Scotland’s Revival History - The Reformation in Scotland.

1. The Need For Reformation.

a. **The State of the Church.**
   A large number of priests were ignorant and churches were poorly attended.
   Moral standards among the clergy were very low.
   Through patronage, church appointments were given to anyone favoured, even children of
   the king and nobles.
   The church held half the wealth of Scotland which caused resentment.

b. **The Political Situation.**
   Scotland was very weak following Flodden in 1513 where King James IV and the “flower
   of his nobility” were slaughtered. Scotland’s historical alliance was with France, against
   England. Catholics looked to France but Protestant sympathizers looked to England which
   had broken with Rome in 1534.
   Protestant views were being fed through Lutheran books entering Scottish ports and by
   Tyndale’s 1526 English translation of the bible, copies of which were being smuggled into
   Scotland and through Scots travellers meeting continental reformers.
   The widow of James V, Marie of Guise was Regent from his death in 1542 on behalf of her
   daughter, Mary, Queen of Scots, then a baby. Links with France were to remain strong till
   1559.
   Through the 1540’s Henry VIII conducted the “rough wooing” which was a bullying tactic
   in order to gain an alliance with Scotland. This failed.

c. **Early Reformers.**
   **Patrick Hamilton** was a nobleman who studied in France imbibing Lutheran doctrines. He
   returned to Scotland in 1527. He was arrested and burned for preaching Luther’s teachings.
   His death awakened many. It was said “The reek of his burning has affected as many as it
   blew upon.” (See Knox – The Reformation in Scotland p 10.)
   **George Wishart.** 1513 – 1546. Wishart studied in Germany and Switzerland and later at
   Cambridge. In 1546 he returned to Scotland and preached powerfully (and famously) on
   Romans in Dundee and E. Lothian. He was captured, accused of involvement in a plot to
   assassinate Cardinal Beaton, the foremost catholic. He was burned at St Andrews. John
   Knox was his follower.

2. **John Knox and the Crisis of 1559-1560.**
   Ordained as a catholic priest in 1536 but he practised law. He studied the bible and Augustine
   and became committed to reformation doctrines.
   In 1546 he ministered to the protestant group in St Andrews castle some months after the
   murder of Cardinal Beaton. There he was captured by the French and spent 19 months as a
   galley slave. His experiences toughened him for battles to come.
   In 1549 he was released by the English and preached in NE England. He was a chaplain to
   King Edward VI and was involved in the formation of the second English Prayer Book. When
   the catholic Mary Tudor came to the throne in 1553 Knox fled to the continent like many other
   protestants. He went to Geneva and was greatly influenced by Calvin. There he learnt the
   principles and practice of a Presbyterian church. He waited for support to grow for the
   reformation in Scotland and wrote to encourage those suffering under “Bloody Mary”.
1559 – 1561.
Scotland seemed to become a protestant nation very quickly. The dramatic events of these years do suggest that but the reality was a much more gradual struggle. The protestant lords, (the Lords of the Congregation, formed in 1557) invited Knox to return to Scotland to lead the reformation movement in Scotland. Why now?
a. 1558. Walter Miln, an 82 year old priest was burned at St Andrews. – Outrage.
b. 1558. Mary Tudor died and was succeeded by her sister, Elizabeth I. – Hope.
c. 1559. Mary Queen of Scots’ husband became king of France. – Fear.

1559.
In May 1559 Knox returned from Geneva and preached a now famous sermon in Perth which launched the protestant offensive. From June 1559 he preached at St Giles Cathedral having huge influence from that pulpit. The clarity and logic of Calvin’s teaching appealed to the Scottish mind.

English Support. The English sent a fleet to blockade Leith and an army to support the Scots against the French garrison. (As a protestant Queen Elizabeth wanted Scotland as an ally.) A major change in Scottish foreign policy was taking place. The Auld Alliance was dying. The Queen Regent proclaimed the protestants to be rebels. Civil war resulted with the catholics supported by France and the protestants supported by England.

1560. “The Year of the Scottish Reformation.”
In June 1560 Marie of Guise, the Regent died and French influence was further weakened. On 6th July 1560 the Treaty of Edinburgh was passed ending French domination. On August 1560 a “Reformation Parliament” met and on August 24th the authority of the pope was abolished, Mass declared illegal and monasteries dissolved, all this done in defiance of the crown.

In 1560 Knox produced “The Scots Confession” based on Calvinist doctrine. The marks of the true kirk were set forth as –
a. The preaching of the word. The bible was honoured and made central. Now everyone could read it or hear it read.
b. Right administration of the sacraments. Communion in both kinds. (Bread and wine.) This represented access to God for all. Communion became a community festival – a great solemn celebration.
c. The practice of church discipline. Kirk Sessions became rather harsh and severe in this. Outward sins were severely punished while inner sins, less able to recognize went unpunished. This led to an emphasis on externals rather than on inner godliness.
d. Bishops and priests were replaced by elders and presbyters. (ie democratic, not hierarchical church government.)
e. The doctrine of election. The belief in being chosen by God brought dignity to the individual. David Hume wrote in 1757 that the religion of Knox “consecrated every individual and in his own eyes, bestowed a character on him much superior to what forms and ceremonies institutions could alone confer.” Herman p 21.

Also, this sense of being chosen united church communities and brought a sense of destiny to the English speaking world.

The Scottish Parliament had made Scotland officially Protestant.
1561.
In 1561 Knox produced “The Book of Discipline” setting out a Calvinistic concept of church order and the appointment of ministers. Kirk Sessions of lay elders and district presbyters had the power to call and ordain ministers. The General Assembly was to meet once or twice a year.
Knox made provision for national education. The aim was to have a school in every parish. This was so the population could become biblically literate. (It did! By 1750 male literacy in Scotland stood at 75% while in England it was 53%.
“Scotland became Europe’s first literate society.” Herman p 23.

In 1561 Mary Queen of Scots returned to Scotland after years in France, recently as Queen there and claiming the throne of England. She was 18, the catholic queen of a newly protestant Scotland. She was young, beautiful, impulsive, high-spirited and like her Stewart forebears, autocratic. There was much tension. She had four famous “interviews” with Knox. (See Knox, Reformation p 271+) She feared his prayers more than the might of armies.

3. What Was John Knox Like?

“He has become a symbol of all that is, or was, harsh, gloomy and life-denying in Scottish life.” Allan Massie. The Thistle and the Rose.


a. He was a man of prayer and dependence on God.
b. He was a preacher of authority and power. The English Ambassador describing Knox’s sermon on Psalm 80 in Nov 1559 at Stirling at a time of defeat said “The voice of one man is able to put more life in us in one hour than 500 trumpets. The listeners acted as men brought back from the dead.” Iain Murray p80.
c. James Melville said “He was so active that he was like to ding the pulpit to blads and fly out of it.” Murray p29.
d. He was a man of faith in God’s sovereignty. He saw God’s hand advancing His purposes even in persecution.
e. He was a man of perseverance and great courage. “He feared the face of no man.”
f. He was a man of vision. He dreamed of Scotland and England becoming one protestant nation.
g. Above all Knox was passionate for the glory of God.
h. He was a loving husband of two wives (the second 34 years his junior) and father of 5 children.

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4. **Differences Between the Scottish and English Reformations.**

a. In England the reformation was established by the crown and so crown and church became strongly linked with the monarch as head of the church. 
In Scotland the reformation was established against the crown by the people. Therefore Christ was seen as head of the church in Scotland, not the monarch. This meant that the Scottish church with its Presbyterian system had a freedom from crown interference which the later Stuart monarchs resented and continually challenged until 1690. (William and Mary.)

b. The reformation in England was a compromise and this is still reflected today in the Church of England which is a “broad” church. Henry VIII broke with Rome for dynastic and financial reasons. He remained in heart and faith a catholic.
The Scottish reformation was radical, thorough and uncompromising.
“Others snipped at the branches of popery but he (Knox) strikes at the roots to destroy the whole.” Herman p 15.

c. Both the Church of England and the Church of Scotland adopted the Westminster Confession, establishing Reformed, Calvinist doctrine but the C of E retained Episcopal Church Government which was hierarchical while the Church of Scotland embraced Calvin’s democratic Presbyterian system of church government.

d. In Scotland the teachings of Calvin were fully embraced. The English Prayer Book was more moderate. In Scotland churches life took on an austere flavour. Churches were unadorned. Singing was unaccompanied. Austerity became the keynote of Scottish religious and social life.
In Scotland Calvinism still has an influence on church and national life today.

5. **Books.**

Jack Deere. Surprised by the Voice of God. Ch. 5.
Antonia Fraser. Mary Queen of Scots. (1969)