** (who trained John Knox) and burned at the stake at St Andrews' by Cardinal Beaton in 1546.
- The repercussion was the storming of St Andrew's and murder of Cardinal Beaton. It took the French military to overthrow the Protestant rebels over a year later in 1547.
- As punishment for seeking aid from France, England invaded Scotland in the Battle of Pinkie later that year.

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b) *Lay Involvement*

- The uprising in reaction to George Wishart's death helps indicate the commitment of the lay to protestant causes.
- By the 1540's the Scottish nobility had embraced Protestant opinions and so the Scottish royalty were losing their influence. Furthermore the poorer lay were the ones who were suffering from the financial mismanagement of the Catholic Church.

c) *Elizabethan Foreign Policy*

- Not as much driven by Protestant agenda, Elizabeth was a shrewd operator. She came to the throne late in the piece (1559) but sympathized with the Protestant mostly because of the excommunication she has been handed by the Pope (see last week's notes). Given that the Pope had declared Francis I (of France) as the rightful heir it made sense that she would do what she could to limit his influence. If Scotland continued to embrace French help they would continue to be a threat for her throne. Elizabeth moved to rid Scotland of French military assistance by signing the *Treaty of Berwick* (1560) with the Scottish nobility.

d) **John Knox (1513/14? – 1572)**

- After two years of French imprisonment (after the St Andrews Castle siege) and five years in England he returned to Scotland in 1554, but then had to flee to Geneva when Mary I came to the throne.
- Knox communicated frequently with the Scottish nobility and spurred them into action against the Catholic Church – they would come to be known as the '*Lords of the Congregation*' for their political influence.

*John Knox – the man*¹

- Knox is often seen second in importance to John Calvin in establishing Presbyterianism.
- Studied at University of Glasgow under John Major (a great scholar of the time) and was ordained to the priesthood in 1540.
- Married first to Marjorie Bowes in 1556 who predeceased him. His second wife was Margaret Stewart (he was 50, she was 17!)
- He led the Reformation in Scotland in accordance with Calvinistic principles, focusing much of his energy against the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots, and Catholic practices like the mass.
- His writing include '*The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Rule of Women*' (1558) and his most famous book '*The History of the Reformation in Scotland*' (written between 1559-66).
- He died in Edinburgh on November 24th 1572 and was buried in St Giles Parish cemetery in Scotland. His tombstone reads: '*Here lyeth a man in his life never feared the face of man, who hath been often threatened with dagger, but yet hath ended his dayes in peace and honour.*'



The Reformation (1560-61)

The scene was set for action – the politics, the minor Catholic reforms and the growth of Protestantism had Scotland as a nation ready for revolutionary change. It was Elizabeth I's ascension (Nov 1558) that triggered the switch. England had rejected Papal Catholicism and moved to Protestantism thus exerting a fair degree of pressure on the Catholic establishment in Scotland.

John Knox at the request of the *Lords of the Congregation* returned to Scotland and his preaching stirred up iconoclastic riots. *Mary of Guise* (the Queen Regent – a hardened Papist) turned to the French to help suppress the Protestant rioters and so the Lords of the Congregation entered into negotiations with Cecil in England. The riots came to an end in October 1559 when the insurgents

¹ For more on John Knox see: <http://www.greatsite.com/timeline-english-bible-history/john-knox.html>

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marched into Edinburgh. Mary was suspended (and died shortly after). In July 1560 the English invention forced the French to agree to the *Treaty of Edinburgh*.

The ***Treaty of Edinburgh*** was drawn up by the Parliament of Scotland and secured the withdrawal of both French and English forces. Interestingly, despite considerable pressure, it was not ratified by Mary I of Scotland (Queen of Scots) the reigning monarch. Regardless it had the intended effect with the withdrawal of French troops.

It was not a church bill and mentioned no church reforms; in fact it forbade the Parliament from dealing with matters of doctrine. It did however give the Scottish Parliament a way to deal with this crisis of religion and cleared the way for Church reform. Behind the scenes, the Parliament organized committees who set about a) placing able preachers in parishes and, b) preparing basic documents for church reform which led to the formation of the *Scots Confession of Faith*² (adopted by Parliament in 1560) and *Book of Discipline* (rejected by Parliament but adopted by the national church in 1561).

There was a tension however. Scotland was now legally Protestant, yet the structures and many of the clergy were still Catholic. The ruling nobility had seen the reforms that had settled the tensions and riots. But the church made up predominantly of active middle classes from the cities pressed for further and more radical change. This tension is seen in the fact that the Scottish Parliament was very willing to accept the *Scots Confession of Faith* and yet they rejected the *Book of Discipline*.

The ***First Book of Discipline (1560)***³ (as it came to be known) proposed a total reformation of religion in Scotland. It established a form of church government (kirk sessions⁴, synods and assemblies) and church officials that were not all clergy (ministers, teachers, elders, deacons, superintendents, and readers – note no Bishops). The model reflected that of international Calvinism.

Although the ideal of the Book of Discipline was correct – providing for clergy adequate stipends and housing, and it aimed to establish education systems in every parish – it threatened the income of the Lords as well as suggesting that they fall under the same disciplinary measure as the middle classes. It is for this reason the Book of Discipline was rejected. The church was reformed in ideal but left without the authority or power to put the ideas into action (except by persuasion).

Towards Presbyterianism (1561-1612)

Surprisingly it was in 1612 that the Episcopacy⁵ was established by the Scottish parliament, but it was preceded by a bitter struggle. The Scottish Crown wanted the Scottish Church to be Episcopal (like in England). The church however (led by the 'six Johns') wanted the church to follow the Presbyterianism model of Calvin. Their battle would finally be won – but well after their lifetime in 1690.

² Knox gives a record of the drama which unfolded (in *History of the Reformation in Scotland*). A supplication was laid before the Parliament by the Protestant nobility, decrying the corruptions of Roman Catholicism, and seeking the abolition of Popery. The petition of the Protestants exclaimed, "We offer ourselves to prove, that in all the [rabble of the clergy] there is not one lawful minister, if God's word, the practice of the apostles, and their own ancient laws shall judge of lawful election. We further offer ourselves to prove them all thieves and murderers: yea, rebels and traitors to the lawful authority of empires, kings, and princes; and therefore unworthy to be suffered in any reformed commonwealth." In response, the Parliament directed the Protestant noblemen and ministers to draw up "in plain and several heads, the sum of that doctrine which they would maintain, and would desire that present Parliament to establish as wholesome, true, and only necessary to be believed and received within that realm." Over the next four days, the Scottish Confession was drafted by six ministers (the '6 John's'): John Winram, John Spottiswoode, John Willock, John Douglas, John Row, and John Knox. On 17 August 1560, the document was read twice, article by article, before the Parliament; and the Protestant ministers stood ready to defend the cause of truth, in the event that any article of belief was assailed. When the vote was taken, the Confession was ratified, with only a few dissenting voices, who "yet for their dissenting could produce no better reason but, 'We will believe as our fathers believed.' The bishops (papistical, we mean), spake nothing."

³ http://www.swrb.com/newslett/actualNLS/bod_ch03.htm

⁴ The 'Kirk' is informal name of The Church of Scotland (*Eaglais na h-Alba* in Scottish Gaelic)

⁵ Church governed by bishops

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The period of 1561 to 1612 can be seen as a struggle for power between the monarchs (Mary, Queen of Scots [1561-1567] – Catholic, and James VI [1578-1619]⁶) and the nobility (Protestant). In the case of Mary I the Protestant opposition was obvious given that she was Catholic. In the case of James VI the resistance was philosophical as James wanted to have control of Scotland in both church and state matters (like that of Elizabeth I – his cousin in England). This view was contrary to that of the Scottish nobility who pressed for a divide between the church and state with the state ultimately (under God) answering to the church. James' determination to rule all was fuelled by the Protestant Lords failed attempt to seize political control from him in 1583. It was Elizabeth I's example in England that helped James promote the Episcopacy over Presbyterianism and force the General Assembly of the Scottish church to agree – the Parliament then ratified the decision in 1612.

Mary Stuart⁷, known to history as *Mary, Queen of Scots*, was one of the most fascinating and controversial monarchs of 16th century Europe. At one time, she claimed the crowns of four nations - Scotland, France, England and Ireland. Her physical beauty and kind heart were acknowledged even by her enemies, yet she lacked the political skills to rule successfully in Scotland. Her second marriage was unpopular and ended in murder and scandal; her third was even less popular and ended in forced abdication in favor of her infant son. She fled to England in 1568, hoping for the help of her cousin, Elizabeth I. Her presence was dangerous for the English queen, who feared Catholic plotting on Mary's behalf. Mary never met her cousin and remained imprisoned for the next nineteen years. She was executed in 1587, only forty-four years old. By orders of the English government, all of her possessions were burned. In 1603, upon Elizabeth's death, Mary's son became King of England as James I.



James Charles Stuart⁸ was born on June 19, 1566 at Edinburg Castle in Scotland. His father, Lord Darnley, was murdered in early 1567 before young James was 1 year old. His mother, Mary Queen of Scots, subsequently ascended to the Scottish throne. Her reign, however was short lived and she was forced to abdicate in favor of her son on July 24, 1567. Little James was crowned *King James VI of Scotland* five days later at the tender age of 13 months. And so, like many monarchs of the time, King James was reared by neither father nor mother but rather by tutors. King James began to rule his native Scotland when he was 19 years old. A few years later, he took Anne of Denmark to be his queen. Together they had nine children – his eldest Prince Henry.



King James' great aspiration to be the first King of both Scotland and England was realized in 1603 upon the death of Queen Elizabeth. When he ascended to the English throne that year he had already been king of Scotland for 36 years. He was now known as King James VI of Scotland & I of England.

The king played a masterly political game and kept his kingdom out of war. For the first time a Scottish monarch wielded effective authority over the more far-flung areas of the realm. He supported literature both through his own writing and his patronage. There was peace during his reign--both with his subjects and foreign powers.

The Catholic religion was also an enemy of King James. Papists (as King James called them) attempted to assassinate him a number of times. Most notably, in 1605 Roman Catholic *Guy Fawkes* attempted to blow up Parliament when the king was to have been present. The conspiracy was discovered and all co-conspirators were executed. This failed attempt is celebrated on November 5 in England each year and is known as *Guy Fawkes Night*.

⁶ Both Mary, Queen of Scots and James I came to the throne before they were 'of age' which mean that regents ruled in their place in the interim. In Mary's case, Mary of Guise (Catholic) was Regent. In James I's case he had four Regents in quick succession, the two most known were the Earl of Moray James Stewart (1567-70) and the Earl of Morton James Douglas (1572-78) both Protestant.

⁷ This brief biography supplied by: <http://www.marileecody.com/maryqosimages.html>

⁸ Edited biography of James VI (of Scotland) taken from: <http://www.jesus-is-lord.com/kingbio.htm>

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King James was an evangelist of the true gospel, which automatically made him an enemy of Rome. King James strongly delineated the errors of Roman superstition and spurned them yet he treated Romanist subjects fairly.

Not only was King James the first monarch to unite Scotland, England and Ireland into Great Britain (as he liked to call it), but he commissioned what many consider to be the greatest piece of religious and literary work in the world - the *Authorized King James Version of the Bible*, aka the Authorized Version.

King James died on March 27, 1625 at Theobolds Park in Herts, England. He was 59 years old when he died and was buried at Westminster Abbey. Unlike many Scottish monarchs, King James died in his bed at peace with his subjects and foreign countries. He also passed Royal power on, intact, to an adult son which was also quite unusual.

The Establishment of Presbyterianism

Strictly speaking Scotland had to wait for **Andrew Melville** (1545-1622), a respected scholar and leader, to establish Presbyterianism. Melville followed John Knox and was responsible for drawing up the **Second Book of Discipline**⁹. The scope of the second book was more restrictive than the first. This book laid down the separation between church and state – a view which gave rise to several clashes with James VI (and led to Melville's imprisonment in the Tower of London in 1606). The major difference was that it did not just modify the role of the episcopacy in Scotland – it abolished it. This book also foreshadowed the teaching of the *Westminster Confession (1546)*¹⁰. The First and Second Books of Discipline exhibit the genius of Scottish Presbyterianism – especially in regard to the impact the Scottish Reformation had on the form of church government.

Like the First Book of Discipline, the Scottish Parliament rejected it, but the church had embraced it, so much so that in 1584 parliament passed laws reinforcing the authority of the Bishops (and subjecting them to the King not the General Assembly). What followed was a political see-saw that saw the Church of Scotland move back and forth from being Episcopal to being Presbyterian!

1586 – compromise: Bishops were allowed to be subject to both King and General Assembly. James VI approved the set-up of presbyteries.

1586-92 – Episcopal power diminished – power to the presbyteries.

1592 – Parliament enacted Presbyterianism, but gave power to King James to direct the meeting of the General Assembly.

Antipathy between James and the Presbyterians grew as James shrewdly used his power to advance his own agenda.

1612 – James VI wins back church control. Scotland declared Episcopalian.

1638 – General Assembly wipes out the Episcopacy for Presbyterianism

1662 – Episcopacy imposed again on the Church

1690- Scottish church wins back their Presbyterianism – which has remained ever since.

Conclusion

The irony in the Scottish reformation is that the Scottish nobility who started the reformation by opposing the crown were in the end the ones responsible for restricting the Church of Scotland to royal and state control. It was the middle class urban folk who embraced the democratic nature of Presbyterianism and fought for it in part out of concern for Scotland and in part to distance themselves from England. The Scottish Reformation was indeed – *the people's reformation*.

⁹ http://www.swrb.com/newslett/actualNLS/bod_ch04.htm

¹⁰ The Westminster Confession of Faith is now the official document stating the beliefs of the Presbyterian Church.

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Reflections for today

What are the strengths and weaknesses of a Presbyterian form of Church Government?
How does Presbyterianism protect the truth of the Gospel?

Bibliography

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