

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 Crow 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

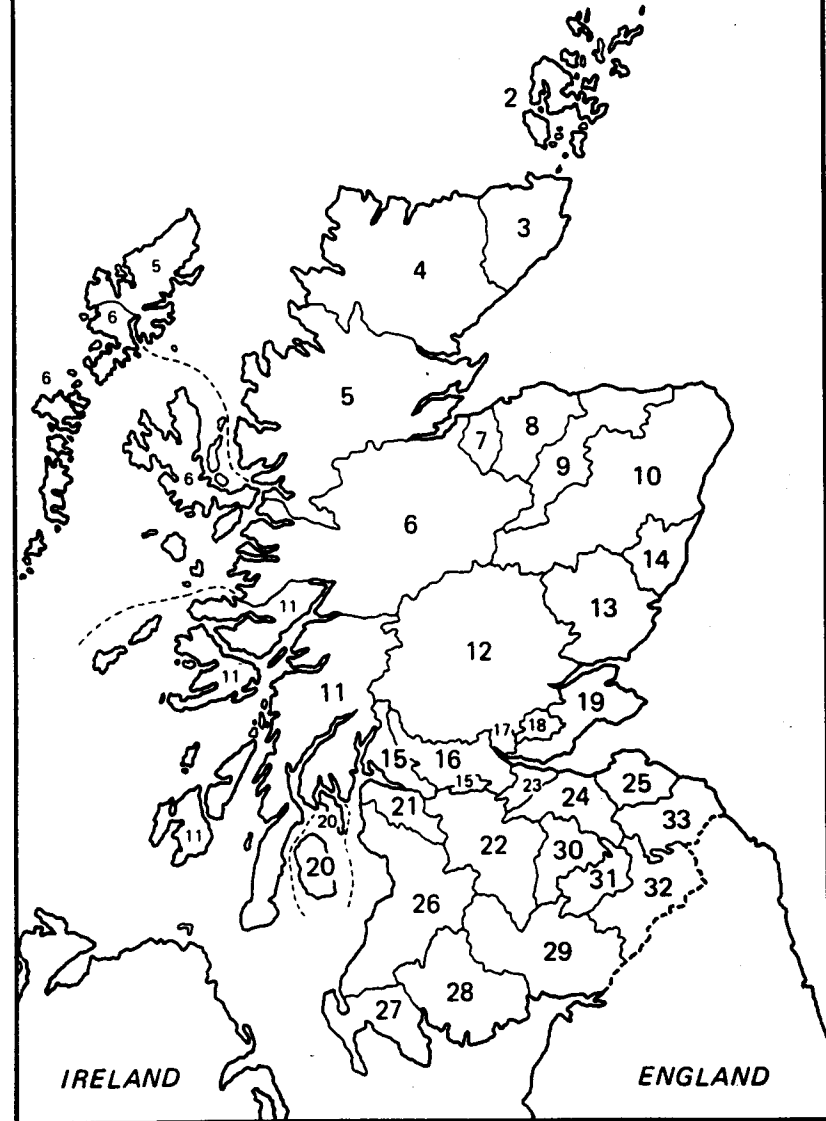
importation of heretical literature from Europe - and battle was again joined.¹

In general terms the growth of protestant opinion can probably be measured by the frequency of parliamentary enactments against heretics and by the activity of the privy council. A parliamentary act of 1535 'anent the dampnable opinzeouns of heresy' was followed by a series of enactments in 1540 which ordered the sacraments to be honoured as in the past, permitted only licensed theologians to dispute on the scriptures, forbade those suspected of heresy to discourse on theological subjects and promised rewards for those who accused heretics and revealed their private meetings. These were certainly followed by prosecutions, but their total number was fairly small and they were more often than not followed by abjurations by the accused rather than by legal conviction and sentence. Indeed only four persons - beginning with Patrick Hamilton in 1528 - were burnt as heretics before the seven convicted in 1539 met the same fate, although several more, including Robert Johnson who became a celebrated court composer in England, fled the country rather than face their accusers. It is clear that before 1539 the growth of protestantism was far from a major problem and even Knox, who would surely have dwelt on it in his *History of the Reformation in Scotland*, could find little evidence of it.²

An examination of the situation in the various localities bears out this conclusion. In few areas are there signs of active discontent with the church or of more positive attempts to present an alternative. In Ayrshire some of the 'Lollards' accused in 1494, for example Adam Reid of Barskimming, appear themselves as conformists in the early sixteenth century, while relations and dependents of other defendents also signify their loyalty to the existing church; for instance an aunt and sister of James Chalmers of Gadgirth were arraigned before the king in 1494 but Chalmers was still prepared to endow an altar in the parish church of Irvine in 1502. On the other hand, the breaking into the chapel of Dundonald in 1511 and the subsequent ransacking of a chest of its books and ornaments by John Leith, a chaplain taken there by George Campbell of Cessnock (yet another of those accused of Lollardy), at first appears to confirm the continuance of the beliefs expressed in 1494; but closer examination reveals that it was prompted by anti-clericalism or even by secular greed rather than

THE COUNTIES OF SCOTLAND

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------------|------------------|
| 1 Zetland | 12 Perth | 23 West Lothian |
| 2 Orkney | 13 Angus | 24 Midlothian |
| 3 Caithness | 14 Kincardine | 25 East Lothian |
| 4 Sutherland | 15 Dunbarton | 26 Ayr |
| 5 Ross & Cromarty | 16 Stirling | 27 Wigtown |
| 6 Inverness | 17 Clackmannan | 28 Kirkcudbright |
| 7 Nairn | 18 Kinross | 29 Dumfries |
| 8 Moray | 19 Fife | 30 Peebles |
| 9 Banff | 20 Bute | 31 Selkirk |
| 10 Aberdeen | 21 Renfrew | 32 Roxburgh |
| 11 Argyll | 22 Lanark | 33 Berwick |



by moves towards church reform. After 1511 there was little sign of further religious discontent for almost twenty years. Donations made to local churches, and in particular to the friaries of Ayr, seem to suggest that for a time religious agitation was unknown; it would not be revived until after the Lutheran upheavals.³

The sea-port of Ayr constituted an obvious gateway into western Scotland for Lutheran and later for Calvinist literature, although how far the new religious ideas were actually circulated cannot be assessed. While Ayr provided the focal point for local unrest, its leaders came not from the inhabitants of the burgh but from among the lairds, one of whom, Walter Stewart, brother of Lord Ochiltree, was accused before the archbishop of Glasgow in 1533 of having decapitated a statue of the Virgin Mary in the Observantine friary at Ayr. Others were clearly involved in this incident and the citation demanding their appearance before the archbishop contains the general accusations that certain parishioners of some (unfortunately unnamed) churches had 'sowed Lutheran errors, asserted them both in private and public, and that some of them read the New Testament in English and other writings containing heretical opinions.' The accused laird saved himself by recanting, but four years later in 1537 there are payments for 'serching of the heretiks in the West land' and a summons of the men of Ayr to appear before the lords of council on matters arising from the forfeiture of goods of those who had been 'convict of heresy'. The problem was thus not easily ended. Nevertheless the departure in 1539 from the Observantine friary, within which trouble had evidently arisen, of a friar named John Willock (who was later to become a superintendent in the reformed church) may indicate that traditional support for the church was stronger there at this juncture than the zeal for reform. Information from elsewhere in the west supports this view, although a heresy trial in Glasgow in 1539 which resulted in the burning as heretics of a Franciscan friar and a layman clearly involved a number of people. Among the accused were three monks of Paisley who abjured their beliefs and were deported overseas. A licence was also granted to one of the novices, John Wallace, to visit Rome, the penitentiaries there and the superior and convent of Cluny 'because of great matters moving his conscience'. He had apparently given evidence against his three colleagues, but his own position may have been in some doubt as he was forbidden on his

travels to pass to England or other heretical areas. If heresy in the west was more widespread at this juncture than has previously been maintained, there still is little positive evidence of it enjoying any popular appeal, barely twenty years before the revolt of 1559-60.⁴

On the east coast the position seems not to have been markedly different. Nevertheless, as early as 1521 John Marshall, rector of the grammar school of Aberdeen, was summoned before the provost and council for his contempt of the church. In his reply the schoolmaster repudiated the authority of the court of Rome, but whether this view arose from Lutheran teachings or in consequence of a domestic dispute over the school must remain uncertain, for two years later Marshall recanted. Equal doubt surrounds a dispute in 1525 between the chaplains of St Nicholas church in Aberdeen that resulted in a temporary suspension of divine service, but it was certainly reported in Aberdeenshire in that year that 'syndry strangearis and otheris . . . has bukis of that heretik Luthyr, and favoris his arrorys and fals opinionys'. The spread of such beliefs may have been assisted by a visit in 1528 to King's college, Aberdeen, of the Danish scholar, Hans Bogbinder, a member of a family that had played an important part in the agitation for reform in Denmark and who was almost certainly influenced by Lutheran doctrine. Evidence of heresy is, however, intermittent. In 1532, Alexander Dick, an Observant friar, laid aside his religious habit, accepted the new doctrines and fled to Dundee for safety and in 1539 'two menne of Abirdene' were imprisoned for helping the convicted heretic Friar Keillor, but there is little indication of general unrest during this period. In Fife, Angus and the Mearns there are also few signs of active protestantism. The execution of Patrick Hamilton at St Andrews in 1528 is indicative only of the place of his trial; and, although the choice of the same town as the execution site of Henry Forrest about 1533 is said to have been made in order that sympathizers in Angus might see the fire, there is no contemporary evidence to support this interpretation. Curiously, there is a similar implication in the account of the deaths in 1534 of two other heretics, Norman Gourlay and David Straton, said to have been burnt somewhere between Edinburgh and Leith 'to the intent that the inhabitants of Fife, seeing the fire might be stricken with terrour and feare'.⁵

If, at first glance, active protestantism seems to have been confined to a few lairds, such as John Erskine of Dun and Andrew Straton of Lauriston, the undoubted spread of protestant literature points to a more positive reception of the new doctrines. In 1527 the English ambassador at Antwerp reported that Tyndale's *New Testament* was being shipped in, some to Edinburgh, but most to St Andrews. Other books which came to Scotland in the same manner included *Patrick's Places* published in Antwerp and John Gau's *Richt Vay to the Kingdom of Hevine* published in Malmo. In 1534 a letter of James V reported that Lutheran books and tracts were being distributed in 'Leith, Edinburgh, Dundee, Sanctandros, Montros, Abirdene and Kircaldy', and that heresy in consequence was likely to spread.⁶

At St Andrews, indeed, the university and its constituent colleges were certainly deeply involved in a religious ferment which intensified after the death of Patrick Hamilton. Hamilton's teachings in the district may have had a marked effect among the educated classes with whom he associated. Thus the feast of the faculty of arts, intended to symbolize love and friendship, was abandoned from 1534 onwards on the grounds that the sung mass and customary procession offended some members of the university. Of the individual colleges at St Andrews, St Salvator's was orthodox, but St Leonard's was more than suspect; the new doctrines were being taught, sometimes in secret but at other times openly, to those who 'drank of St Leonard's well'. However, while some of the students who favoured heretical opinions chose to leave Scotland, others (notably Gavin Logie and John Winram) remained. Knox in his *History* credits both with the spreading of new opinions but in fact Logie sat on a heresy trial shortly before his death in 1539 and Winram was then also uncommitted, holding to no more than a policy of reform from within the church. Though in 1536 the preaching of Friar Alexander Seton, a Dominican friar from the town's convent, reached a wide audience, there is still no sign of any popular reaction. Indeed, Seton himself was forced to flee to England.⁷

Before his flight the friar had also preached at Dundee where - almost alone in Scotland at this time - protestantism may be said to have possessed some popular appeal. Criticism of the existing order was certainly to the fore among the friars and in 1528 one of them, William Arth, preached there against the licentious lives of

the bishops and against the abuse of cursing. In the following decade the weaknesses of the Roman church were most scathingly indicted by the brothers Wedderburn, sons of a Dundee merchant. James Wedderburn, for all that he had received religious instruction from one of the Blackfriars of the town, composed a tragedy (*The beheading of John the Baptist*) and a comedy (*A History of Dionisius the Tyrant*) in both of which 'he nipped the abuses and superstition of the time'. Both these plays were acted in the burgh, the former at the West Port and the latter in the playfield. In 1540 he was forced to flee to Dieppe. His brother John was a priest in Dundee before becoming a convert to reformed opinions; he too fled, but to Germany where he likewise used his poetic gifts to the full by turning 'manie bawde songs and rymes in gadly rymes', which were to become variously known as the *Wedderburn Psalms*, the *Psalms of Dundee* and the *Gude and Godlie Ballattis*. The book itself falls naturally into two parts, the first being doctrinal and devotional, the second profane but spiritualized. It is profitable, it is explained in a short prologue, for the young and the unlearned to sing the word of God in their mother tongue. Selected passages from scripture were to be set to music and sung as hymns, psalms and ballads. This prologue is followed by the text of the catechism, which includes the ten commandments, the Lord's prayer and passages on the sacrament of baptism and the Lord's supper. Much of the text is simple but effective, as may be seen in a passage entitled 'Of our belief':

We trow in God allanerlie
Full of all mycht and Maiestie
Maker of hevin and eird sa braid
Quhilk has him self our Father maid:
And we his sonnys or in deid,
He will us keip in all our neid,
Baith Saule and body to defend,
That na mischance sall us offend;
He takis cure, baith day and nycht,
To save us, throw his godly mycht
Fra Sathanis subtletie and slycht.

In the metrical catechism that concludes this section, two hymns by Luther are included one of which, on the Lord's supper explicitly recognizes the real presence:

And he, that we suld not forget
 Gave us his body for to eit,
 In forme of bread, and gave us syne
 His blude to drink in forme of wyne

The catechism is followed by spiritual songs and ballads of scripture on the theme of sin and salvation; many are pleasing nativity hymns:

Hay Zule now sing and make myrth
 Sen Christ this day to us is born.

A sense of sin is, nevertheless, ever-present, and the twenty-seven psalms of David that follow are also in a sombre vein. The distinctive note in the collection is not to be found in the psalms and hymns, but rather in the ballads 'changed out of profane songs into godly songs'. The religious appeal of verses such as:

Pray God for grace, my lufe maist dear
 Quhilk bocht us with his precius blude,
 That we him lufe with hart inteir
 In welth and want be land and flude.

is hard to assess, but it may have been too readily assumed that these ballads served as the marching songs of the Scottish Reformation. As no edition was printed in Scotland before 1560, this would seem unlikely and the ballads would seem to have had a greater influence on the second half of the century. If works like these may have promoted a local spirit of hostility towards at least certain sections of the church, there was still little sign of those active heresies so prevalent in Dundee society. Indeed the only indications of overt unrest were a command to the bailies of Dundee and Perth in 1536 to seek out two men suspected of hanging an image of St Francis, and a letter of rehabilitation granted in 1539 to a burgess named Richard Rollok who had abjured his heresies.⁸

Edinburgh, with its sea-port of Leith, presents a fairly similar picture. If for the first time the evidence points to at least a section of the urban populace embracing protestant doctrine at an early period, few converts were resolute enough to maintain their new beliefs in the face of prosecution. In 1532 'ane greit abjuration of the favouraris of Mertene Lutor' took place at the abbey of Holyrood, but whether those Lutheran supporters were all local

persons is unknown. As Scotland's busiest port facing northern continental Europe, Leith was an obvious point of entry for the new religious opinions; and it is significant that amongst those accused in 1534 of professing reforming beliefs were Henry Cairnes, a sea-skipper, and Adam Dayes, a shipwright, both of whom dwelt in Leith, to which town others in the list of accused also belonged. Among the inhabitants of Edinburgh similarly arraigned in 1534 was Henry Hendersoune, the master of the burgh grammar school who, with David Hutchison the provost of the collegiate church of Roslin, was one of the most prominent, and certainly one of those best situated, to propagate reformed opinions. Yet the total number of heretics named in 1534 is only eight, and although a contemporary account declares that 'sindrie utheris baith men and wemen' appeared and recanted, their number was clearly very small; the action taken against them may have effectively curbed their activities for the time being. A similar pattern reappears a little later in 1539, with a handful of burgesses including Martin Balkesky, who was specifically accused of 'having and using of certane Inglis (i.e. heretical) bukis' having their goods restored to them on recantation; only one burgess named as John Braune who apparently remained steadfast in his beliefs, forfeited his property within the burgh. The burning of five convicted heretics in 1539 must have reinforced the message, for Edinburgh remained quiescent in religious matters for at least another decade.⁹

The five heretics executed on the Edinburgh Castle-hill were actually all drawn from central Scotland. Two were Blackfriars, one of whom (John Keillor) had written a morality play on Christ's passion which was performed in Stirling in 1535; another was Thomas Forrest, a canon regular of the abbey of Inchcolm, who had apparently brought some of his younger fellow canons round to his way of thinking 'but the old bottells would not receive the new wine'. As vicar of Dollar in Clackmannanshire, a church appropriated to his abbey, and in close proximity to Stirling, his chief crime had lain in preaching every Sunday from the Old and New Testament in English. The remaining two accused were, respectively, a burgh priest of Stirling and the brother of the laird of Arngibbon in Stirlingshire. No opportunity was apparently provided for the recanting of these five, who were accused as teachers of heresies and as having been present at the

wedding of the vicar of another Clackmannanshire parish, Tullibody. Nine others who were arraigned, including two Stirling merchants, were more fortunate, being permitted to abjure; others, including the scholar George Buchanan who had written two poems attacking the Franciscans, fled the country. These trials were apparently occasioned by signs of a rising local dissatisfaction with the church among both the friars of Stirling and the canons of the abbey of Cambuskenneth where in 1538, Robert Logie, master of the novices who had 'embraced the truth', fled to England and was followed by one of his fellow canons and a Greyfriar. However, as at Edinburgh the punishment meted out to those who remained appears to have had a salutary effect and there is little sign of religious unrest in Stirling for many years thereafter.¹⁰

Over the rest of the country there is little indication that heretical opinions were held. Even where there is some evidence it is notable that the nature of the heresies was limited - the agitation was mainly against images, pretended miracles, the abuse of excommunication, financial rapacity and the immoral life of churchmen. On the more positive side, the use of the scripture in the vernacular was being advocated and the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith would also seem to have been accepted by those accused of heresy. This doctrine, which is concerned with the means whereby man passes from a state of damnation owing to sin to a state of grace, emerged as one of the major divisions between catholics and protestants. Both agreed that man's justification is brought about by divine grace but, whereas Lutherans argued that man had no truly free will and justification could come about by faith alone, the catholic view emphasized the place of man's free will in allowing him to regain justification by means of penance and the performance of good works. Though the catholic position was not clarified until the sixth session of the council of Trent in 1547, the Lutheran standpoint emerged in Scotland at a much earlier date. Murdoch Nisbet's *The New Testament in Scots* included a translation of Luther's own preface to the New Testament in which the place of faith is stressed while *Patrick's Places*, the work of Patrick Hamilton, was entirely concerned with explaining how man is justified. The charge that he had asserted that 'man hath no free will' and that 'no man is justified by works, but by faith only', figured prominently in his trial and conviction for heresy in 1528. John Gau, a Scot living in

Malmö, also reflected the Lutheran viewpoint in his book *The Richt Vay to the Kingdom of Hevine* (1533), and faith was also stressed in the preaching of the Dominican Alexander Seton in 1535. The circulation of these works was, however, restricted, and in 1539 protestantism remained an ill-defined doctrine to all but a few believers who were unevenly distributed throughout the country; even if in distinct localities they possessed a coherence within their own communities, these groups had little or no contact with one another and were uncertain of the goals for which they were striving.¹¹

The executions of 1539 might have proved salutary and decisive if political events in both England and Scotland had not dictated otherwise. In that year, James v demonstrated in no uncertain manner that the willingness to allow criticism of the church either in verse, satire or plain speech, which had characterized the earlier years of his reign, was at an end. Enactments of 1540 strengthened by an act of the following year against heresy and iconoclasm underlined the point and, until James's death in 1542, there is little indication of renewed protestant activity. Only then, with the seizure of political initiative by the governor, the earl of Arran, were circumstances again propitious for those in favour of religious change to demonstrate their strength. Their cause was aided in 1543, as part of Arran's pro-English policies, by an act authorizing the possession of the scriptures in the vernacular. Protestants - to an unknown extent - increased in numbers. It is misleading, however, to accept the attacks on religious houses within certain burghs that occurred later that year, sparked off by Arran's radical tendencies, as attempts to reshape and refurbish the church. As much economic as religious motivation lay behind these riots, and people seem also to have seized upon an opportunity to work off old scores. Once again the national significance of these outbreaks can only be assessed by an examination of the localities in which they took place; this in turn allows for a more accurate estimate of protestant numbers at this juncture in the movement for reformation.¹²

Of the riots that took place in 1543, those in the towns of Dundee and Perth were the most serious. Indeed Perth had hitherto exhibited little interest in the new doctrines and although the bailies of the town, in conjunction with those of Dundee, had been ordered to search for two iconoclasts in 1536, the attack on

the Blackfriars monastery seven years later had no apparent antecedents. And the religious motivation behind even this act can be questioned, since the mob's act of defiance in stealing the friars' 'kettle' (containing their dinner) from the fire and parading it through the burgh may point towards a social or economic cause. Nevertheless, a definable group of heretics had now appeared within the burgh and early in the following year several of the inhabitants were accused. As a result four men were hanged and a woman drowned having been accused of acts which included interrupting a friar in the pulpit, 'hanging up the image of St Francis on a card, nailing of a rammes harness to his head, and a cowes rump to his taile, eating of goose on Allhallow even', and 'holding an assemblie and conventioun . . . conferring and disputing there upon holie scripture'. The background of this group, which apparently contained others who only saved themselves by flight, is significant: it included a flesher, a maltman, a merchant and a skinner. It was from this social grouping that further support for the new faith was to stem. Yet, though there was further public activity, the adherents of the new cause, with the exception of Stephen Bell who was accused in 1547 of breaking an image of St Magdalene within the chapel of the town of Leny in Perthshire, remain anonymous until the very eve of the Reformation. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the repressive measures of 1544 had the desired effect in Perth and its surrounds.¹³

Further north in Aberdeen the position was much the same: in 1543 the magistrates appointed friar John Roger of the Blackfriars of Perth, and friar Walter Thomson for 'preiching and teaching of the trev Vord of God, and their daylie prearis for the estait of the lord governairis grace, the commont weill of this realme, and of this guid towne'. In the next year an attack on the Dominican priory by several burgesses and their colleagues was followed a few months later by the imprisonment at the order of the earl of Huntly of two burgesses, Thomas Branche and Thomas Cusing, for hanging an image of St Francis. Also in 1544 a pardon was issued to a large number of local landowners for holding heretical opinions and reading forbidden books. Those guilty included the earl Marischal, Meldrum of Fyvie, Fraser of Philorth and the provost of Aberdeen. It is clear from the composition of this group that protestantism had spread well beyond the burgh, and in 1547 the bishop of Aberdeen complained that heresy in his diocese was

'thriving greatly'. Nevertheless, this prefaced a period of religious peace in this quarter, apparently undisturbed until the eve of the Reformation. This experience, broken only by the appearance in 1550 of a chaplain in Orkney who abjured unorthodox 'oppynianis' concerning the faith, was to be shared by the entire north of Scotland in which the prevalence of Gaelic in many areas, including the Isles, constituted a further barrier to the advance of protestant doctrine.¹⁴

It was in Dundee, where the town's two friaries were attacked and sacked by a mob in 1543, that the populace showed themselves to be receptive to the preaching of Friars Guilliame and Rough who taught the use of the scriptures in the vernacular; religious motives may have played a larger part in the riots here than at Perth. The carrying away of chalices, vestments and the Eucharist from the Blackfriars' monastery and the proposal to attack the abbey of Arbroath that was thwarted by Lord Ogilvie point in this direction, and may support the contemporary charge that 'ane greit heresie' raged in Dundee at this time. The lack of stringent action against any of the inhabitants - there was no indictment until ten years later - may also point to a situation in which moderation was felt to be the wisest course of action. The mood within the burgh certainly remained unchanged. In 1554 George Wishart's preaching there appears to have met with general approval; he came to Dundee again in the following year when, with a plague then raging within the town, he received an even greater welcome. If continued sympathy for the reformed cause remained in being thereafter there is little indication of further growth in protestant ideas for another decade after the mid-1540s.¹⁵

Much the same pattern emerges in the countryside around Dundee, in Angus and also in the Mearns. In 1544 John Roger, the Blackfriar who had earlier taught in Aberdeen and had 'fruitfullie preached Christ Jesus to the comfort of manie' in this area, died, either by accident or by design, trying to escape from the castle of St Andrews where he had been imprisoned, apparently for having ignored a monition against his preaching in the parish church of Glamis. This monition emerged from a general inquisition held throughout the district at this time, which resulted also in the trial of two other priests, David Lyndsay and John Wigtoun: since Wigtoun later attempted to assassinate Wishart, the terms of

his release are perhaps questionable. In 1545 Wishart himself returned to his home town of Montrose, 'to salute the church there' with his preaching during his ministrations in Dundee. Montrose, a sea-port, was certainly open to incoming protestant opinions, but undoubtedly the chief influence in the promotion of reformed principles there was John Erskine laird of Dun, who was provost of the town. Through his influence neighbouring landowners, for example the laird of Brighton near Forfar who was denounced with Friar Roger in 1544, may have been won over to the protestant cause. But as in Dundee, support was to be latent rather than active for another ten years.¹⁶

In the neighbouring county of Fife the religious emergency of 1543/4 had been characterized by the sacking of the abbey of Lindores and the temporary expulsion of the monks, and it was to extend until 1547 owing to the murder of the archbishop of St Andrews, Cardinal Beaton, in 1546. The extent to which even Beaton's death can be viewed as a religious portent is questionable, for although it was justified as an act of retaliation for the conviction and execution of George Wishart as a heretic earlier the same year, the true motivation was possibly political and personal, perhaps largely inspired by Henry VIII of England. However, the seizure and holding of the castle of St Andrews by the murderers for over a year allowed protestants to preach openly in the surrounding area. These protestants included John Knox, who by then had emerged as a follower of Wishart, and who had joined the 'castilians' in April 1547. The episode constitutes a touchstone by which protestant strength can be assessed. Unfortunately, most of the evidence comes from the not unbiased pen of Knox himself. The new doctrine, as he relates it, was 'well liked by the people' and, following his own (Knox's) call to the ministry, 'a great number of the town, openly professed, by participation of the Lord's Table'. Nevertheless, even in Knox's account evidence of opposition is clear. The principal of St Leonard's college, John Annand, was on Knox's admission able to undermine the initial teaching and, if similar success did not attend his encounters with Knox, we only have Knox's word for it; furthermore the counter-attack mounted by John Winram and other representatives of the priory and university in preaching in the parish church each Sunday shows a response that may have checked any move towards protestant ascendancy. Any hope of an ecclesiastical revo-

lution came to an end when the castle fell to the French in 1547 and for over a decade there is little further evidence of vigorous protestant activity in the town.¹⁷

South of the Forth all was quiet, even in 1543. In Edinburgh the burgesses rallied to thwart an attack, which was largely politically inspired, on the Blackfriars monastery; there it was said only a handful including William Forman, one of the canons of Holyrood, 'careyed the name of professioun and knowledge'. Even Knox admits that at this time the burgh was 'for the most part drowned in superstitioun', and when Friar Rough preached therein he was physically threatened by a hostile congregation. In 1545 George Wishart preached in Leith but reaction to him seems to have been slight. Nor was support forthcoming in the surrounding Lothians. When Wishart was apprehended at Ormiston in East Lothian he had been deserted by all but three of the local lairds who had initially befriended him. Although in the period before his arrest Wishart's preaching had been heard in Inveresk and Tranent, his attempt to attract a congregation at Haddington was almost wholly fruitless owing to counter political pressure by the local magnate Patrick Hepburn, earl of Bothwell. Following Wishart's death little further interest appears to have been evinced in protestant teaching, and Knox refers to Haddington with such apparent contempt that it would seem that the inhabitants were not enthusiastic for the new doctrine. Elsewhere in the south-east and in the borders, there is a hint that protestant opinions were gaining favour, although active dissent was noticeably absent. Proximity to England was an obvious factor in this respect and the 'newe appynyonis of England' and the 'ill wynd towartes haly kirk' exhibited in 1544 were thought sufficiently dangerous in the following year to require the rigours of the law. Three years later, however, reforming ideas were still prevalent and the fact that 'part of the legis has tayn new apoynzionis of the scriptur and has don again the law and ordinance of holy kirk' was being advanced as a reason why the cause of 'Inglis men is fawvorit'. Little of this was translated into action, however, and, despite the reports, religious conservatism seems to have remained the norm.¹⁸

This verdict also holds good for the most of the west coast during this period, with Kyle in Ayrshire proving the exception to the general rule. Even there support was mixed and Ayr itself

far from consistent in its attitude to reform. Thus, in 1543, when the use of the English New Testament was authorized by the governor, a Franciscan friar John Routh preached against its introduction and provoked a riot. If this outbreak indicates a popular sympathy for reform in the town, the bailies of the burgh nevertheless supplied the friar with money, a horse and a 'pair of hose and doublet' when he went to face trial for an action that apparently had their support. The parish church of Ayr continued to be maintained by the dean of guild (the titular head of the guild in a royal burgh), and the breaking of images in 1544-45 seems not to have been occasioned by iconoclasm but rather by accident when the town's guns were drawn out of the church where they were stored. The town paid for the removal of the broken figures. Iconoclasm was to the fore, however, in 1545 when George Wishart visited Ayrshire to preach to 'divers gentlemen of Kyle', but the general weakness of support for him is shown by the fact that he had to preach not in church but at the market cross at Ayr. He was also debarred from entry to the church of Mauchline on the authority of Sir Hugh Campbell of Loudon, the sheriff of Ayr and by a group of local landowners who feared that 'an ornate tabernacle' might be destroyed. Wishart appears to have restricted his other preaching to the church of Galston and to private houses. Thus, even in Kyle at the time, opinion on religious matters was clearly divided and, although one influential figure, Alexander, fourth earl of Glencairn, seems to have fully embraced the protestant cause, the number of committed lairds may have been few.¹⁹

This period was a critical one in the battle against heresy, demonstrating the maximum effort by the authorities to curb protestant activities. The execution of Wishart in 1546 was followed by injunctions that names were to be given in of 'heretiks that or relapsis or haldis of apynionis agains the sacrament of the Alter'. Fears that parts of the realm were 'infectit with that pestilencious heresies of Luther, his sect and followaris' grew not unnaturally after the murder of Cardinal Beaton in 1546. In the following month the privy council was apprehensive 'that evill disparit personis will invaid, destroy, cast down, and, withhald abbays, abbay places, kirkis, alswelle parochie kirkis as utheris religious places'. However, with the recapture of St Andrews' castle in July 1547 these fears largely vanished, and events in most

parts of the country seemed to justify Beaton's optimistic opinion shortly before his death that 'the heretical opinions which formerly flourished have been almost extinguished'.²⁰

Even the greatly strengthened protestantism in England following the accession of Edward VI in 1547 was of doubtful advantage to the cause of reform in Scotland. Areas of the country adjacent to the borders increased their protestant leanings but the impact of reform elsewhere appears to have been limited. Indeed, so long as England proved a safe haven for reformers, no crusade in Scotland was forthcoming. Nevertheless, the arrival in England of John Knox, following his release in February 1549 from the French galleys to which he had been condemned after the fall of the castle of St Andrews, and his appointment as minister at Berwick-upon-Tweed and Newcastle, allowed a number of border Scots to hear him preach at both these centres. The views he expounded were apparently still in the general Lutheran rather than Calvinist tradition. His views on justification were certainly still on Lutheran lines. His approval of Henry Balnaves' treatise on *Justification by Faith* which he received in 1548 confirms his position on this issue and Knox himself was to comment that 'the just live by faith, ever trusting to obtain that which is promised, which is eternal life, promised to us by Jesus Christ'. His sermons certainly appear to have reflected his hatred of the mass and contained denunciations of the catholic claim that the mass was a sacrifice for the living and the dead. Other attitudes expressed by Knox were common enough among protestants; condemnation of the papacy and the rejection of purgatory and a consequent denial of the efficacy of prayers for the dead and to the saints. In one important respect, however, Knox followed in the footsteps of Wishart for in his denial of the real presence in the Blessed Sacrament he deserted the Lutheran compromise, which had denied²¹ transubstantiation in the mass but had nevertheless admitted the real presence.

If in such respects Knox's immediate concern appears to have been chiefly to support the Church of England and to counter the disputes that threatened its unity, some relative increase in protestant strength in Scotland may have taken place as a result of his influence in the south in the period before 1553. With the accession of Mary Tudor in that year, and with Knox's flight to the continent, the growth of this influence was jeopardized. The increasing commitment of the border lairds to England was also threatened

by this change. While political considerations may not always have been uppermost – as is demonstrated in Roxburghshire in 1553 when the two young lairds of Corsford and Ferniehurst brought an Augustinian canon of St Andrews called Acchisoun to Kelso ‘to be the sone raying in the mornynge . . . and maid ane sermond’ – they always loomed large. Thus the changes in England may have exerted their own particular influences on political and religious affiliations within Scotland and these were to remain undisturbed until the accession of Elizabeth in 1558. Despite promising beginnings there is, therefore, little indication that either the south-east or the borders were actively protestant during the 1540s and earlier 1550s.²²

Kyle in Ayrshire, as previously noted, continued its open loyalty to the new opinions almost alone. Support for the cause may even have grown in the 1550s as both political and economic motivations began to dictate a shift from traditional allegiances. An alliance with England rather than with France may have appealed on economic grounds to Ayrshire merchants while many lairds, influenced by events south of the border, may have been moved in the same direction not only by political considerations but also by the opportunity given by opposition to the established church for the secularization of ecclesiastical property. Attacks on religious houses, parish churches and chapels became more frequent in Ayrshire and extended at times into the neighbouring shires of Lanark and Renfrew. This is, at least, the substance of a charge made in 1550 against John Lockhart of Barr who had helped a heretic canon of Glenluce escape from Houston castle. It was in Lockhart’s house that Wishart had frequently preached and he with Charles Campbell of Bangour was accused of stealing Eucharistic chalices and ornaments of the mass and breaking choral stalls and glazed windows during the period 1545 and 1548. Such overt action did little to advance the protestant cause. Although Adam Wallace who was seized at Winton in East Lothian and accused of having usurped ‘the office of preacher having no lawful calling thereto’ came from Fail in Kyle, there is no evidence to suggest that his preaching in the east was part of any missionary endeavour. Nevertheless, although Wallace (who was burnt for his presumption) appears to have been mainly occupied as a tutor to the children of the laird of Ormiston, a laird banished for his support of Wishart, he demonstrated considerable theological

knowledge at his trial and his denial of the real presence in the sacrament of the mass may have been reflected in his preaching.²³

Taking a general view of the 1540s, it is clear that, although a provincial council of the church felt it necessary to pass various statutes in 1549 against heresy and persons who had in their possession ‘any books of rhymes or popular songs containing calumies and slanders defamatory of churches and church institutions’, and while suitable remedies for the ills of the church were being sought, it was still not unrealistic to maintain that ‘complete unity in the ecclesiastical estate’ might be preserved. The earl of Glencairn alone amongst the magnates seems to have been firmly committed to protestantism at this point and, if he carried with him those lairds of Kyle who shared protestant feelings with lairds in Angus, Fife and Lothian, they still constituted a tiny minority of sympathizers. If the frequent mention of these lairds in complaints laid before the privy council reveals the existence of an active force against the established church, the fact that these same figures appear time and time again can also be used to demonstrate the limited nature of that support. Moreover, though the movement exhibited strength in the attacks on the existing church structure it also revealed little by way of a more positive attempt to replace it. If some priests followed the example of Campbell of Cessnock’s household chaplain, who read scriptures in English to the family and servants, and likewise exhibited their sympathies with the reforming cause, devotion to the mass – as distinct from opposition to the church as an institution whose wealth might be assailed – was still evident. If in this period the church had been able to promote organizational reform, with or without the doctrinal reform envisaged by Archbishop Hamilton, while leaving the church essentially ‘catholic’, then protestantism might have remained attractive to only a small minority.²⁴

The accession of Mary Tudor to the throne of England in 1553, and the assumption of the regency in Scotland by the queen mother, Mary of Guise, from the earl of Arran and the Hamiltons in April 1554, brought the limited attempts at doctrinal and organizational reform to an end until the very eve of the Reformation. This made a protestant solution theoretically more feasible, but the continued weakness of that movement in the localities was still only too evident. Indeed we can only accept as exaggerated

the following anonymous account of the immediate pre-Reformation period.

The greatest fervencie appeared in the Mearns and Angus and Kyle, and Fyffe and Lothian; but chiefly the faithfull in Dundie exceeded all the rest in zeall and boldness, preferring the true religion to all things temporall. But in Edinburgh their meeting was ut in privat houses.

It literally records all the areas of protestant strength; and even within the districts local variations are clearly evident.²⁵

Of the areas mentioned by the writer, Edinburgh seems to him the most suspect. However, his interpretation of the position in Lothian may be questioned for although certain lairds such as Sir James Sandilands of Calder were favourably disposed to reform, others were not and it is significant that Knox himself made no effort to extend his preaching beyond the confines of the Edinburgh area. Even there, indeed, his impact is questionable. 'The professors of Edinburgh' who held 'their privat conventiouns . . . in the feilds in sommer, in houses in winter' were few in number in 1555. In that year William Harlaw, originally a tailor in the burgh, who had preached as a deacon in the Church of England and is described as 'not verie learned' although 'his doctrine was plaine and sound', returned as a teacher to the Edinburgh protestants. So too did John Willock who had fled his friary in Ayr in 1535. The protestant group, it has been claimed, was 'neither few, nor of meaner sort', but while the latter part of this statement may have been true, the first is undoubtedly open to question since the group originally comprised two separate entities, which even after their union by Erskine of Dun could still meet in a single private house. Other teachers such as John Douglas and Paul Methven of Jedburgh also preached to this Edinburgh congregation, which had its own elders and deacons but, as the visit of John Knox in 1555-56 demonstrated, protestantism clearly lacked popular support. Knox's exhortations had to be carried out secretly, and he quickly discovered that even amongst those professing protestantism some made 'small scruple to go to mass, or to communicate with the abused sacraments in the papistical manner'. When after a month's absence Knox returned to Lothian, he resided not in the capital but at Calder house at Mid-Calder, some miles away, where he stayed for the winter of 1555-56 drawing there 'divers from Edinburgh'. Amongst those who visited him

there were Lord James Stewart and Archibald, Lord Lorne, heir to the earldom of Argyll. Both men were to be prominent leaders in the army of the congregation that finally effected the work of reformation, but neither was fully committed at this juncture. Another prominent visitor, John, Lord Erskine, was not to join the reformers until after the death of the Queen Regent whom he had hitherto supported. Those contacts, strengthened by a fleeting visit to Archibald, fourth earl of Argyll who thereafter maintained a protestant preacher, John Douglas, as his private chaplain, were to be perhaps the most significant outcome of Knox's teaching in the area. Although he returned to Edinburgh itself from time to time and on one occasion 'continued in doctrine in the bishop of Dunkeld's great lodging for ten days', the most eminent of his listeners, William Keith, fourth earl Marischal, was less than enthusiastic about reformed principles even after the Reformation had been achieved. There are few indications of a widespread or popular support and, without Glencairn's protection, the opportunity to preach might not have arisen. Nevertheless, the aftermath of his visit can be seen in the complaint of the Queen Regent in September 1556 to the provost of Edinburgh, bailies and council that: 'thair is certane odious balletis and rymes laitlie sett furth be sum ewill inclinit personis of your toun qua has alsua tane doun diveris imagis and contempnandlie brokin the samyn.' A further criticism specifically refers to the breaking of images, but even before this grievance was aired Knox and Willock had returned to the continent. Their departure seems to have had the effect of quietening the situation, and it was not until Willock's return in 1558 that there were again signs in Edinburgh of ecclesiastical unrest.²⁶

The most fruitful response to Knox's visits elsewhere during his brief stay in 1555-56 was in Kyle. He received a warm welcome from the lairds there in the first three months of 1556. John Lockhart of Barr, who had already entertained Willock, was Knox's principal host in Kyle although he also stayed with Lord Ochiltree and several other lairds. For instance, Knox celebrated communion for the earl of Glencairn at Finlayston in Renfrewshire. Most of his contacts were still among established reformers, yet the major purpose of his visit must have been to extend the cause of reform. How far he could claim to have had any success in this cannot be easily assessed. Knox, nevertheless, had been

accepted as the doctrinal leader of the Scottish protestants. Since taking up residence in Geneva in 1554 his faith had become Calvinist in tone. Calvinism permeated his religious thought. Only two sacraments, that of baptism and of the Lord's Table, were regarded as valid and the doctrine of predestination, which accepted that God has pre-selected some men for heaven and others for eternal damnation, figured more prominently in his writings as the years proceeded. The doctrine is explicitly stated in a letter written 'to his brothers in Scotland' in 1557 and is exhaustively analysed in his *Answer to the Cavillations of an Adversary respecting the Doctrine of Predestination*. This extension of Calvinism may have been Knox's greatest achievement during his visit to Scotland, for although Knox in other respects claimed great triumphs, communion was celebrated only in private houses and he made no attempt to preach in churches as Wishart had done, nor indeed did he preach to the masses. While this may have been prudent, in view of the authorities' concern about his preaching even though they were at first uncertain that the culprit was Knox, it only demonstrates again that the movement in Kyle even at this late date was not a popular one, but was very much restricted to a few influential magnates, the principal among these being Glencairn. It was these men, with their following among the local lairds who, as they became increasingly involved in the struggle against French political intrusion into Scotland, decided to couple secular and political aims with religious beliefs.²⁷

A similar picture to this is to be found in Angus and the Mearns when, on two occasions, Knox visited John Erskine of Dun. To Dun, which lay midway between two burghs with protestant leanings, Brechin and Montrose, 'resorted the principal men of that country to hear him preach', although Knox himself apparently (and perhaps surprisingly) made no attempt to visit Dundee which had so enthusiastically received earlier preachers. Early in the following year (1556) he revisited Dun and 'ministered the communion at the request of the gentlemen of the countrie about, speciallie of the Mernes'. Thereafter the lairds appear to have been active in converting others to their views and in doing so went outside the confines of their own district. Nevertheless, neither in Kyle nor in the Mearns was their pressure consistently maintained. Indeed Knox's seemingly premature return to the continent in July 1556 may have been occasioned by despondency

at his lack of success. If he was despondent, then he was not unjustified. In October 1557, when he was at Dieppe and prepared to return to Scotland to initiate further religious reform at the invitation of the earl of Glencairn, Lord Lorne, Lord James Stewart and Erskine of Dun, he received a letter from a friend who had spoken with 'all those that had seemed most frank and fervent in the mater; and that in none did he find such boldness and constancie as was requisite for such an interprise, but that some did ... repent that ever anie such thing was moved.' Despite the fact that the initial signatories to Knox's invitation had included a landowner from the Mearns and one from Ayrshire, opinion had apparently shifted in both districts. The same situation may also have obtained in neighbouring Fife, a county which seems to have been relatively unaffected and had remained unvisited by Knox. Not until the appearance of a fresh wave of preachers in the following year, when 'manie in Angus and Fife beganne openlie to renounce their idolatrie', did protestant expectations in these and other parts of the country again rise. But why did matters change in 1558? The answer seems to lie in politics.²⁸

The impending marriage of Mary, queen of Scots to the Dauphin Francis, eldest son of the French King Henry II, increased fears that Scotland would be even more effectively dominated by the Queen Regent and her French advisors and would become an appendage of France. Thus many nobles and lairds were prompted to align themselves with the pro-English reforming party, who, in December 1557, had drawn up the 'First Band', a pledge to work for the recognition of a reformed church. This had initially attracted few new supporters, the earl of Morton being the only influential figure to join the signatories who had invited Knox to return earlier in the year. By early 1558, however, there was increasing support from the lairds and barons who proceeded to draw up proposals for reformed worship. The marriage of Mary on 24 April 1558 was accompanied by a well-known 'secret' assignation of her kingdom to the king of France if she died without heirs, and this added to the political support for the party which had also embraced church reform.²⁹

The volatile political situation created by these events continued throughout 1558. Encouraged by these developments and by the accession of Elizabeth in England, protestant preachers again took up their cause in the Scottish localities. In several towns protestant

sympathizers began to form themselves into more highly organized groups, appointing elders and deacons from their own number to ensure that a proper order among the new protestant congregations might be maintained. According to one commentator 'God also blessed this weake beginning, that within few moneths the face of a church was erected in sundrie places'. Of these Dundee was undoubtedly the most committed. There it was reported that 'the faithfull . . . exceeded all the rest in zeall and boldness', a revival brought about after the arrival in the burgh in 1558 of John Willock and Paul Methven. Largely through Methven's efforts, it is said, 'the town of Dundie beganne to erect the face of a reformed church publiclie, in which the word was preached openlie, and the sacraments truelie ministered'. Nevertheless, burgesses shuttled him 'from ane nighbour to another' and he was forced to leave the town for a while in May 1559 after being denounced by the Regent for preaching at Easter and administering the sacraments to several of the 'leiges of the burgh'. By this date, however, the committment of the inhabitants was assured, and Dundonians were to play a prominent part in the final outcome of the Reformation movement.³⁰

When not occupied in Dundee, Methven moved around the surrounding countryside and in the summer of 1558 preached 'in sindrie gentlemens places in Angus and also in Fyfe'. Thus he administered the sacrament in the parish church of Lundie eight miles distant from Dundee, and also at Cupar in Fife, ten miles away. His activities in Fife undoubtedly met with some popular response and may have occasioned the burning for heresy of Walter Myln, an aged priest who, refusing to say mass, had left his parish of Lunan in Angus in the early 1540s. Myln's execution at St Andrews in 1558 may indeed have fostered sympathy for the protestants and aided growth of reforming opinion in the town; yet according to Knox as late as June 1559, the protestant lords could not look to St Andrews for friendly support since 'the town at that time had not given profession of Christ'.³¹

On the west coast Ayr followed the example of Dundee and there too overt protestantism can be attributed to the support of the lairds in the surrounding hinterland. And in Kyle even more than in Angus the process of spreading protestant beliefs may have been maintained up to Knox's departure in 1556, either by itinerant preachers drawn from the household chaplains of families with

reforming tendencies or by benefited priests with sufficient protestant sympathies to adopt the new beliefs. In Ayr itself the council began to identify more and more closely with the reform movement, and in May 1558 accepted into their jurisdiction Sir Robert Leggat, curate of the neighbouring burgh of Prestwick, who had marked protestant sympathies and who assumed thereafter the duties of vicar and curate of Ayr. For a period, co-existence appears to have been possible: in an account of 1558 payments to the town's friaries appear side by side with a payment for the minister's chamber rent, which also, incidentally, indicates that the curate was already acting as minister. Nevertheless, although Knox may have been justified in describing Kyle as 'a receptacle of God's servants of old', it is clear that many Ayrshire inhabitants in the county as a whole remained true to their old faith.³²

Such an attachment to the old church is equally evident in Edinburgh which, although exhibiting discontent with the existing church in 1558, was far from being committed to the protestant cause. Incidents such as the theft of a statue of the patron saint of the burgh, St Giles, which was afterwards burnt, followed by a similar incident on St. Giles's day when another statue of the saint, borrowed from the Greyfriars by the burgh authorities for a religious procession through the town, was torn down and eventually thrown into a sewer, doubtless demonstrate that at least the brethren were growing more bold and probably increasing in strength. But they were still numerically weak; and although John Willock, from his sick bed, is reported to have taught some of the nobility, barons and gentlemen of the district, it is also noted that several of these 'fell backe after'. Such hostility to the course of reform was certainly not restricted to Edinburgh. At Aberdeen in 1559 the cathedral chapter thought it necessary to proceed against heretics in the diocese and in particular against those involved in the burning of the parish church of Echt and in the casting down of the images; otherwise there was little or no sign of reforming zeal, the presence of the powerful earl of Huntley - nephew of the bishop of the diocese - ensuring that reformed principles had few active adherents. In other burghs the religious sympathies of the inhabitants were equally clearly with the existing order. At Peebles on the very eve of the Reformation in March 1559 the bailies and burgesses demonstrated where their loyalties lay when they intervined to prevent a preacher from

using 'any new novationes of common prayeris or preching' and declared that they would not 'assist to him nor none of his sect nor opinioun'.³³

The course of affairs at Peebles was repeated throughout southern Scotland. Although the recommitment of the church of England to protestantism in 1558 presented a fresh opportunity to revive sympathy in the border districts, the reformers claimed little support in these areas. Not until September 1559 could Knox report that 'Christ Jesus is begunne to be preached upon the south borders . . . in Jedburgh and Kelso'. If in the period of the Reformation more support was to be forthcoming from this quarter, political considerations were again as important as any commitment to the protestant ideal. This is amply demonstrated by the careers of the two young lairds Ferniehurst and Cessford, who had brought a preacher to Kelso in 1553: Ferniehurst emerged as a staunch supporter of the Queen Regent and her daughter, Mary, queen of Scots, and continued to embrace catholicism; Cessford, now diametrically opposed in political attitudes to his one-time friend, supported the protestant cause. Such considerations were to be vital for the outcome of the Reformation movement. On religious issues alone it is clear that the greatest strength of protestant support, with the exception of Kyle, was confined to a closely demarcated area on the east coast. Beyond these areas the reformers were clearly numerically weak. Yet political considerations were to favour this militant minority and enable them to achieve their religious goal.³⁴

The Triumph of Protestantism



The catholic church had failed to promote effective reform; the protestant party in Scotland found it equally difficult to promote its case in the face of hostility from the civil authorities. Had it not been for the fears aroused by the marriage of Mary, queen of Scots, which prompted many of the magnates and lairds to associate themselves with the pro-English reforming party in the First Band of 1557, the support necessary to achieve Reformation might have been withheld. The revival of protestant preaching in 1558 and the continuing political resistance to the Francophile policies of Mary of Guise were encouraged by the accession of Elizabeth in England and led to further support which in the following year grew more rapidly still. In the course of 1559, commencing with the 'Beggars' Summons' which appeared on 1 January and threatened appropriation of the friaries in favour of the poor before Whitsunday, 12 May, the movement also became more noticeably militant. The arrival of Knox from the continent on 2 May coincided with a determined effort by the Queen Regent to deal with the new situation. Dundee and Perth had already made their profession of faith and other burghs subsequently joined them. Stirling, which had not exhibited any overt protestant activity since 1538, accepted the order of Common Prayers in June 1559, a step already taken in May by Perth which had been quiescent since 1543. Both towns demonstrated their zeal more practically by destroying their friaries. The earlier policy of conciliation towards protestants by the Queen Regent may partially explain the absence of visible protestantism in either of these towns for more than a decade before this date. At all events neither seems to have been greatly favoured by protestant preachers until Knox delivered his famous inflammatory sermon in St John's kirk at Perth in May 1559, and he himself was to describe the inhabitants of that burgh as 'young and rude in Christ', confirming that