

Reform from Within



Certain sections of both laity and clergy were very much alive to the dangers of a decadent church which had ceased to minister to spiritual needs and had lost almost all semblance of discipline. Criticism took many forms, ranging from serious disputations which not only attacked the church for its malpractices but also offered suggestion for its reformation to those of a satirical nature which by attacking the church for its folly helped to promote self-examination and subsequent amendment.

Some of these, for example the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis*, looked for reformation outside the existing framework of the church; others were merely anti-clerical; some like the works of Sir David Lindsay of the Mount not only offered criticisms but proffered some positive suggestions for reform. Many of Lindsay's works, the *Dreme*, the *Complayntis*, the *Testament* and the *Dialog* or *Monarchie* have reforming themes, but the most influential was undoubtedly the *Satyre of the Thrie Estatis*. First performed at Epiphany 1540 at Linlithgow, probably in the banqueting hall, before James V and his queen, Mary of Guise, it was subsequently performed after the king's death at Cupar in 1552 and at the Greenside on the lower slopes of the Calton hill, Edinburgh, in the presence of the regent, Mary, and a large number of the magnates and people on 12 August 1554. The play is a compound of morality play and political satire; the first half concerns the redemption of King Humanitie from Sensualitie and the vices (Flattery, Deceit and Falsehood) which come in her train by the sombre but majestic Divine Correction; in the second half the blemishes of the body politic and particularly ecclesiastic are exposed and 'John the Commonweal', a representative figure of the people is elevated to a place in the government of the kingdom. In this part comprehensive charges - of simony, plurality, oppression of the poor, illiteracy, lack of chastity - are proffered against certain sections of the

clergy who are ultimately stripped of their fine vestments and driven off. Lindsay's attack varies in its intensity; the inmates of male monastic houses, with the exception of the monks of Balmerino who are to be asked if 'lecherie be sin', escape general charges of immorality but are condemned insofar as they 'lief richt easelie'. Abbots on the other hand are characterized by one who says of himself:

My paramours is baith as fat and fair
As ony wench into the toun of Air.

Nunneries do not escape so easily, for although the prioress is only accused of repelling Chastity, in admitting the charge she also records:

Howbeit the Nuns sings nicht and days,
Their heart wats nocht what their mouth says,
The sooth I you declare,
Makkand you intimatioun
To Christis congregatioun
Nuns are nocht necesare.

In the *Complaynt of the Papingo*, however, Lindsay modifies this view in respect of the Dominican nuns in the Sciennes. His views on friars are also ambivalent, for at times he may be found praising the various orders of preaching friars for the zeal with which they carried the Christian message to the people; devotion he claims is 'fled unto the freiris'. But in the *Thrie Estatis*, Lindsay suggests that the friars have used their preaching ability to secure advantage to themselves; Flattery in reply to an objection that he cannot disguise himself as a friar because he cannot preach says:

Quhat rak, man, I can richt weill fleich
Perchance I'll cum to that honour
To be the king's confessour.
Pure freiris ar free at ony feist
And marshallit ay among the best.

The privileges accorded to friars and their failure to castigate other sections of the church for their obvious failings lest they lose their preaching fees are other charges levelled by Lindsay against the friars of whom he seems to have become increasingly critical.¹

It is, however, the secular clergy who bear the brunt of Lindsay's displeasure. The bishops are decryed by the poor man both for their wealth and their immorality:

Our bishops with their lustie rokets quhyte
 They flow in riches royally and delyte;
 Like Paradice bene their palices and places,
 And wants nae pleasure of the fairest faces.

But doubt I wad think it ane pleasant lyfe
 Aye when I list to part me from my wyfe
 Syne tak another of far greiter beutie.
 But ever alas, my lords, that may not be,
 For I am bound, alace in marriage,
 But they like rams rins rudely in their rage!

The greed of the secular clergy as a whole is equally condemned; the lusty parson is accused of being only interested in acquiring teinds, for his preaching his parishioners might wait seventeen years, but the parson would 'nocht want ane boll of beir'. The vicar too would not forsake his financial dues for:

The pure cottar, being lyke to die,
 Haifand young infants twa or thrie,
 And has twa ky, bot ony ma
 The vickar must haif ane of thae,
 With the gay frugge that covers the bed,
 Howbeit the wyfe be purelie clad,
 And gif the wyfe die on the morne,
 Thocht all the bairns sould be forlorne

The ower kow he cleekis away
 With the pure cot of raploch gray.
 Wald God this custome war put down,
 Quhilk never was foundit be reasoun.

Identifying the faults was relatively simple, but proposing remedies was more difficult. To some problems, Lindsay presents specific answers; nunneries that fail to fulfil their functions should be closed down:

Thir wantoun Nunnis are now necessair
 Till Common weill nor zit to the glorie
 of Christis kirk . . .

Thair rents usit till ane better tyme,
 For Commonweil of all this regioun.

In particular he suggests that their revenues be used to provide salaries for judges. In general terms Lindsay argues that reforma-

tion must lie in the hands of the civil power; the crown in particular must use its authority to that end. Temporality decrees that the king:

Sall write unto the Papeis Haliness
 With his consent by proclamatioun,
 Baith corse-present and cow we sall cry doun.

If, however, the crown fails in its duty, Lindsay would seem to suggest that the estates might take the initiative for when the spiritual lords record their dissent to this mode of procedure, the temporal estates reply

Wee set nocht by quhidder ye consent or nocht:
 Ye are bot ane estait and we ar twa.

Where appropriate the areas of temporal and spiritual authority might be redefined; and, in seeking the reform of the consistorial courts, Lindsay urged that the example of France be followed so that temporal matters should be reserved for civil courts and only exclusively spiritual cases for the courts of the church. Legislation might also deal with abuses such as simony and plurality:

That fra henceforth na priests sall pass to Rome
 Because our substance they do still consume
 And als I think it best by my advice
 That ilk priest sall have but ane benefice.²

In furtherance of this policy Lindsay had the ear of the king and later of the queen regent; their tacit approval for his suggestions might be inferred from the play's performance for their joint enjoyment at Linlithgow and its later revival at Edinburgh in 1554. No official reprimand followed either performance and no suggestion of heresy appears to have become attached to the play; Lindsay avoided controversial liturgical comment and references to the New Testament in English are muted. When Dame Verity is accused of heresy by Flattery for possessing a New Testamont 'in Englisch toung, and printit in England', her reply may reflect Lindsay's own opinion, but it is one to which little exception could be taken:

Forsooth my friend, ye have ane wrong judgement
 For in this book there is nae heresy
 But our Christ's word, richt douce and redolent -
 An spring and well of sincere veritie!

Likewise in his attitude towards the papacy: the pope is never disowned or condemned and is associated with some of the reforms advocated by Lindsay. A diminution of papal authority would certainly have followed the implementation of some of the reforms suggested but, as royal power would have grown in proportion to that lost by the papacy, such remedies might have been regarded as representing official royal policy. Some measures, such as the proposed abolition of the right of priests to petition for benefices in Rome, were hardly novel, and had been advocated by the crown since the reign of James I. In this, as in other matters, Lindsay might be regarded as orthodox.³

Many of his ideas were in fact acceptable to the church. When Lindsay wrote:

Ane bishop's office is for to be ane preichour
And of the Law of God ane publick teachour

he was merely stating a principle on the merits of preaching that had been accepted by the church by the early sixteenth century. The synodal constitutions of Archbishop Forman of St Andrews decreed that monastic houses should send one or two of their members to study theology at university. In this self-same spirit Thomas Crystall, abbot of Kinloss, had sent two of his monks to study theology under John Adamson at the Blackfriars monastery at Aberdeen and several other monks are found at universities in this period. Secular clergy were encouraged in the same manner and in 1544 the new constitution of Kirkwall cathedral stipulated that the chancellor of the diocese was to be at least a bachelor of canon law and to lecture publicly once weekly. Several months before, an enactment in the fifth session of the Council of Trent had likewise decreed that in cathedral churches a theologian should lecture to the canons, and a canonist to the canons and other clergy; Cardinal Beaton had begun the reform of preaching and training of theologians. It was in this tradition, as well as that of Trent, that in July 1548 William Gordon, bishop of Aberdeen, appointed a licentiate in theology, John Watson, to lecture publicly in the cathedral twice a week and to preach there once a month, as well as annually in every church appropriated to the cathedral and its chapter. Watson clearly took his duties seriously and possessed at least three volumes of model sermons. Events at

Trent and decrees emanating from that council were obviously closely followed. Nevertheless, no Scottish bishops attended the Council of Trent, which was convened in 1542 but did not meet until 1545. Cardinal Beaton may have intended to attend and he called a special council at Edinburgh in the year following the council's first meeting in order to raise a tax to send representatives. In the end no delegates were sent, although Scots priests regularly made the journey to Rome during this period. If a Scot, Robert Wauchope, archbishop of Armagh, was present and indeed took a leading part in the council's early sessions, the absence of a distinctively Scottish presence was one that redounded little to the credit of the Scottish episcopate at the time. Yet these selfsame bishops were well aware of the decrees promulgated at Trent and acted with promptitude in drawing them to the attention of the Scottish church.⁴

Strenuous efforts were made to reform from within the existing framework. On the initiative of Archbishop Hamilton, three provincial councils (in 1549, 1552 and 1559) passed a series of reforming statutes. These covered a multitude of problems, some designed to remedy practices that had led to increased alienation between church and laity. Attempts were made to remedy certain defects in the working of the ecclesiastical courts. The statutes of 1549 declared that in future procurators were not to undertake cases that had no legal basis; wherever possible cases were to be expedited lest litigants suffered financial loss through undue delay. Other regulations forbade the pursuit of unjust actions and defined procedure in cases relating to matrimonial suits and the confirmation of wills. Delays were again deplored in 1559, when it was enacted that absolution for excommunication must only be given in cases of genuine repentance and not simply to allow legal actions to proceed. Regulations were laid down for the administration of property from which the clergy drew much of their income. Inflation and increased taxation in the course of the sixteenth century had led to an increase in the practice of long-term leasing of teinds and ecclesiastical property, including even glebes and manses, while the granting of feus or perpetual leases had become increasingly common. The patrimony of the church was being alienated and to check this, it was decreed in 1549 that except for good reasons approved by the bishops such leases should be prohibited. Ten years later the ban was repeated, on this occasion

allowing relaxation in favour of the actual tenants and tillers of the lands.⁵

The payment of teind was also to be made more equitable for 'poor tillers or husbandmen' who in future were either to pay their dues direct to churchmen, or if the teinds in question were let by their lawful owners, were to be leased to none but the tillers and cultivators of the lands from which they were derived; the middlemen who had pressurised the poor tenants was apparently to be eliminated, or at least have his economic privileges modified. This too was to be the answer in relation to mortuary dues; in effect a sliding scale was to be established:

When the dead's part shall have amounted only to ten pounds money Scots, only forty shillings shall be paid to the vicar of that parish as composition for the annal or the mortuary, which was to be paid, and for the uppermost garment; and when the dead's part shall not have amounted to ten pounds, but shall have ranged between that part and twenty shillings, relative payment out of the dead's part shall be made to the vicar in the proportion above related, at the rate of forty shillings to the ten pounds, and when the dead's part shall not have exceeded twenty shillings, nothing shall be paid out of it for the mortuary or the uppermost garment; but if the dead's part shall have exceeded the sum of ten pounds of the said money Scots, then the vicar shall be paid in full . . . as was customary of yore.

Easter offerings were to be similarly monitored for 'the avoidance of popular discontent' for whereas priests at the Easter sacrament had been so solicitous of their teinds and other offerings 'as to seem to sell that most sacred sacrament for the consideration of a garment', they were henceforward advised to come to an agreement with their parishioners shortly before Lent 'so that at the solemn service of Easter the Christian people may have greater leisure for prayer, and may also receive that sacrament with a more ardent spirit of devotion'.⁶

Such concern characterized many of the statutes passed at these three councils. In addition to the measures designed to promote economic and social justice they can be broadly classified into those designed to remedy the moral laxity of the clergy, those intended to rectify abuses in the sphere of spiritual ministrations, and finally those which made a more positive attempt to ensure that the church in combating heresy would not only regain its former vitality, but also prepare itself to meet the changing con-

ditions of the sixteenth century. Statutes designed to combat moral deficiencies in the clergy included edicts against concubinage, the maintenance of the children of such liaisons, non-residence and pluralism. In the case of the latter the 1549 council chose to repeat verbatim the relevant chapter of the seventh session of the Council of Trent which had been promulgated in March 1547. Other statutes forbade the exercise of trade by priests, a prohibition which was repeated in 1549 and 1559, and also banned unseemly dress so that beneficed clergy were to wear only round caps and should not dress:

in top-boots and doubly-breasted or oddly-cut coats, or coats of forbidden colours, as yellow, green, and such kinds of parti-colour, and shall wear long cassocks reaching down to the ankles in churches, cities, towns and larger villages, but on journeys short cassocks fitted with sleeves, regard, however, being had to the exigencies of time and place; they shall have white shirts with white seams.

Beards too were frowned upon and were forbidden not only 'so that frequent railleries levelled at them for wearing beards might be put an end to, but also as clergymen they might be distinguishable from laymen. Temperance in both eating and drinking was also to be observed 'by the avoiding, in accordance with each one's standing and dignity, delicacy and superfluity in meats and drinks'.

Bishops were to enforce the observation of these decrees, and if they failed in this duty were to be themselves proceeded against in provincial and synodal councils. In 1549 they were reminded that their moral example was of paramount importance 'lest the very persons rashly proceed to the rigorous correction of the morals of others, who are themselves implicated in notorious offences, since from this cause arises the greatest scandal to the laity and the largest proportion of the heresy'. Episcopal authority was also to be used as a means of restoring discipline. Bishops were empowered to visit monastic houses, whether or not they had previously been exempt from episcopal inspection, and were also to assist in the recall of apostate monks and canons. In 1552, every bishop was ordered to make a complete visitation of his diocese at least every two years and to preach in person four times a year; in 1559 this requirement was reaffirmed and they were to preach 'even oftener, as often they can do conveniently'. Archdeacons and deans of Christianity were to reinforce the work of the bishops and all

ruinous and dilapidated churches were to be rebuilt and repaired. Great stress was laid upon education in the council of 1549 which repeated word for word chapters on this theme passed at the fifth session of the Council of Trent. In churches where the revenues were slight and the clergy few in number so that no theological lectureship could be maintained, lectures in theology were to be given in the grammar school. Livings originally endowed for teachers of theology must thenceforward be given only to those capable of exercising such a duty; failing which they must appoint a competent substitute. In cathedrals and other churches with numerous clergy, a theologian should lecture to the canons and a canonist to the canons and other clergy. Every monastery was also to have a theologian and emphasis was again placed on sending representatives of the religious to universities to study theology. Practical results again followed these decrees. Andrew Davidson, bachelor in theology was appointed to preach in St Andrews diocese and two other preachers, John McQuhyn and friar James Johnstone, were supplied with pensions from the abbey of Paisley.⁷

Most reforms were directed towards resolving defects among the clergy, but some statutes were aimed at improving the conduct of the parishioners. Attendance at mass was stressed in 1552 when, because it was alleged that 'very few indeed out of the most populous parishes deign to be present at the sacrifice of holy mass on the Sundays and the other double festivals appointed by the church', the names of defaulters were to be noted by the curate and reported to the dean of Christianity for punishment. Disciplinary action was also to be taken against 'those who have fallen into the habit of hearing mass irreverently and impiously, or who jest or behave scurrilously in church at time of sermon' and against those who engaged in trade 'in church porches and churchyards in the time of divine service on the Sundays and on holy days'.

Steps were also taken to ensure that spiritual ministrations were conducted in a more seemly fashion; bishops were to ensure that in their dioceses, parochial incumbents should 'strive with all their might that the word of God be expounded to their flocks, sincerely, and in a Catholic sense; that the true uses of the Church's ceremonies be moderately, soberly and discreetly explained; that false opinions be prohibited, publicly denounced, and confuted'. Injunctions were also made as to the reading of certain prayers and

although a statement concerning the Lord's prayer was left blank in the text of the proceedings of the 1549 council, it was enacted that 'at the beginning of all public sermons the ancient and received form of invocation by saying the Lord's Prayer and the Angelical Salutation to the Virgin Mother of God to obtain grace shall be observed; and at the end of the said sermons prayers shall be made for the souls of the departed in the customary form received by the church'. The faults of the clergy were, however, more clearly pinpointed in the regulations of 1552 relating to the reading of Hamilton's catechism which was to be read on all Sundays and holy days for half an hour before high mass 'in a loud and audible voice'. For this task rectors, vicars and curates were to prepare themselves 'by constant, frequent and daily rehearsal of the lesson to be read, lest they expose themselves to the ridicule of their hearers, when, through want or preparation, they stammer and stumble in mid-course of reading.'⁸

The issue of this catechism under the authority of Archbishop Hamilton of St Andrews and of the general council of the Scottish church convened at Edinburgh, was intended to ensure that the 'true, Catholic and Apostolic faith may by the exclusion of all kinds of error, be kept intact and uninjured'. To this end it was ordained that:

a certain book, written in our vulgar Scottish tongue, and, after the most elaborate revision, approved by the opinions and votes of the most prudent prelates in the whole realm, and of the most learned theologians and other churchmen taking part in the present convention, shall be put into the hands of rectors, vicars and curates, as much for the instruction of themselves as of the Christian community committed to their care: which book it orders to be called a catechism, that is to say, a plain and easy statement and explanation of the rudiments of the faith.

No doctrinal condemnation of Lutheranism or Calvinism was necessary: the true faith could speak for itself.⁹

The author of the catechism appears to have been friar Richard Marshall, a Dominican refugee from Newcastle who undertook the task after an invitation to an English secular priest Richard Smith had been turned down on the grounds that he was unwilling to attack all the teachings then employed in the reformed church of England. The catechism itself consists of four sections logically proceeding through various catholic tenets dealing with the twelve

articles of the Creed, the ten commandments, the sacraments and finally an exposition of the Our Father and the Hail Mary. It was stated in the preface that its aim was exposition of controversial matters in terms of decisions of the general councils of the church. To what extent this was true has raised questions both about its omissions and its divergence from the teachings then being expounded at the Council of Trent, and attention has centred on its exposition of the role of faith in justification, which does not follow the decree on that doctrine promulgated at Trent some five years previously. More positively, however, the tone of the catechism's instruction on justification might be adjudged to have a protestant ring; in the reception of the sacraments a special trusting faith is stressed, members of the Christian community were 'to believe with certainty' that Christ died for the salvation of mankind. It has been suggested that these interpretations were in deference to a Lutheran request that doctrines previously determined should be reconsidered; Lutheran envoys seeking such modifications were in fact received at Trent in January 1552 and four years previously Charles v had attempted to effect religious compromise by the Interim of Augsburg. However, this appears to savour of special pleading. It is more likely that Richard Marshall, in accepting the modification of teaching on justification, was influenced by his own desire to appeal to moderate opinion in the reformed Church of England.¹⁰

Other parts of the catechism appear equally unorthodox. There is virtually nothing at all bearing upon the mass as a sacrifice in the chapters dealing with the Blessed Eucharist. This may also be explained by the postponement of the consideration of the doctrine at Trent, but it is odd that so little is said of a topic which figured prominently in protestant attacks upon the church. Even the term mass is avoided in the main body of the text and only appears in the appendix to the final section of the catechism in which some attention appears to have been paid to areas regarded as deficient even in 1552. Other omissions are equally perplexing: the authority of the pope is nowhere referred to and indulgences are also ignored - the issue of indulgences was certainly not considered at Trent until 1563, but the absence of any mention of the papacy is distinctly odd. The survival of the conciliar theory - the doctrine which attributed supremacy in the church to General Councils rather than to the pope - which some churchmen

were still anxious to promote in the sixteenth century may explain the fact that papal authority is not stressed, but the total failure to refer to the papacy would appear to go far beyond that point. In these respects the orthodoxy of Hamilton's catechism must remain dubious, but it is doubtful whether an attempt to obtain doctrinal compromise really explains its shortcomings. The purpose of the catechism was to reject heresy and ensure that the catholic faith was kept in all its purity. In many respects this aim was undoubtedly achieved; for example on questions on the authority of the church in interpreting scripture, the sacraments and prayers for the dead, the catechism was totally in line with orthodox Tridentine views. It may be that the decrees of Trent on issues such as justification, made only five years before the issue of the catechism, had not made their full impact on Scotland by 1552. If this were so, it was doubly unfortunate for not only was the use of the catechism seriously impaired but it also meant that on the central doctrinal issues on which the protestants tended to concentrate, the catechism had few positive definitions to which catholics could turn as controversy became more bitter. In this respect the catechism did not measure up to the task set for it.¹¹

Irregularities in saying the canonical hours and celebrating mass may, however, have been more serious challenges to reformers-from-within than that of providing a catechism. This problem was tackled by the 1559 council, which decreed that priests were to celebrate 'oftener than they are wont to do, the sacrifice of holy mass in the presence of the people'; by 1559, parsons as well as bishops were expected not only to preach four times a year, 'but even oftener, at the discretion of the ordinary, under pain of losing the fourth part of the fruits'. Substitutes were allowed for the very young, for the institutions to which churches were appropriated and for elderly churchmen who had 'passed their fiftieth year, and had not hitherto been accustomed to preach'.¹²

The implementation of such suggestions obviously posed problems and therefore a more immediate and practical solution was provided by the preparation of a series of instructions or exhortations on the sacraments of baptism, holy Eucharist, extreme unction and matrimony which 'the several parish or other priests, the lawful ministers of the said sacraments, when about to administer the said sacraments, shall make use of by giving before each sacrament its own appropriate and befitting exhortation, and

reciting and reading it publicly and distinctly'. Only one of these exhortations appears to have survived - *A Godlie Exhortation on the Eucharist* - which was a simple practical instruction to be given before a priest administered holy communion. Its purpose was to allow the congregation to understand more easily 'the purpose, efficacy, and use of the sacraments of the church'. Its origin appears to have lain in petitions presented, which not only asked that priests should catechize, but also asked that 'the common prayers, with litanies in our vulgar tongue be said in every parish kirk on Sundays and other holy days after the divine service of the mass and that afternoon prayers be said likewise'. These concessions were not forthcoming but the exhortations went some little way to meeting their demands. The language is simple and direct; the congregation was reminded of Christ's passion upon the cross in remembrance of which communicants ought to receive the sacrament, which is 'the sacrament of lufe and concorde, so that nane of you with dispyte (contempt) in your herte presume to cum to this blyssit sacrament, bot as ye walke be forgevin of your synnis and ressauit in unitie with God, swa aucht ye to forgeve uthir'. The idea behind this series of exhortations was undoubtedly sound, but came much too late. Whether these exhortations are to be equated with the creed of catholic faith dubbed by Knox 'The Twa-penny Fayth' because it was printed and sold for that price must remain doubtful. Other tracts were clearly contemplated and may have been produced; the survival by accident of one of these does not necessarily identify it with the creed described by Knox and it cannot now be ascertained whether the exhortation was ever used for its intended purpose.¹³

Not much is known either of the fate of the first systematic attempt to provide an approach to the nature of and method of dealing with religious controversy from a catholic standpoint. Not until 1558 was this need seemingly met by the appearance of *Ane Compendius Tractive*. The author was Quintin Kennedy, abbot of Crossraguel in Ayrshire, who had studied at St Andrews under John Mair and had completed his education at the university of Paris, probably at the college of the Sorbonne. His career as abbot of Crossraguel to which he was appointed in early 1548 following the death of his uncle William, is obscure; he does not appear to have aspired to a political career, but was present at the provincial council of the church that met in 1549. Whether he spent the

succeeding years in theological study or in a life of ease in which conscience eventually triumphed cannot be readily determined; in the preface to his tract he writes that he had been constrained to publish his book for the 'relief of my awin conscience towart sic as I have charge of, conforme to my vocatioun', a statement capable of both interpretations. In any case, and for whatever reason, by 1558 Kennedy had decided to intervene in the religious controversies which were then reaching a critical juncture.¹⁴

In the *Tractive* Kennedy fully admitted the principal abuses prevailing in the Scottish church; many of these he directly attributed to growing secular influence. It had become a daily occurrence 'gyf ane benefice vaick, the gret men of the realme wyll have it for temporale rewarde'. The granting of such benefices to kinsmen was equally scandalous; if any of these appointed, who could frequently neither 'sing or say' and were equally 'norischeit in vyce' were to be mounted on a mule it would be questionable 'quhether he or his mule knawis best to do his office. Perchance Balaames asse knew mair nor thai baith'. Kennedy's remedy for these defects is simple and perhaps unrealistic in view of the fact that the crown had always maintained a voice in the appointment of abbots and bishops for he suggests that 'Geve the Kirk had the auld ancient libertie . . . that ane bischop wer frelie chosin be his chapitre, the abbot and prior be the convent of the Kirk; then sulde all hereseis be flemit [cast out], and the peple weill techeit'. If this were the remedy, the crown and the crown alone could ensure that such appointment were offered to suitably qualified candidates. Kennedy's main purpose, however, was not to suggest practical remedies for the reform of the church, but rather to avert precipitate action by the magnates by opposing the protestant claim that scriptural interpretation appertained 'to the Spirit of God' by the which also the scripture was written', that interpretation of Holy Writ could only be effected by members of the true church, by which was meant not any visible church but rather the company, known in its entirety only to God, of the elect through the ages. It was in this belief that the 1560 Scots Confession of Faith stated that if 'the interpretation, determination or sentence of any doctor, kirk or council repugn to the plain word of God written in any other place of the scripture, it is a thing most certain that theirs is not the true understanding and meaning of the Holy Ghost, supposing that councils, realms and nations have approved

and received the same'. Two years earlier, Kennedy's tract had set out to refute this view, in a text divided into eighteen chapters. There was, he claimed, only one way to end religious controversies; that is to agree who will act as judge in such matters. That Scripture might be its own judge, as the protestants claimed, was an illusion and a recipe for a multitude of private unorthodox opinions. The church alone, Kennedy claimed, could act as judge of the true meaning of Scripture. In practice, however, this task had been delegated to its appointed leaders. When gathered together in properly convened general councils, they constituted assemblies which were alone capable of interpreting the word of God. The argument was straightforward and direct, but was hardly likely to convince the reformers to whom a summary of the principal line of argument was despatched about April 1559. Kennedy's aim in writing his *Compendius Tractive* had been to demonstrate that there was no theological foundation for rebellion against either temporal or ecclesiastical authority because God had provided all the necessary means for an orderly settlement of doctrinal disputes, but by the time of its publication such disputations were at an end; the claims of Knox in his *Appelation to the Nobility of Scotland*, in which he had appealed to the magnates to further the course of Reformation by force if necessary, were about to be answered. The arguments that might have been used to avert Reformation by revolution were thereafter of only academic importance, and this was to be equally true of Kennedy's post-Reformation tracts - *Ane Littel Brief Tracteit*, *Ane Oratioune* and *Ane Compendius Ressonyng* - in which he discussed the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and the sacrifice of the mass. By then the opportunity for promoting reform from within was past and by then all that Kennedy could hope to achieve was to persuade some of his fellow Catholics to remain steadfast in their faith.¹⁵

The outbreak of the Reformation also meant that the statutes of 1559 were to be equally ineffective. But if events had allowed, the willingness to achieve reform was undoubtedly present. Immediately after the 1559 council, Archbishop Beaton of Glasgow held a diocesan synod which adopted the desired reforms, and these were then notified to the archdeacons and deans with specific instructions in certain cases to pursue the appropriate course of action required to effect them. Preaching was to be enforced and penalties invoked against priests guilty of non-residence, pluralism

and concubinage; churches were to be repaired and the wearing of clerical dress enforced. The question of church repair was also taken up in the diocese of St Andrews; and Adam Bothwell, commendator of Holyrood, had his revenues sequestrated until windows were repaired in some of the abbey's appropriated churches. In early 1559 in the diocese of Aberdeen the chapter had proposed, at the suggestion of Bishop William Gordon, a whole series of necessary reforms: time did not allow their implementation and this failure has sometimes led to the suggestion that attempts at reform were doomed from the outset.¹⁶

It is certainly true that little progress had been made in certain directions. The reforms themselves, moreover, were selective and did not deal with certain aspects of ecclesiastical life. Little was said in any of the statutes about collegiate churches or the chapters of cathedrals. Nothing was said about the spiritual requirements or the means of training for the priesthood, one of the areas in which the Scottish church was at its weakest. Above all, however, there was no attempt to measure up to the problem of how the church should proceed if its statutes failed to achieve their desired purpose. The secular arm was appealed to on certain issues, but basically the church hoped to achieve its aims through its own efforts. Leadership was required for reform, but, as the bishops were frequently guilty of more offences than any, reforming policies were vitiated from the outset. Bishops were willing to appoint theologians; they were less willing to reform their lives or to endanger their own livelihoods by placing principles before financial reward.

Yet if political events had not dictated otherwise, all might not have been lost; the proposals of earlier councils were not entirely dead letters and some statutes actually reflected reforms already under way. The need for reform of the church was widely accepted; new attitudes prompted by the rising tide of literacy had made this inevitable. It was universally agreed that the standards of the past would not suffice for the future; explanations of the mysteries of the faith could no longer be left in the hands of ill-educated and inarticulate vicars. Preaching must be an act practised by benefice-holders and not only by a handful of friars and other trained theologians. Other responsibilities must likewise be faced; if the church dictated a certain standard of morality, then it must live up to its own teachings, especially in relation to a celibate

priesthood. The poor should equally be the concern of the church which, rather than setting a bad example by contributing to growing poverty through unjust impositions laid equally upon rich and poor alike, must demonstrate its concern for those deserving of its charity. The need for reform was recognized, but the will to reform was less obvious. Bishops, abbots and commendators might pay lip-service to the principle of reformation, but their vested interests lay in the retention of the corrupt system which continued to produce rich dividends. The crown alone could have broken this vicious circle, but it too chose to benefit politically and financially from the existing situation. In time the success of the Tridentine reforms elsewhere in Europe would have modified even these attitudes, but for the time they prevailed. Secular attitudes which had been bred within the church, coupled with even stronger manifestations of secularism outside its ranks, proved too strong for the survival of the existing system. These forces even more than incipient protestantism led to the ultimate failure of the policy of reform of the church from within and to the emergence of a triumphant protestant church.

Towards Protestantism: the 1540s and 1550s



As a distinctively popular movement, protestantism had no deep roots in Scotland. Heresy in the fifteenth century was virtually unknown and appears to have been confined to a few individuals who, as followers of the teachings of Hus and Wycliffe, were forced to flee from persecution in England and the continent. Some, like Robert Harding, found uneasy sanctuary in the north, but others – for example his fellow friar James Resby of Perth in 1407, an anonymous heretic in Glasgow in 1422 and the Bohemian Paul Craw at St Andrews in 1433 – were condemned and burnt to death. How far their views gained any acceptance is unknown, although legislation in 1425 demonstrates that the government was concerned lest their doctrines might spread. At St Andrews university, at which an oath to defend the church against lollardy had been demanded from students of the arts from 1417, Lollard sympathizers were still being denounced in 1436, although the fears then expressed appear to have been groundless. Thereafter, ‘small question of religion moved within the realm’ until after the revolt of Martin Luther in 1517, with the exception of the inexplicable reappearance in Kyle in Ayrshire of so-called Lollards. Their tenets included the rejection of the real presence after the consecration in the mass, of priestly celibacy and of the belief that the mass profited souls in purgatory. Papal authority was disclaimed and it was asserted that true Christians received the body of Jesus Christ every day by faith. Nevertheless when thirty persons, including several prominent lairds from Kyle and Cunningham including John Campbell of Newmills and Andrew Shaw of Polkemmet, were called to account for such opinions before King James IV, it should be noted that he simply admonished them. The advent of Lutheranism posed a more insidious threat, however, and by 1525 Parliament was constrained to legislate against the