JOHN KNOX

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Innes's historical biography of John Knox, the Scottish Protestant reformer, tracing his development from the crisis point during George Wishart's martyrdom through his emergence as the leading figure of the Scottish Reformation.

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CHAPTER I THE SCHOLAR AND PRIEST: HIS ENVIRONMENT The century now closing has redeemed Knox from neglect, and has gathered around his name a mass of biographical material. That material, too, includes much that is of the nature of self-revelation, to be gleaned from familiar letters, as well as from his own history of his time. Yet, after all that has been brought together, Knox remains to many observers a mere hard outline, while to others he is almost an enigma—a blur, bright or black, upon the historic page.

There is one real and great difficulty. For the first forty years of his life we know absolutely nothing of the inner man. Yet at forty most men are already made. And in the case of this man, from about that date onwards we find the character settled and fixed. Henceforward, during the whole later life with its continually changing drama, Knox remains intensely and unchangeably the same. It is the contrast, perhaps the crisis, which is worth studying. The contrast, indeed, is not unprecedented. More than one Knox-like prophet, in the solemn days of early faith, 'was in the desert until the time of his shewing unto Israel'; and not the polished shaft only, but the rough spear-head too, has remained hid in the shadow of a mighty hand until the very day when it was launched. But each such case impels us the more to inquire, What was it after all which really made the man who in his turn made the age?

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Knox was born in or near Haddington in 1505. Of his father, William Knox, and his mother, whose maiden name was Sinclair, nothing is known, except that the parents of both belonged to that district of country, and had fought under the standard of the House of Bothwell. We shall never know which of the two contributed the insight or the audacity, the tenacity or the tenderness, the common-sense or the humour, which must all have been part of Knox's natural character before it was moulded from without. His father was of the 'simple,' not of the gentle, sort; possibly a peasant, or frugal cultivator of the soil. But he saved enough to send one of his two sons, John, now in the eighteenth year of his age, and having, no doubt, received his earlier education in the excellent grammar school of Haddington, to the University of Glasgow. Haddington was in the diocese of St Andrews, but a native of Haddington, John Major, was at this time Regent in Glasgow. He had brought from Paris, four years before, a vast academical reputation, and Knox now 'sat as at his feet' during his last year of teaching in Glasgow. In 1523, however, Major was transferred to St Andrews, and there he taught theology for more than a quarter of a century, during the latter half of which time he was Provost or Head of St Salvator's College. Whether Knox at any time followed him there does not appear. Beza, Knox's earliest biographer, thought he did. But Beza's information as to this portion of the life, though apparently derived from Knox's colleague and successor,[1] is so extremely confused as to suggest that the Reformer was equally reticent about it to those nearest him as he has chosen to be to posterity. For nearly twenty years of manhood, indeed, Knox disappears from our view. And when, in 1540, he emerges again in his native district, it is as a notary and a priest. 'Sir John Knox' he was called by others, that being the

style by which secular priests were known, unless they had taken not only the bachelor's but also the master's degree at the University.[2] Knox in after years never alluded to his priesthood, though his adversaries did; but so late as 27th March 1543 he describes himself in a notarial deed in his own handwriting as 'John Knox, minister of the sacred altar, of the Diocese of St Andrews, notary by Apostolical authority.' Apostolical means Papal, the notarial authority being transmitted through the St Andrews Archbishop; and Knox at this time does not shrink from dating his notarial act as in such a year 'of the pontificate of our most holy Father and Lord in Christ, the Lord Paul, Pope by the Providence of God.' Only three years later, in 1546, he was carrying a two-handed sword before Wishart, then in danger of arrest and condemnation to the stake at the hands of the same Archbishop Beaton under whom Knox held his orders. And in the following year, 1547, Knox is standing in the Church of St Andrews, and denouncing the Pope (not as an individual, though the Pope of that day was a Borgia, but) as the official head of an Anti-Christian system. This early blank in the biography raises questions, some of which will never be answered. We do not know at all when Knox took priest's orders. It was almost certainly not before 1530, for it was only in that year that he became eligible as being twenty-five years old. It may possibly have been as late as 1540, when his name is first found in a deed. In that and the two following years he seems to have resided at Samuelston near Haddington, and may have officiated in the little chapel there. But he was also at this time acting as 'Maister' or tutor to the sons of several gentlemen of East Lothian, and he continued this down to 1547, the time of his own 'call' to preach the Evangel. Nor do we know whether the change in his views, which in 1547 was so complete, had been sudden on the one hand or gradual and long prepared on the other. Knox's own silence on this is very remarkable. A man of his fearless egoism and honesty might have been expected to leave, if not an autobiography like those of Augustine and Bunyan, at least a narrative of change like the Force of Truth of Thomas Scott, or the Apologia of John Henry Newman. He has not done so; indeed, the author who preserved for us so much of that age, and of his own later history in it, seems for some reason to have judged his whole earlier period unworthy of record—or even of recal. For we find no evidence of his having been more confidential on this subject with any of his contemporaries than he has been with us. This certainly suggests that the change may have been very recent—determined, perhaps, wholly through the personal influence of Wishart, whom Knox so affectionately commemorates. Or, if it was not recent, it is extremely unlikely that it can have been detailed, vivid, and striking, as well as prolonged. Knox was not the man to suppress a narrative, however painful to himself, which he could have held to be in a marked degree to the glory of God or for the good of men. But whatever the reason was, the time past of his life sufficed this man for silence and self-accusation. We may be sure that it would have done so (and perhaps done so equally), no matter whether those twenty years had been spent in the complacent routine of a rustic in holy orders; in the dogmatism, defensive or aggressive, of scholastic youth; in fruitless efforts to understand the new views of which he was one day to be the chief representative; or in half-hearted hesitation whether, after having so far understood them, he could part with all things for their sake. Which of these positions he held, or how far he may have passed from one to another, we may never be able to ascertain. But there is one too clear indication that Knox disliked, not only to record, but even to recal, his life in the Catholic communion. His greatest defect in after years, as a man and a writer, is his inability to sympathise with those still found entangled in that old life. He absolutely refuses to put himself in their place, or to imagine how a position which was for so many years his own could be honestly chosen, or even honestly retained

for a day, by another. This would have been a misfortune, and a moral defect, even in a man not naturally of a sympathetic temper. But Knox, as we shall see, was a man of quick and tender nature, and had rather a passion for sympathising with those who were not on the other side of the gulf he thus fixed. And this one-sided incapacity for sympathy must certainly be connected with his one-sided reticence as to the earlier half of his own autobiography.

Incapacity to sympathise with persons entangled in a system is one thing, and disapproval of that system, or even violent rejection of it, is another. Knox, as is well known, broke absolutely with the church system in which he was brought up. What was that system, and what was Knox's individual outlook upon the Church—first, of Western Europe, and secondly of Scotland?

We know at least that Knox, before breaking with the church system of mediaeval Europe, was for twenty years in close contact with it. And his was no mere external contact such as Haddington, with its magnificent churches and monasteries, supplied. It commenced with study, and with study under the chief theological teacher of the land and the time. Major was the last of the scholastics in our country. But the energy of thought of scholasticism, marvellous as it often was, was built upon the lines and contained within the limits of an already existing church system. And that system was an authoritative one in every sense. The hierarchy which governed the Church, and all but constituted it, was sacerdotal; that is, it interposed its own mediation at the point where the individual meets and deals with God. But it interposed correspondingly at every other point of the belief and practice of the private man, enforcing its doctrine upon the conscience, and its direction upon the will, of every member of the church. Nor was the system authoritative only over those who received or accepted it. Originally, indeed, and even in the age when the faith was digested into a creed by the first Council, the emperor, himself an ardent member of the Church, left it free to all his subjects throughout the world to be its members or not as they chose. But that great experiment of toleration lasted less than a century. For much more than a thousand years the same faith, slowly transformed into a church system under the central administration of the Popes, had been made binding by imperial and municipal law upon every human being in Europe.

Major, not only by his own earlier writings, but as the representative in Scotland of the University of Paris, recalled to his countrymen the great struggle of the Middle Age in favour of freedom—and especially of church freedom against the Popes. That struggle indeed had Germany rather than France for its original centre, and it was under the flag of the Empire that the progressive despotism of Hildebrand and his successors over the feudal world was chiefly resisted. The Empire, however, was now a decaying force. Europe was being split into nationalities; and national churches—a novelty in Christendom—were, under various pretexts, coming into existence. For the last two centuries France had thus been the chief national opponent of the centralising influence of Rome, and the University of Paris was, during that time, the greatest theological school in the world. As such it had maintained the doctrine that the church universal could have no absolute monarch, but was bound to maintain its own self-government, and that its proper organ for this was a general council. And in the early part of the fifteenth century, when the schism caused by rival Popes had thrown back the Church upon its native powers, the University of Paris was the great influence which led the Councils of Constance and of Basle, not only to assert this doctrine, but to carry it into effect. But Major, when Knox met him, represented in this matter a cause already lost. Even in the previous century the decrees of the reforming Councils were at once frustrated by the successors of the Popes whom they deposed, and in this sixteenth

century a Lateran Council had already anticipated the Vatican of the nineteenth by declaring the Pope to be supreme over Council and Church alike. Even the anti-Papal Councils themselves, too, were exclusively hierarchical, and accordingly they opposed any independent right on the part of the laity, as well as all serious enquiries into the earlier practice and faith of the Church. So at Constance the Chancellor of Paris, Doctor Christianissimus as well as statesman and mystic, compensated for his successful pressure upon Rome by helping to send to the stake, notwithstanding the Emperor's safe-conduct, the pure-hearted Huss. The result was that, even before the time of Major, the expectation, so long cherished by Europe, of a great reform through a great Council had died out. And the University of Paris, instead of continuing to act in place of that coming Council as 'a sort of standing committee of the French, or even of the universal, Church,'[3] had become a reactionary and retarding power. It opposed Humanism, and was the stronghold of the method of teaching which the new generation knew as 'Sophistry.' It opposed Reuchlin, and was preparing to oppose Luther, and to urge against its own most distinguished pupils the law of penal fire. It continued to oppose the despotism of the Pope, but it did so rather from the standpoint of a narrow and nationalist Gallicanism, based largely upon the counter-despotism of the King. This selfish policy attained in Major's own time its fitting result and reward. The despotic King and despotic Pope found it convenient for their interests to partition between them the 'liberties' of the Gallican Church; and by the Concordat of Bologna in 1516, Leo gained a huge revenue from the ecclesiastical endowments of France, while Francis usurped the right of nominating all its bishops. The University, as well as the Parliaments, resisted, and Major, who now lectured in the Sorbonne as Doctor in Theology, and had become famous as a representative of the anti-Papal school of Occam, took his share in the work. He was preparing for publication a Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, and he now added to it four Disputations against the arbitrary powers of Popes and Bishops, and especially against the authority of Popes in temporal matters over Kings, and in spiritual matters over Councils. It was all in vain. In 1517 the University was forced by the Crown to submit, after a protest of the broadest kind;[4] and in 1518 Major returned to his native country a famous teacher, but a defeated churchman. Yet the grave fact for Scotland was that Major and his old University, and the Western hierarchy everywhere, henceforward practically acquiesced in their own defeat. A greater question had arisen, and one which they were unwilling to face. On the other side of the Rhine, Luther and his friends now claimed for the individual Christian the same kind of freedom against Councils and Bishops which the previous century had claimed for Councils and Bishops against Popes. Paris took the lead in opposition to the new Evangel by its Academic decrees of 1521. And when Major, in 1530, republished his Commentary, he not only omitted from it his Disputations against Papal absolutism, but dedicated it to Archbishop James Beaton as the 'supplanter' and 'exterminator' of Lutheranism, and, above all, as the judge who, amid the murmurings of many, had recently[5] and righteously condemned the nobly-born Patrick Hamilton.

It may be well thus to represent to ourselves what must have been the outlook into the Western Church of Major, or of any one who looked through Major's eyes, in that year 1523. But I think it very unlikely that Knox could have derived from such an outlook, or from Major in any aspect, a serious impulse to his career as Reformer. Knox no doubt learned from him scholastic logic, and turned it in later days with much vigour to his own purposes. Major, too, may have unconsciously revealed to his pupils with how much hope the former generation had looked forward to a council. We find afterwards that Knox and his friends, like Luther in his earlier stages, when appealing

against the hierarchy, sometimes appealed to a General Council. But neither side regarded this as serious. It would have been more important if we could have shown that Major transmitted to his pupil the opposition maintained for centuries by his university to an ultramontane Pontiff as the hereditary opponent of all Church freedom and all Church reform. But Luther and the German Reformers had already exaggerated this view, so far as to suggest that the usurping chief of the Church must be the scriptural Antichrist. And their views, brought direct to Scotland by men like Hamilton, had, as we have seen, immensely increased the reaction in the mind of Major, which was begun abroad before 1518. It is, indeed, curious to notice how in his later writings the old university feeling against tyranny in the Church almost disappears, while the equally old and honourable feeling of the learned Middle Age, and especially of its universities, against the tyranny of kings and nobles, finds expression alike in his history and his commentaries. Buchanan, who proclaimed to all Europe the constitutional rights, even against their sovereign, of the people of Scotland, and Knox, the 'subject born within the same,' who was destined to translate that Radical theory so largely into fact, were both taught by Major. And they may well have been much influenced on this side by a man who had long before written that 'the original and supreme power resides in the whole of a free people, and is incapable of being surrendered,' insomuch that an incorrigible tyrant may always be 'deposed by that people as by a superior authority.'[6] For even Fergus the First, he narrates, 'had no right' other than the nation's choice, and when Sir William Wallace was yet a boy, he was taught by his Scottish tutor to repeat continually the rude inspiring rhyme, 'Dico tibi verum Libertas optima rerum.'[7] These views as to the rights of man, and of Scottish men, may well have fanned, or even kindled, the strong feeling of independence in secular matters and as a citizen, which burned in the breast of Knox. But as to spiritual matters and the Church universal, the only feelings which we can imagine Major, on his return from abroad, to have impressed upon the younger man from Haddington are a despair of reform, and a disbelief in revolution.

Let us turn, therefore, from abroad to the Church at home. It is admitted on all hands that the clergy of this age in Scotland were extraordinarily corrupt in life, a reproach which applied eminently to the higher ranks and the representative men. But corruption of churchmen is always a symptom of deeper things. It does not appear that Scotland was much influenced by the spirit of the Renaissance, whether you apply that term to the intellectual passion for both knowledge and beauty which spread over most parts of Europe during the three previous centuries, or to the more specific and half-Pagan culture which in some parts of Europe was the result. It may be more important to observe that the Church in Scotland had not enjoyed any period of inward religious revival—any which could be described as native to it or original. On the contrary its great epoch had been its transformation, through royal and foreign influence, into the likeness of English and continental civilisation, as civilisation was understood in the Middle Age. And that transformation in the days of Queen Margaret and her sons was accompanied, and to a large extent compensated, by a less desirable incorporation into the western ecclesiastical system. The later 'coming of the Friars' had not the same powerful effect in the remote north which it had in some other realms. And in any case that impulse too had long since yielded to a strong reaction, and the preachers were now regarded with the disgust with which mankind usually resent the attempt to manipulate them by external means without a real message. But there were two great sources of ruin to the Scottish church, both connected with its relation to a powerful aristocracy. One was the extraordinary extent to which its high offices were used as sinecures for the favourites, and the

sons of favourites, of nobles and of kings. This did not tend to impoverish the church; on the contrary, it made it an object to all the great families to keep up the wealth on which they proposed that their unworthy scions should feed. 'In proportion to the resources of the country the Scottish clergy were probably the richest in Europe.'[8] But the wealth, accumulated in idle and unworthy hands, was now a scandal to religion, and a constant fountain of immorality. Still worse was the extent to which that wealth was in Scotland diverted from its best uses to the less desirable side—the monastic side—of the mediaeval church. In the revival which came from England before the twelfth century, a great impulse had been given to the parochialising of the country, and to keeping up religious life in every district and estate. But a prejudice running back to very early centuries branded the parish priests as seculars, and gradually drew away again the devotion and the means of the faithful from the parishes where they were needed, and to which they properly belonged. It drew them away, in Scotland, not only to rich centres like cathedrals, with their too wasteful retinue, but far more to the great monasteries scattered over the land. Kings and barons, who proposed to spend life so as to need after its close a good deal of intercession, naturally turned their eyes, even before death-bed, to these wealthy strongholds of poverty and prayer; and of a hundred other places besides Melrose, we know 'That lands and livings, many a rood, had gifted the shrine for their soul's repose.' But the transfer, to such centres, of lands (which were supposed, by the feudal law, to belong to chiefs rather than to the community), was not so direct an injury to the people of Scotland, as the alienation to the same institutions of parochial tithes—sometimes under the form of alienating the churches to which the tithes were paid. These parochial tithes all possessors of land in the parish were bound by law to pay, whether they desired it or not. And, strictly, they should have been paid to the pastor of the parish and for its benefit. But by a scandalous corruption, often protested against by both Parliament and the Church, the Lords of lands were allowed to divert the tithes, which they were already bound to pay, to congested ecclesiastical centres, sometimes to cathedrals, more often to religious houses of 'regulars.' After this was done the monastery or religious House enjoyed the whole sheaves or tithes of the land in question; the local vicar, if the House appointed one, being entitled only to the 'lesser tithes' of domestic animals, eggs, grass, etc. This robbery of the parishes of Scotland—parishes which were already far too large and too scattered, as John Major points out—was carried on to an extraordinary extent. Each of the religious houses of Holyrood and Kelso had the tithes of twenty-seven parishes diverted or 'appropriated' to it. In some districts two-thirds of the whole parish churches were in the hands of the monks, and no fewer than thirty-four were bestowed on Arbroath Abbey in the course of a single reign. When we remember that the Lords of these great houses were generally members—often unworthy members—of the families which were thus enriching them to the detriment of the country, we can imagine the complicated corruption which went on from reign to reign. Unfortunately the nepotism and simony which resulted had direct example and sanction in the relation to Scotland of the Head of the Church at Rome.[9] The most ardent Catholics admit this as true in relation to Europe generally in the time with which we deal;[10] and the Holy See had been allowed some centuries before to claim Scotland as a country which belonged to it in a peculiar sense, and the Church of Scotland as subject to it specially and immediately. The jealousy of an Italian potentate which was always powerful in England, and which had now, under Henry the Eighth, made it possible to reject the Romish supremacy while retaining the whole of Roman Catholic doctrine, had little influence farther north. Scotland followed the Pope, even when he went to Avignon, and when England had

accepted his rival or Anti-Pope. And while in this it sympathised with France, it had little of that traditional dislike to high Ultramontane claims which we saw to have been so strong in Paris. The Pope remained the centre of our church system, and there were in Scotland no projects of serious reform except those which went so deep as (in the case of the Lollards and other precursors of the Reformation) to break with the existing ecclesiastical machine as a whole, and so to challenge the deadliest penalties of the law. For it is a mistake to suppose that heresy, in the modern misuse of the word (as equivalent to false doctrine), was greatly dreaded in the Roman Catholic Church, or savagely punished by our ancient code. In Scotland, as elsewhere, the fundamental law was that of Theodosius and the empire, that every man must be a member of the Catholic Church, and submit to it. That law was indeed the original establishment of the Church, and for many centuries there had been in Scotland no penalty for breaking it except death. But the Church, when its authority was thus once for all sufficiently secured, was, in the early Middle Age, rather tolerant of theological opinion. And not until error had been published and persisted in, in face of the injunctions of authority—not until the heresy thus threatened to be internal schism, or repudiation of that authority—was the secular power usually invoked. Unfortunately Western Europe as a whole, ever since its intellectual awakening three or more centuries ago, was moving on to precisely this crisis; and the very existence of the Church, in the sense of a body of which all citizens were compulsorily members, was now felt to be at stake. The Scottish sovereign had long since been taken bound, by his coronation oath, to interpose his authority; and the present King, delivered in 1528 from the tutory of the Douglases by the Beatons, had thrown himself into the side of those powerful ecclesiastics. A statute, the first against heresy for nearly a century, was passed two years after Knox went to college. When he was twenty-three years old, England was preparing to reject the Pope's supremacy; but Scotland was so far from it that this year Patrick Hamilton was burned at St Andrews. When he was thirty-four years old, the English revolution had been accomplished by the despotic Henry; but his Scottish nephew had refused to follow the lead, and in that year five other heretics were burned on the Castle-hill of Edinburgh, the popular 'Commons King' looking on. On James V.'s death there was a slight reaction under the Regent, and Parliament even sanctioned the publication of the Scriptures. But Arran made his peace with the Church in 1543, and Beaton, the able but worldly Archbishop of St Andrews, and as such Knox's diocesan, became once more the leader of Scotland. He had already instituted the Inquisition throughout his see; he was now advanced to be Papal Legate; and he was fully prepared to press into execution the Acts which a few years before he and the King had persuaded the Parliament to pass. Not to be a member of the Church had always meant death. But now it was death by statute to argue against the Pope's authority; it was made unlawful even to enter into discussion on matters of religion; and those in Scotland who were merely suspected of heresy were pronounced incapable of any office there. And, lastly, those who left the country to avoid the fatal censure of its Church on such crimes as these, were held by law to be already condemned. The illustrious Buchanan was one of those who thus fled. Knox remained, and suddenly becomes visible.

[1] Knox's later biographer, Dr Hume Brown, has given to the world a letter from Sir Peter Young to Beza, transmitting a posthumous portrait of Knox, which is thus no doubt the original of the likeness in Beza's Icones, and makes the latter our only trustworthy representation of him. The letter adds, 'You may look for (expectabis) his full history from Master Lawson'; and this raises the hope that Beza's biography, founded upon the memoir of Knox's colleague, James Lawson, as the

icon probably was upon the Edinburgh portrait, would be of great value. In point of fact Beza's biography does give great prominence to Knox's closing pastorate and last days, as his newly-appointed colleague might be expected to do. But about his early years it is hopelessly inaccurate, to say the least.

[2] So, in Shakespeare, Sir Hugh, who is 'of the Church'; Sir Topas the curate, whose beard and gown the clown borrows; Sir Oliver Martext, who will not be 'flouted out of his calling;' and Sir Nathaniel, who claims to have 'taste and feeling,' and whose female parishioners call him indifferently the 'Person' or the 'Parson.'

[3] Rashdall's 'Universities of Europe,' i. 525.

[4] The Act of Appeal of the University lays down principles which apply far beyond the bounds of Gallicanism; that 'the Pope, although he holds his power immediately from God, is not prevented, by his possession of this power, from going wrong'; that 'if he commands that which is unjust, he may righteously be resisted'; and 'if, by the action of the powers that be, we are deprived of the means of resisting the Pope, there remains one remedy, founded on natural law, which no Prince can take away—the remedy of appeal, which is competent to every individual, by divine right, and natural right, and human right.' And, accordingly, the University, protesting that the Basle Council's decrees of the past have been set aside, Appeals to a Council in the future.—Bulaeus' 'Hist. of the University of Paris,' vol. viii. p. 92.

[5] This uncompromising preface took the place of one in which Major, on his arrival in Scotland in 1518, praised the same Archbishop, then in Glasgow, for his many-sided and 'chamaelon-like mildness.' It is generally recognised that the stern policy latterly carried on under the nominal authority of James Beaton was really inspired by his nephew and coadjutor, David Beaton, the future cardinal.

[6] 'Expositio Matt.' fol. 71. (Paris.)

[7] 'I tell the truth to thee, there's nought like Liberty!'—Major's 'History of Greater Britain.'

[8] Hume Brown's 'Knox,' i. 44.

[9] See Scots Acts, A.D. 1471, c. 43.

[10] An Petrus Romae fuerit, sub judice lis est: Simonem Romae nemo fuisse negat.

Chapter 2

02 - The Crisis: Single or Two-Fold?

CHAPTER II THE CRISIS: SINGLE OR TWO-FOLD? On this dark background Knox for the first time appears in history. But we catch sight of him merely as an attendant on the attractive figure of George Wishart. At Cambridge Wishart had been ’courteous, lowly, lovely, glad to teach, and desirous to learn’; when he returned to Scotland, Knox and others found him ’a man of such graces as before him were never heard within this realm.’ He had preached in several parts of Scotland, and was brought in the spring of 1546 by certain gentlemen of East Lothian, ’who then were earnest professors of Christ Jesus,’ to the neighbourhood of Haddington. On the morning of his last sermon in that town he had received (in the mansion-house of Lethington, ’the laird whereof,’ father of the famous William Maitland, ’was ever civil, albeit not persuaded in religion’) a letter, ’which received and read, he called for John Knox, who had waited upon him carefully from the time he came to Lothian.’ And the same evening, with a presentiment of his coming arrest, he ’took his good-night, as it were for ever,’ of all his acquaintance, and

’John Knox pressing to have gone with the said Master George, he said, "Nay, return to your bairns, and God bless you! One is sufficient for one sacrifice." And so he caused a two-handed sword (which commonly was carried with the said Master George) be taken from the said John Knox, who, although unwillingly, obeyed, and returned with Hugh Douglas of Longniddrie.’[11] The same night Wishart was arrested by the Earl of Bothwell, and afterwards handed over to the Cardinal Archbishop, tried by him as a heretic, and on 1st March 1546 burned in front of his castle of St Andrews. Ere long this stronghold was stormed, and the Cardinal murdered in his own chamber by a number of the gentlemen of Fife, whose raid was partly in revenge for Wishart’s death. They shut themselves up in the castle for protection, and we hear no more of John Knox till the following year. Then we are told that, ’wearied of removing from place to place, by reason of the persecution that came upon him by the Bishop of St Andrews,’ he joined Leslie’s band in their hold in St Andrews, in consequence of the desire of his pupils’ parents ’that himself might have the benefit of the castle, and their children the benefit of his doctrine [teaching].’ It is plain that by this time what Knox taught was the doctrine of Wishart. Indeed he had not been long in St Andrews when, urged by the congregation there, he consented to become its preacher. And his very first sermon in this capacity rang out the full note of the coming reform or rather revolution in the religion of Scotland.

Now, this is a startlingly sudden transition. The change from the position of a nameless notary under Papal authority, who is in addition a minister of the altar of the Catholic Church, to that of a preacher in the whole armour of the Puritan Reformation, is great. Was the transition a public and official one only? Was it a change merely ecclesiastical or political? Or was it preceded by a more private change and a personal crisis? And was that private and personal crisis merely intellectual? Was it, that is, the adoption of a new dogma only, or perhaps the acceptance of a new system? Or if there was something besides these, was it nothing more than the resolve of a very powerful will—such a will as we must all ascribe to Knox? Was this all? Or was there here rather, perhaps, the sort of change which determines the will instead of being determined by it—a personal change,

in the sense of being emotional and inward as well as deep and permanent—a new set of the whole man, and so the beginning of an inner as well as of an outer and public life? The question is of the highest interest, but as we have said, there is no direct answer. It would be easy for each reader to supply the void by reasoning out, according to his own prepossessions, what must have been, or what ought to have been, the experience of such a man at such a time. It would be easy—but unprofitable. Far better would it be could we adduce from his own utterances evidence—indirect evidence even—that the crisis which he declines to record really took place; and that the great outward career was founded on a new personal life within. Now there is such an utterance, which has been hitherto by no means sufficiently recognised. It is 'a meditation or prayer, thrown forth of my sorrowful heart and pronounced by my half-dead tongue,' on 12th March, 1566, at a moment when Knox's cause was in extremity of danger. Mary had joined the Catholic League and driven the Protestant Lords into England, and their attempted counter-plot had failed by the defection of Darnley. Knox had now before him certain exile and possible death, and on the eve of leaving Edinburgh he sat down and wrote privately the following personal confession. Five years later, when publishing his last book, after the national victory but amid great public troubles, he prefixed a preface explaining that he had already 'taken good-night at the world and at all the fasherie of the same,' and henceforward wished his brethren only to pray that God would 'put an end to my long and painful battle.' And with this preface he now printed the old meditation or confession of 1566. It is therefore autobiographical by a double title. And it is made even more interesting by the striking rubric with which the writer heads it.

JOHN KNOX, WITH DELIBERATE MIND, TO HIS GOD.

'Be merciful unto me, O Lord, and call not into judgment my manifold sins; and chiefly those whereof the world is not able to accuse me. In youth, mid age, and now after many battles, I find nothing in me but vanity and corruption. For, in quietness I am negligent; in trouble impatient, tending to desperation; and in the mean [middle] state I am so carried away with vain fantasies, that alas! O Lord, they withdraw me from the presence of thy Majesty. Pride and ambition assault me on the one part, covetousness and malice trouble me on the other; briefly, O Lord, the affections of the flesh do almost suppress the operation of Thy Spirit. I take Thee, O Lord, who only knowest the secrets of hearts, to record, that in none of the foresaid do I delight; but that with them I am troubled, and that sore against the desire of my inward man, which sobs for my corruption, and would repose in Thy mercy alone. To the which I clame [cry] in the promise that Thou hast made to all penitent sinners (of whose number I profess myself to be one), in the obedience and death of my only Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ. In whom, by Thy mere grace, I doubt not myself to be elected to eternal salvation, whereof Thou hast given unto me (unto me, O Lord, most wretched and unthankful creature) most assured signs. For being drowned in ignorance Thou hast given to me knowledge above the common sort of my brethren; my tongue hast Thou used to set forth Thy glory, to oppugne idolatry, errors, and false doctrine. Thou hast compelled me to forespeak, as well deliverance to the afflicted, as destruction to certain inobedient, the performance whereof, not I alone, but the very blind world has already seen. But above all, O Lord, Thou, by the power of Thy Holy Spirit, hast sealed unto my heart remission of my sins, which I acknowledge and confess myself to have received by the precious blood of Jesus Christ once shed; in whose perfect obedience I am assured my manifold rebellions are defaced, my grievous sins purged, and my soul made the tabernacle of Thy Godly Majesty—Thou, O Father

of mercies, Thy Son our Lord Jesus, my only Saviour, Mediator, and Advocate, and Thy Holy Spirit, remaining in the same by true faith, which is the only victory that overcometh the world.'[12] This window into the heart of a great man is not less transparent because it opens upwards. Its revelation of an inner life, with the alternations proper to it of struggle and victory, will receive confirmation as we go on. As we go on too we shall be arrested by the intense personal sympathy which Knox showed in helping those around him who were still weaker and more tempted than himself—a sympathy in which many will find a surer proof of the existence of a life within, than even in this record of his deliberate and devotional mind. What this record now suggests to us is that the personal life which it reveals had a foundation in some personal and moral crisis. The truth and light came to him when he was 'drowned in ignorance,' and the change cannot have originated in any fancy as to his own predestination, or in any foresight by himself of his own public services. The foundation, as it is put by Knox, was deeper, and was, in his view, common to him with all Christian men. It is a transaction of the individual with the Divine, in which the man comes to God by 'true faith.' And this faith is, or ought to be, absolute and assured, simply because it is faith in the offer and promise of God himself in his Evangel. This was the teaching of Wishart, as it had been of Patrick Hamilton before him. It was the teaching which Hamilton had derived from Luther, and Wishart from both Luther and the Reformers of Switzerland. Later on, when the minor differences between the two schools of Protestantism had declared themselves, it might fairly be said that Knox, and with him Scotland, founded their religion not so much (with Luther) on the central doctrine of immediate access to God through his promise, as (with Calvin) on the more general doctrine of the immediate authority of God through his word. But the former—the Evangel—was the original life and light of the Reformation everywhere, and its glow as of 'glad confident morning' now flushed the whole sky of Western Europe.[13] Knox himself always preached it, and on the day before his death he let fall an expression which indicates that his acceptance of it had rescued him at this very date from the tossings of an inward sea. 'Go, read where I cast my first anchor!' he said to his wife. 'And so she read the seventeenth of John's Gospel.' Now the 'Evangel of John' was what Knox tells us he taught from day to day in the chapel, within the Castle of St Andrews, at a certain hour; and when on entering the city he took up this book of the New Testament, he took it up at the point 'where he left at his departure from Longniddry where before his residence was,' and whither Wishart had sent him back to his pupils a year before. And of all parts of this Evangel the rock-built anchorage of the seventeenth chapter may surely best claim to be that commemorated in Knox's stately and deliberate words. But these conjectures must not make us forget the fact that Knox himself places an undoubted and great crisis at the threshold of his public life. His teaching in 1547 of John's Gospel, and of a certain 'catechism,' though carried on within the walls, sometimes of the chapel, and sometimes of the parish kirk, of St Andrews, was supposed to be private or tutorial. Soon, however, the more influential men there urged him 'that he would take the preaching place upon him. But he utterly refused, alleging that he would not run where God had not called him.... Whereupon, they privily among themselves advising, having with them in council Sir David Lindsay of the Mount, they concluded that they would give a charge to the said John, and that publicly by the mouth of their preacher.' And so, after a sermon turning on the power of the church or congregation to call men to the ministry,

'The said John Rough, preacher, directed his words to the said John Knox, saying, "Brother, ye shall not be offended, albeit that I speak unto you that which I have in charge, even from all those

that are here present, which is this: In the name of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ, and in the name of these that presently call you by my mouth, I charge you that you refuse not this holy vocation, but ... that you take upon you the public office and charge of preaching, even as you look to avoid God's heavy displeasure, and desire that He shall multiply His graces with you." And in the end, he said to those that were present, "Was not this your charge to me? And do ye not approve this vocation?" They answered, "It was: and we approve it." Whereat the said John, abashed, burst forth in most abundant tears, and withdrew himself to his chamber. His countenance and behaviour, from that day till the day that he was compelled to present himself to the public place of preaching, did sufficiently declare the grief and trouble of his heart; for no man saw any sign of mirth in him, neither yet had he pleasure to accompany any man, many days together.'[14]

There is no reason to think that Knox exaggerates the importance of this scene in his own history. A man has but one life, and the choosing even of his secular work in it is sometimes so difficult as to make him welcome any external compulsion. But the necessity of an external and even a divine vocation, in order to justify a man's devoting his life to handling things divine, has long been a tradition of the Christian Church—and especially of the Scottish church, which in its parts, and as a whole, has been repeatedly convulsed by this question of 'The Call.' And in Knox's time, as in the earliest age of Christianity, what is now a tradition was a very stern fact. The men who were thus calling him knew well, and Knox himself, more clear of vision than any of them, knew better, that what they were inviting him to was in all probability a violent death. Rough himself perished in the flames at Smithfield; and four months after this vocation Knox was sitting chained and half-naked in the galleys at Rouen, under the lash of a French slave-driver. He did not perhaps himself always remember how the future then appeared to him. Old men looking back upon their past are apt 'to see in their life the story of their life,' and the Reformer, after his later amazing victories, sometimes speaks as if these had been his in hope, or even in promise, from the outset of his career. But it is plain to us now, as we study his letters in those early years, that he was repeatedly brought to accept what we know to have been the real probability—viz., that, while the ultimate triumph of the Evangel would be secure, it might be brought about only after his own failure and ruin. Such were the alternatives which Knox—a man of undoubted sensitiveness and tenderness, and who describes himself as naturally 'fearful'[15]—had to ponder during those days of seclusion at St Andrews. Of one thing he had no doubt. The call, if once he accepted it, was irrevocable;[16] and he must thenceforward go straight on, abandoning the many resources of silence and of flight which might still be open to a private man. But this was not all. It would be doing injustice to Knox, and to our materials, to suppose that personal considerations were the only ones which pressed upon him in this crisis. He never, in any circumstances, could have been a man of 'a private spirit,' and his present call was expressly to bear the public burden. But the burden so proposed was overwhelming. Was it by his mouth that his countrymen were to be urged to expose themselves, individually, to certain danger and possible ruin? Was it upon his initiative that his country was to be divided, distracted, and probably destroyed—deprived of its old faith, severed from its old alliances, and hurled into revolt from its five hundred years of Christian peace?[17] The risk to his country was extreme. And if, by some marvellous conspiration of providences, Scotland passed through all this without ruin, was Knox prepared to face the more tremendous responsibilities of success? Did he hear in that hour the voice by which leaders of Movements in later days have been chilled, 'Thou couldst a people raise, but couldst not rule?' For if we assume that he felt

entitled to back this weight of leadership upon God and Evangel, the question still remained, Was even the Evangel strong enough to bear this burden of a nation's future? That it was able to guide and save the individual man, through all changes and chances of this life and the life beyond, Knox may have been assured. But the questions which rose behind were those of Church organisation and social reconstruction. Was it possible, and was it lawful, to accept the existing Church system, in whole or in part, and to build upon that? And if this was impossible, if Christ's Church must go back to the Divine foundation in His new-discovered Word, was that Word sufficient, not for foundation merely, but for all superstructure—for doctrine, discipline, and worship alike? Or would the Church be entitled to impose its own wise and reasonable additions to the recovered statute-book of Scripture? Lastly, if such a new Church shone already in 'devout imagination' before Knox, he must have also had some forecast of its new relations to feudal and royal Scotland. Was he to plead merely for freedom, under a neutral civil authority? Or in the event of the chiefs of the nation, or some of them, individually adopting the new faith, were they to adopt it for themselves alone; or for subjects and vassals too, as under the former regime? And were they to enforce it, by feudal or royal or even legislative authority, on unwilling subjects and unwilling vassals too?

I think it clear that all these questions must have passed before the mind of Knox during that week of agitated seclusion within the castle walls. Not only so. There is evidence in his own writings that when at the close of that time he came forth to take up the public work, he had already formed his conclusions as to all the main principles on which it was to proceed. And from these he never afterwards varied. Thirteen years were still to elapse before they resulted in Scotland in a religious revolution; and during those years of wandering and exile Knox learned much from the wisest and best of the new leaders—much from them; and much, too, from his own experience, which he was in the future to reduce to details of practice. But his principles were the same from the first. He believed fundamentally in the gracious Word of God revealed to man, as overriding and over-ruling all other authorities. His first sermon denounced the whole existing church system as an Anti-Christian substitute, interposed between man and that original message. But, strange to say, the part of the discourse which at once aroused controversy was his sweeping denial of the Church's right to institute ceremonies, the ground of denial being that 'man may neither make nor devise a religion that is acceptable to God.' He was thus Protestant and Puritan[18] from the first, as his master Wishart was before him, and his choice had now to be made according to his convictions. We, looking back upon the past at our ease, may recognise that on some of these matters he was too hasty in his conclusions—especially in his conclusions as to his opponents, and the duty towards them which the party now oppressed would have, in the unlikely event of its coming into power. But we are bound to remember—Knox himself insists upon it—that he did not take up the function of guide to his people at his own hand, or accept it at his own leisure. He was suddenly called upon in God's name to accept or refuse an almost hopeless task, but one in which success and failure involved the greatest alternatives to him. That preaching the Gospel to which he was called, if it meant on the one hand, in the event of failure, exile or death, meant on the other, in case of success, the salvation of a whole people now sitting in darkness. But he had to accept the task as a whole or to refuse it; and his conclusions as to what that task involved were fused into unity—in some respects into premature unity—in the glow of a supreme moral trial. For the week of deliberation before he emerged as the teacher of the Congregation was certainly not spent upon detailed difficulties either of future legislation or present consistency. It prolonged itself

rather in poise and struggle against the more obvious and tremendous obstacles, reinforced no doubt by a thousand more remote behind them. But the ultimate question was whether the gigantic strain of all of these combined would be too much for an anchor dropped by one strong hand into the depths of the Evangel. And so that week saved a nation—perhaps a man. For I think it quite a possible thing that this crisis in St Andrews, the only one recorded or even suggested by Knox himself, may have been the one personal crisis of his life. I cannot indeed say with Carlyle, that before this Knox 'seemed well content to guide his own steps by the light of the Reformation, nowise unduly intruding it on others ... resolute he to walk by the truth, and speak the truth when called to do it; not ambitious of more, not fancying himself capable of more.'[19] Of all men living or dead, this is the one whom it is most impossible to think of as acquiescing in such an easy relation to those around him, or even as attempting so to acquiesce—at least without inward self-question and torture. We must remember that Knox had undoubtedly before this time embraced the doctrinal system of the Reformation, no doubt in the form taught by Wishart. And a catechism of that doctrine, perhaps founded upon or identical with that which Wishart brought from Basel, he gave to his East Lothian pupils. Long before his external 'call' at St Andrews, the inward impulse to preach the message to his fellow-men, and to champion their right to receive it, must have pressed upon his conscience. Was this pearl worth the price of selling all to buy it? And was such a price demanded of him individually? If these questions were still unanswered—for that they had been put, and put incessantly, I have no doubt—then the Knox whom we know was still waiting to be born, and the representative of Scotland was like Scotland itself, 'as yet without a soul.'[20] He had carried a sword before Wishart, and he and the gentlemen of East Lothian would have defended their saintly guest at the peril of their lives. He had been followed thereafter by the persecution of his bishop, until he made up his mind for exile in Germany (rather than in England, where he heard that the Romish doctrine flourished under Royal Supremacy). And after the 'slaughter of the Cardinal,' he took refuge within the strong walls of the vacant castle, like other men whose sympathies made them, in the quaint words of the chronicler[21], 'suspect themselves guilty of the death' of Beaton, though they might not have known of it before the fact. But all this Knox might conceivably have done, and still have borne about with him a troubled and divided mind, until the address of Rough flashed out upon his conscience his true vocation, and sent him in tears and solitude to make proof of the Evangel—and of the Evangel in that form which takes hold of both eternities. This final crisis may thus have been the only one. And if it were so, Knox would not be the first man who has found in self-consecration a new birth; nor the first prophet whose 'Here am I' has been answered by fire from the altar and the assurance that iniquity is purged. But even if we assume, what is more probable, that the crisis in St Andrews was not the first, but the second, in Knox's religious life, the result for the purposes of critical biography is the same. For the later crisis resumed and gathered up into itself, on a higher plane, and with more intensity, the elements of the change which went before. It was, on this assumption, a new call; and a call to higher and public work. But it was a call in the same name, and to the same man, to do new work on the strength of principles and motives to which he had already committed himself. It was, in short, a greater strain, but upon the first anchor. This point has acquired more importance since Carlyle, and so many of us who follow him as admirers of Knox, have adopted the modern trick of speech of calling him a Prophet to his time. It is assumed that Knox took the same view,[22] and that he held himself to have had, if not a prophet's supernatural endowment and vocation, at least a special mission and an extraordinary call. The question is complicated by other things than the

special and extraordinary work which he, in point of fact, achieved. We find that, in the course of that work, Knox, a man of piercing intuitions in personal and public matters, repeatedly committed himself to judgments, and even predictions, which were unexpectedly verified. And some of these he himself regarded, as we have seen already in his deliberate Meditation, as not intuitions merely, but private intimations given by God to his own heart and mind. Naturally, too, a man of Knox's devout and yet passionate temper was disposed to lay as much stress upon these incidents as they would bear; while the marvel-mongers around him, and in the next generation, went farther still. But the main fact to remember is, that Knox all his life insisted that such incidents, whatever their occasional value, were no part of his original mission, and were outside the bounds of his life-long vocation. The passage in which he is disposed to make most of them is the following; and it is worth quoting also, because of the striking terms in which he incidentally describes his real work and permanent call. He is explaining why, after twenty years' preaching, he has never published even a sermon, and now publishes one with nothing but wholesome admonitions for the time. (This wholesome sermon was the one which so much offended Darnley.)

'Considering myself rather called of my God to instruct the ignorant, comfort the sorrowful, confirm the weak, and rebuke the proud, by tongue and lively voice in these most corrupt days, than to compose books for the age to come: seeing that so much is written (and that by men of most singular condition), and yet so little well observed; I decreed to contain myself within the bonds [bounds?] of that vocation, whereunto I found myself specially called. I dare not deny (lest that in so doing I should be injurious to the giver), but that God hath revealed to me secrets unknown to the world; and also that he hath made my tongue a trumpet, to forewarn realms and nations, yea, certain great personages, of translations and changes, when no such things were feared, nor yet were appearing; a portion whereof cannot the world deny (be it never so blind) to be fulfilled, and the rest, alas! I fear shall follow with greater expedition, and in more full perfection, than my sorrowful heart desireth. Those revelations and assurances notwithstanding, I did ever abstain to commit anything to writ, contented only to have obeyed the charge of Him who commanded me to cry.'[23] And when he did 'cry,' from the pulpit or elsewhere, he was careful to found his claim to be heard, not on private intimations, but on God's open word. As early as 1554 he denounces judgment to come upon England (which, by the way, was not fulfilled in the sense which he expected), but he adds immediately—

'This my affirmation proceedeth, not from any conjecture of man's fantasy, but from the ordinary course of God's judgments against manifest contemners of his precepts from the beginning;'[24] and more fully in another contemporary document—

'But ye would know the grounds of my certitude: God grant that hearing them ye may understand and steadfastly believe the same. My assurances are not the marvels of Merlin, nor yet the dark sentences of profane prophesies; but, 1. the plain truth of God's word, 2. the invincible justice of the everlasting God, and 3. the ordinary course of his punishments and plagues from the beginning, are my assurance and grounds.'[25] This was early in his career. At its close Knox, now very frail, was deeply aggrieved by the troubles caused by Lethington and Kirkaldy, who held the castle of Edinburgh. His verbal predictions of their coming end, as reported (after the event however) by those around his death-bed, and his assurance at the same time of 'mercy to the soul' of the chivalrous Kirkaldy, are among the most striking incidents of this kind in his life. But in his Will, written contemporaneously on 13th May 1572, he says,

’I am not ignorant that many would that I should enter into particular determination of these present troubles; to whom I plainly and simply answer, that, as I never exceeded the bounds of God’s Scriptures, so will I not do, in this part, by God’s grace.’[26] This did not prevent him from freely describing his old friends in the Castle as murderers, and predicting their destruction, especially as they seemed now to be planning a counter-revolution in the interest of the exiled Queen of Scots. They retorted by accusing him, among other things, of prejudging her and ’entering into God’s secret counsel.’ Knox roused himself to answer the charges in detail. But there remained, he adds,

’One thing that is most bitter to me, and most fearful, if that my accusers were able to prove their accusation, to wit, that I proudly and arrogantly entered into God’s secret counsel, as if I were called thereto. God be merciful to my accusators, of their rash and ungodly judgment! If they understood how fearful my conscience is, and ever has been, to exceed the bounds of my vocation, they would not so boldly have accused me. I am not ignorant that the secrets of God appertain to Himself alone: but things revealed in His law appertain to us and our children for ever. What I have spoken against the adultery, against the murder, against the pride, and against the idolatry of that wicked woman, I spake not as one that entered into God’s secret counsel, but being one (of God’s great mercy) called to preach according to His blessed will, revealed in His most holy word.’[27] The old man’s irritation was most natural. For, on the one hand, his accusers had hit a blot. He was sometimes extremely dogmatic, imperious, and rash in his application of ’God’s revealed will’ both to persons and things. But the form in which they put it—that he posed as a prophet, as one having a special message from God’s secret counsel, instead of a general commission to proclaim that revealed will—was not only false, but struck at the roots of his whole life and work. It is demonstrable that from Knox’s first teaching in East Lothian and first preaching in St Andrews onwards, the meaning of both teaching and preaching was a call to the common Scottish man, and to every man, to go to God direct without any intermediation except God’s open word.[28] And I think it plain that this direct and divine call to all was not only the meaning but the strength of the message in Scotland as elsewhere. It seems to us now as if the burden which it laid on the individual—on frail and feeble women, for example, in that time of persecution—was overwhelming. It is most pathetic to find Knox, when sitting down to write tender and consoling messages to those in such circumstances, pre-occupied with urging the obligation of each one of them individually to hold fast, against possible torture or death, that which each one had individually received. But he never shrank from it, or from pointing out that such relation to God himself was the noblest privilege. And the evidence is plain that all over the Europe of that age this reception of a Divine message direct to the individual, in the newly opened Scriptures, was, not a burden, but a source of incomparable energy and exhilaration—alike to men and women, to the simple and the learned, to the young and—stranger still—to the old. Knox knew it; and he knew that his claiming a special message or ambassadorship would be, not so much ’exceeding the bounds’ of his vocation, as denying it altogether. He was imperious and dogmatic by nature; and he took these natural qualities with him into his new work. But he would have shuddered at the idea of formally interposing his own personality between the hearers of that time and the message which they received. And he would have regarded the office of a mere prophet—the bearer, that is, of a special message, even though that message be divine—as a degradation, if, in order to attain it, he had to lay down the preaching of ’that doctrine and that heavenly religion, whereof it hath pleased His merciful providence to make me, among others, a simple soldier and witness-bearer unto men.’[29] Does it follow that Knox—who thus rejected strongly the idea of

being a prophet to his time, and insisted instead upon his merely receiving and transmitting the one message which was common to all—that this man was therefore little more to his age than any other might be? By no means. The same message comes to all men in an age, and is received by many, but it is received by each in a different way.[30] And the way in which this message was then received by one man in East Lothian made all the difference to Scotland, and perhaps to Europe. It must not be forgotten, indeed, that the result of it upon Knox himself was to transform him. So certain is this that some have felt as if this were the case of one who, up to about his fortieth year, was an ordinary, commonplace, and representative Scotsman, and was thereafter changed utterly, but only by being filled with the sacred fire of conviction. This is only about half the truth, though it is an important half—to Knox himself by far the more important. But it is not the whole, and it is far from the whole for us. The author who has enabled us to see his own confused and changing age under 'the broad clear light of that wonderful book'[31] the 'History of the Reformation in Scotland,' and who outside that book was the utterer of many an armed and winged word which pursues and smites us to this day, must have been born with nothing less than genius—genius to observe, to narrate, and to judge. Even had he written as a mere recluse and critic, looking out upon his world from a monk's cell or from the corner of a housetop, the vividness, the tenderness, the sarcasm and the humour would still have been there. But Knox's genius was predominantly practical; and the difference between the transformation which befell him, and that which changed so many other men in his time, was that in Knox's case it changed one who was born to be a statesman. He probably never would have become one, but for the light which for him as for the others made all things new. But in the others it resulted in a self-consecration whose outlook was chiefly upon the next world, and in the present was doubtfully bounded by possible martyrdom and possible evasion or escape. In the case of Knox the instinctive outlook was not for himself only, but for others and for his country. And while he saw from the first, far more clearly than they, the embattled strength of the forces with which they all had to contend, the unbending will of this man rejected all idea of concession or compromise, evasion or escape. And his native sagacity (made keener as well as more comprehensive now that it looked down from that remote and stormless anchorage), revealed to him that there was at least the possibility of the mightiest earthly fabric breaking up before him in unexpected collapse. Our conclusion then must be that the call which Knox received was one common to him with every man and woman of that time—to accept the Evangel—and common to him with every preacher of that time—to preach the Evangel; but that this man's large conception of what such a call practically meant, not for himself alone, but for all around him and for his country, made it from the first for him a public call, and compelled him to hear in the invitation of the St Andrews congregation the divine commission for his life-long work. From the first, and in conception as well as execution, that work was great and revolutionary. And from the first, and in its very plan, it involved serious errors. But Knox himself, in this and every stage of his career, claimed to be judged by no lower tribunal than that Authority whose dread and strait command he at the first accepted. And if there are some things in that career which his country has simply to forgive, we shall not reckon among these the original resolve of that day in St Andrews—a resolve which has made Knox more to Scotland 'than any million of unblameable Scotchmen who need no forgiveness.'

* * * * * But there are few who will doubt the sincerity, or the strength, of the impulse which launched Knox upon his public career. There are many however who, recognising that he was a

great public man, doubt persistently whether he was anything more. They are not satisfied with the evidence of trumpet-tones from the pulpit, or of solemn and passionate prayer at some crisis of a career. These are part of the furniture of the orator, the statesman, and the prophet. Was there a private life at all, as distinguished from the inner side of that which was public? And was that private life genuine and tender and strong? Have we another window into this man's breast—opening in this case, not upwards and Godwards, but towards the men—or women—around him? We have: and it is fortunate that the evidence on this subject is found, not at a late date in Knox's life, as is the Meditation of 1563, but close to the threshold of his career.

[11] The quotations are from Knox himself—in the first book of his 'History of the Reformation in Scotland.' When quoting from any part of Knox's 'Works' (David Laing's edition in six volumes), I propose to modernise the spelling, but in other respects to retain Knox's English. It will be found surprisingly modern.

[12] 'Works,' vi. 483

[13] 'The end and intent of the Scripture,' according to the translation by George Wishart, Knox's earliest master, of the First Helvetic or Swiss Confession, is, 'to declare that God is benevolent and friendly-minded to mankind; and that he hath declared that kindness in and through Jesu Christ, his only Son; the which kindness is received by faith; but this faith is effectuous through charity, and expressed in an innocent life.' And even more strikingly, the very first question of the famous Palatinate Catechism for Churches and Schools, though that catechism is Calvinistic in its conception rather than Lutheran, and came out so late as 1563, bursts out as follows:—

'What is thy only comfort in life and death?

'Ans. That I, with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Saviour, Jesus Christ, who with his precious blood has fully satisfied for all my sins, and redeemed me from all the power of the Devil.'

[14] 'Works,' i. 187.

[15] On his death-bed. The Regent Morton's famous epitaph spoken by Knox's grave, is an imperfect echo of what the Reformer ten days before, in bidding farewell to the Kirk (Session) of Edinburgh, had said of his own past career:—'In respect that he bore God's message, to whom he must make account for the same, he (albeit he was weak and an unworthy creature, and a fearful man) feared not the faces of men.'—'Works,' vi. 637.

[16] One of the most eloquent documents of the time is the address in 1565 to the half-starved ministers of the Kirk (inspired and perhaps written by Knox), urging that having put their hands to the plough, they could not look back:—

'God hath honoured us so, that men have judged us the messengers of the Everlasting. By us hath He disclosed idolatry, by us are the Wicked of the world rebuked, and by us hath our God comforted the consciences of many.... And shall we for poverty leave the flock of Jesus Christ before that it utterly refuse us?... The price of Jesus Christ, his death and passion, is committed to our charge, the eyes of men are bent upon us, and we must answer before that Judge.... He preserved us in the darkness of our mothers' bosom, He provided our food in their breasts, and instructed us to use the same, when we knew Him not, He hath nourished us in the time of

blindness and of impiety; and will He now despise us, when we call upon Him, and preach the glorious Gospel of His dear Son our Lord Jesus?'—'Works,' vi. 425.

[17] Seven years after this time, Knox, writing from abroad to 'his sisters in Edinburgh,' tells of the 'cogitations' which God permitted Satan even at that late date to put into his mind—

'Shall Christ, the author of peace, concord, and quietness, be preached where war is proclaimed, sedition engendered, and tumults appear to rise? Shall not His Evangel be accused as the cause of all calamity which is like to follow? What comfort canst thou have to see the one-half of the people rise up against the other; yea, to jeopard the one to murder and destroy the other? But above all, what joy shall it be to thy heart to behold with thine eyes thy native country betrayed into the hands of strangers, which to no man's judgment can be avoided, because they who ought to defend it and the liberties thereof are so blind, dull, and obstinate that they will not see their own destruction?'—'Works,' iv. 251.

[18] The two sources which, next to his own report of this sermon, best indicate his earliest standpoint, are (1) the (second) Basel Confession—better known as the First Confession of Helvetia—which Wishart had brought with him from the Continent, and before his death had translated into English, and which Knox, therefore, must have known and may have used; and (2) the treatise of his friend, the layman and lawyer, Balnaves, written two years later, and which Knox then sent from Rouen to St Andrews with his own approval and abridgement. The former is distinctly 'Reformed' and Puritan, and lays down that all ceremonies, other than the two instituted sacraments and preaching, 'as vessels, garments, wax-lights, altars,' are unprofitable, and 'serve to subvert the true religion'; while Balnaves repeats the more fundamental principle of Knox's sermon (that all religion which is 'not commanded,' or which is 'invented' with the best motives, is wrong). And both treatises shew that Knox must have had also before him from the first the thorny question of the relation of the Church and the private Christian to the civil magistrate—for both solve it, like Knox himself (but unlike Luther in his original Confession of Augsburg), by giving the Magistrate sweeping and intolerant powers of reforming alike the religion and the Church.

[19] 'Lectures on Heroes: The Hero as Priest.

[20] Carlyle, as above.

[21] Lindsay of Pitscottie.

[22] Thus, Mrs M'Cunn, in her charming volume on Knox as a 'Leader of Religion,' says that he 'constantly claimed the position accorded to the Hebrew prophets, and claimed it on the same grounds as they.' And even Dr Hume Brown, when narrating Knox's refusal in the Galleys to kiss the 'Idol' presented to him, adds: 'It is in such passages as these that we see how completely Knox identified his action with that of the Hebrew prophets' (vol. i. 84), the passage founded upon being one in which Knox points out that 'the same obedience that God required of his people Israel,' even in idolatrous Babylon, was required by Him of the 'Scottish men' in France, and was actually given by 'that whole number during the time of their bondage,' not merely by the one unnamed prisoner who flung the painted 'board' into the Loire. One reason why the prisoner is unnamed is no doubt that here, as in a hundred other places more explicitly, Knox would impress us with the feeling that no other or higher obedience in such matters is required of minister or prophet or apostle, than is required of the humblest man or the youngest child in God's people.

[23] 'Works,' vi. 230.

[24] 'Works,' iii. 245.

[25] 'Works,' iii. 169.

[26] 'Works,' vi. p. lvi.

[27] 'Works,' vi. 592.

[28] The right of every man to do so, and his duty to do so, were both there: the only question might be whether, of the two, the right to do it (as with Luther), or the duty to do it (as with Calvin) was first and fundamental.

[29] 'Works,' iii. 155.

[30] Recipitur in modum recipientis.

[31] John Hill Burton's 'History of Scotland,' iii. 339. He adds, 'There certainly is in the English language no other parallel to it in the clearness, vigour, and picturesqueness with which it renders the history of a stirring period.

03 - The Inner Life: His Women Friends

CHAPTER III THE INNER LIFE: HIS WOMEN FRIENDS

Before the age with which we are dealing there was, throughout Europe, a certain barrier between the religious life on the one hand and the domestic and private life—the ordinary vie intime—on the other. Among the men and women of the new era that barrier was broken down. The religious was no longer a recognised class: religion was no longer a luxury for the few, or to be partaken of in sacred places and at fixed days and hours. The common man, if a Christian man at all, was to be so now in his common and daily life, living it out from day to day on the deepest principles and from the highest motives. And the Christian woman, having a similar and an equal vocation, undertook the like responsibilities. But her responsibilities were in that age of transition very perplexing, and more than ever invited friendly counsel and pastoral care. Now what was John Knox's private life? He was twice married, and we know from his correspondence that even before his first marriage there were women of high position and character to whom he sustained what may be called personal and pastoral relations. Have we any documents from that time by which to illustrate, and perhaps to test, the principles of his inward and personal life, before we go on to find these written large in the scroll of his country's history?

Norham Castle, near Berwick, is still a very striking pile, especially to those who come upon it, as the writer did, after four days leisurely walking down the banks of the great border river. Every curve of the stream had its natural beauty intertwined with some association of history or the poets, from the first morning on Neidpath Fell, to the fourth evening when

'Day set on Norham's castled steep, And Tweed's fair river, broad and deep, And Cheviot's mountains lone. The battled towers, the donjon keep, The loophole grates where captives weep, The flanking walls that round it sweep'— are all still there, though the inmates are no longer captives. Norham is, indeed, best known as the scene of the whole of the first canto of 'Marmion.' In that poem Sir Hugh the Heron is supposed to have been Lord of it, while his wife is away in Scotland, prepared to sing ballads of Lochinvar to the ill-fated King on his last evening in Holyrood. But when Knox, delivered from the galleys, preached in Berwick in 1549, the Captain of the Hold of Norham, only six miles off, was Richard Bowes. And his lady, born Elizabeth Aske, and co-heiress of Aske in Yorkshire (already an elderly woman and mother of fifteen children), became Knox's chief friend, and after he left Berwick for Newcastle his correspondent, chiefly as to her religious troubles. Most of the letters of Knox to her which are preserved are in the year 1553, and one of the earliest of these acknowledges a communication 'from you and my dearest spouse.' This means that Marjory Bowes, the fifth daughter in that large household, had already been sponsa or betrothed, with her mother's consent, to the Scottish preacher. Knox, now forty-eight years old, had recently declined an English bishopric, offered him through the Duke of Northumberland, but was still chaplain to the King. A letter to Marjory, undated, follows, in which he explains to his 'dearly beloved sister' some passages of Scripture, and adds—'The Spirit of God shall instruct your heart what is most comfortable to the troubled conscience of your mother.'

This communication ends with the subdued or sly postscript, 'I think this be the first letter that ever I wrote to you.'[32] In July, while Knox was in London, Mary Tudor ascended the throne, and everything began to look threatening. In September Knox acknowledges the 'boldness and constancy' of Mrs Bowes in pushing his cause with her husband, who was as yet 'unconvinced in religion,' but he urges her not to trouble herself too much in the matter. He would himself press for the betrothal being changed into marriage, or at least acknowledged. 'It becomes me now to jeopard my life for the comfort and deliverance of my own flesh, as that I will do by God's grace; both fear and friendship of all earthly creature laid aside.'[33] Mrs Bowes suggested that, in addition to writing her husband, he should lay his case before an elder brother, Sir Robert Bowes, Warden of the Marches, who seems to have acted as head of the family. Sir Robert turned out to be more hostile to the perilous alliance proposed for his niece than even her father; and Knox wrote that 'his disdainful, yea, despiteful words have so pierced my heart that my life is bitter unto me.' When Knox was about to have 'declared his heart' in the whole matter, Sir Robert interrupted him with, 'Away with your rhetorical reasons! for I will not be persuaded with them.' Knox, indignant, predicted to the mother of his betrothed that 'the days should be few that England should give me bread,'[34] but adds again, 'Be sure I will not forget you and your company so long as mortal man may remember any earthly creature.'[35] He escaped from England very soon, and not till September 1555 did he return, and that on Mrs Bowes' invitation; and with the result that he brought off to Geneva, where he was now pastor of a distinguished English colony, not only his wife Marjory, but his wife's mother too. Here his two sons, Nathaniel and Eleazar, afterwards students at Cambridge and ministers of the Church of England, were born. But in 1559 wife and mother-in-law accompanied or followed him from the Continent to Edinburgh. During the anxious and critical winter which followed, Mrs Knox seems to have acted as her husband's amanuensis, but 'the rest of my wife hath been so unrestful since her arriving here, that scarcely could she tell upon the morrow what she wrote at night.'[36] Next year brought victory and peace, but too late for her; for in December 1560, about the time when the first General Assembly was sitting in Edinburgh, Knox's wife died. We learn this from the 'History of the Reformation,' in which Knox records a meeting of that date between himself and the two foremost nobles of Scotland, Chatelherault and Moray, upon public affairs, 'he upon the one part comforting them, and they upon the other part comforting him, for he was in no small heaviness by reason of the late death of his dear bedfellow, Marjorie Bowes.'[37] And of her we have no further record, except Calvin's epithet of suavissima,[38] and her husband's repetition years after, in his Last Will, of the 'benediction that their dearest mother left' to her two sons, 'whereto, now as then, I from my troubled heart say, Amen.'[39]

Four years passed, and Knox, still minister of Edinburgh, and now in his fifty-ninth year, was seen riding home with a second wife, 'not like a prophet or old decrepit priest as he was,' said his Catholic adversaries, 'but with his bands of taffetie fastened with golden rings.' The lady for whom he put on this state was Margaret Stewart, the daughter of his friend Lord Ochiltree, and the same critics assure us that 'by sorcery and witchcraft he did so allure that poor gentlewoman, that she could not live without him.' Queen Mary was angry when she heard of it, because the bride 'was of the blood,' i.e. related to the Royal house; and even Knox's friends did not like his union at that age with a girl of seventeen. Young Mrs Knox seems, however, to have played her part well, especially as mother of three daughters; she tended their father carefully in his last illness; and no one will regret that two years after his death she made a more suitable marriage as to years with

Andrew Ker of Faudonside, one of the fierce band whose daggers had clashed ten years before in the body of David Rizzio.

Knox's liking for feminine society, and his suspicion that he had more qualifications for it than the world has believed, come out sometimes in a casual way. After one of his famous interviews with Queen Mary, he was ordered to wait her pleasure in the ante-room.

'The said John stood in the chamber, as one whom men had never seen (so were all afraid), except that the Lord Ochiltree bare him company; and therefore began he to forge talking of the ladies who were there sitting in all their gorgeous apparel; which espied, he merrily said, "O fair ladies, how pleasing were this life of yours if it should ever abide, and then in the end that we might pass to heaven with all this gay gear. But fye upon that knave Death, that will come whether we will or not! And when he has laid on his arrest, the foul worms will be busy with this flesh, be it never so fair and so tender; and the silly soul, I fear, shall be so feeble, that it can neither carry with it gold, garnassing, targetting, pearl, nor precious stones." And by such means procured he the company of women.'

These moralities, however merrily intended and at the time successful, would have perhaps been more appropriate in the Forest of Arden or the graveyard of Hamlet, than among the four Maries in Holyrood; and for anything that is to be of autobiographical value we must go elsewhere and go deeper. His wives contribute nothing; we may hope that they were as happy as the countries which have no history. And if that is too much to believe—or too little to hope—we shall find enough in the next few pages to satisfy us that they had near them in all their trials a strong and tender heart. But of their inward troubles, and of the sympathy these may have drawn forth, Knox is not the historian—he refuses to be the historian even of his own inner life. He unfolds himself in writing only to the women who are in trouble, and at a distance. And the only concession to domesticity is in the fact that his chief correspondent is, if not a wife, a prospective mother-in-law. The letters to her are the most important of all, and the following extract is from one published among the letters of 1553 as 'The First to Mrs Bowes.' It was by no means the first, even in that year; but it is the one which Knox himself long afterwards selected as the first for republication and as best illustrating the original relation between himself and the lady recently deceased. In it he had said, writing from London to Norham:—

'Since the first day that it pleased the providence of God to bring you and me into familiarity, I have always delighted in your company; and when labour would permit, you know that I have not spared hours to talk and commune with you, the fruit whereof I did not then fully understand nor perceive. But now absent, and so absent that by corporal presence neither of us can receive comfort of other, I call to mind how that ofttimes when, with dolorous hearts, we have begun our talking, God hath sent great comfort unto both, which for my own part I commonly want. The exposition of your troubles, and acknowledging of your infirmity, were first unto me a very mirror and glass wherein I beheld myself so rightly painted forth, that nothing could be more evident to my own eyes. And then the searching of the Scriptures for God's sweet promises, and for his mercies freely given unto miserable offenders—(for his nature delighteth to shew mercy where most misery reigneth)—the collection and applying of God's mercies, I say, were unto me as the breaking and handling with my own hands of the most sweet and delectable unguents, whereof I could not but receive some comfort by their natural sweet odours.'[40] The sympathy that flows through this

beautiful passage comes out very strongly in another written in bodily illness. His importunate correspondent had proposed to call for him in Newcastle that very day. Knox suggests to-morrow instead.

'This day ye know to be the day of my study and prayer unto God; yet if your trouble be intolerable, or if ye think my presence may release your pain, do as the Spirit shall move you, for you know that I will be offended with nothing that you do in God's name. And O, how glad would I be to feed the hungry and give medicine to the sick! Your messenger found me in bed, after a sore trouble and most dolorous night, and so dolour may complain to dolour when we two meet.'[41]

Another letter, also to Mrs Bowes, is from London, and reveals a very remarkable scene. He acknowledges receiving one letter from Marjory, and one from her mother, the latter, as usual, full of complaint.

'The very instant hour that your letter was presented unto me, was I talking of you, by reason that three honest poor women were come to me, and were complaining their great infirmity, and were showing unto me the great assaults of the enemy, and I was opening the cause and commodities thereof, whereby all our eyes wept at once; and I was praying unto God that ye and some others had been there with me for the space of two hours. And even at that instant came your letters to my hands; whereof one part I read unto them, and one of them said, "O would to God I might speak with that person, for I perceive that there be more tempted than I."'[42] The persuasive ingenuity which would suggest to the Lady of Norham that she was a source not only of comfort but of strength to those troubled like herself, turns out much to our advantage. For Knox puts himself, first of all, in the place of those whom he would either advise or console. And in the earliest dated letter of his which we possess there is a vivid picture of what took place between two people who were much in earnest, three and a half centuries ago, about this life and the next. Knox has written fully to Mrs Bowes, and adds—

'After the writing of these preceding, your brother and mine, Harry Wycliffe, did advertise me by writing that your adversary took occasion to trouble you, because that I did start back from you rehearsing your infirmities. I remember myself to have so done, and that is my common consuetude when anything pierceth or toucheth my heart. Call to your mind what I did standing at the cupboard at Alnwick: in very deed I thought that no creature had been tempted as I was. And when that I heard proceed from your mouth the very words that he troubles me with, I did wonder and from my heart lament your sore trouble, knowing in myself the dolour thereof.'[43]

What was the temptation which Knox thought no creature shared with him, but which he found, as he stood at the cupboard at Alnwick, had come to Mrs Bowes in the same form, and even in the same words? As it happens, we can answer with great certainty. It was a temptation to infidelity or 'incredulity': the adversary 'would cause you abhor that, and hate it, wherein stands only salvation and life,' viz., the name, as well as the whole message, of Jesus Christ. So it is put in this letter; and in others, apparently later, we read—

'That ye are of that foolish sort of men that say in their heart, "There is no God," I wonder that the Devil shames not to allege that contrary [to] you; but he is a liar, and father of the same. For if in your heart ye said there is no God, why then should ye suffer anguish and care by reason that the enemy troubles you with that thought? Who can be afraid, day and night, for that which is not?'[44]

Again—

’He would persuade you that God’s Word is of no effect, but that it is a vain tale invented by man, and so all that is spoken of Jesus, the Son of God, is but a vain fable.... He says the Scriptures of God are but a tale, and no credit is to be given to them....[45] Before he troubled you that there is not a Saviour, and now he affirms that ye shall be like to Francis Spira, who denied Christ’s doctrine.’[46] In that age, which broke through the crust of mere authority to seek some ’foundation of belief, ’there must have been many of both sexes in this state of mind; though each doubter might think that ’no creature’ shared it. The new doctrine of individual faith and individual responsibility was one for women as well as men, and they had a special claim on the sympathy of their teachers when central doubts attacked them. Whether these doubts in the case of Mrs Bowes, or in that of Knox, arose in the line of any particular enquiries does not appear. He treats them as if they were rather moral than intellectual, and born of the feebleness of the soul under temptation. And in this relation it says not a little for his estimate of Mrs Bowes, whom he was leaving behind under the Marian persecution, and with her husband and most of her family hostile to her, that, instead of attenuating, he rather magnifies the external difficulties she had to meet.

’Your adversary, sister, doth labour that ye should doubt whether this be the Word of God or not. If there had never been testimonial of the undoubted truth thereof before these our ages, may not such things as we see daily come to pass prove the verity thereof? Doth it not affirm that it shall be preached, and yet contemned and lightly regarded by many; that the true professors thereof shall be hated with [by] father, mother, and others of the contrary religion; that the most faithful shall cruelly be persecuted? And come not all these things to pass in ourselves?’[47] But sceptical or speculative doubts were not Mrs Bowes’ chief trouble. She writes Knox complaining of her temptations—even temptations of sense. And chiefly and continually she complained of past guilt and present sin, by reason of which she felt as if ’remission of sins in Christ Jesus pertained nothing to her.’[48] This was not a case for the ’sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort’ which the Church of England ascribes to the doctrine of Predestination rightly used. Nor does Knox deal with it—at least in his letters—by the simple and peremptory preaching of the Evangel. He recognised it as a case calling for sympathy, and he does not find the sympathy hard. Knox, indeed, like the other Reformers, had parted for ever with the mediaeval idea of salvation by self-torture—even by self-torture for sin. Like all the wisest of the human race, too—even before Christianity came to sanction their surmise—he held that religion must be an objective thing, and that salvation lies in dealing, not with ourselves, but with One outside of us and above. Yet it is a salvation from sin, and the new life now springing up throughout Europe was intensely a moral life. The faith, too, on which the age laid so much stress as a ’coming’ to God, involved repentance as a ’turning’ to God. And while repentance no longer meant penance, whether of body or mind, it meant—and as Knox puts it repeatedly—’it contains within itself a dolour for sin, a hatred of sin, and yet hope of mercy’; and it is renewed as often as the occasion arises for renewed deliverance from the evil. Accordingly, Knox now acts on the principle which he announced years afterwards in a letter to another friend,[49] and again and again tears open his own heart to comfort others by shewing that he, with hope or assurance in Christ, still felt the burden and assault of sin.

’I can write to you by my own experience. I have sometimes been in that security that I felt not dolour for sin, neither yet displeasure against myself for any iniquity in that I did offend. But rather my vain heart did thus flatter myself, (I write the truth to my own confusion, and to the glory of my

heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ), 'Thou hast suffered great trouble for professing of Christ's truth; God has done great things for thee.'... O Mother! this was a subtle serpent who thus could pour in venom, I not perceiving it; but blessed be my God who permitted me not to sleep long in that estate. I drank, shortly after this flattery of myself, a cup of contra-poison, the bitterness whereof doth yet so remain in my breast, that whatever I have suffered, or presently do, I repute as dung, yea, and myself worthy of damnation for my ingratitude towards my God. The like Mother, might have come to you,' &c.[50]

Mrs Bowes lived in her famous son-in-law's house till close upon her death. By that time he had come to recognise that her experience was an exceptional[51] and, perhaps, a morbid one; and at a very early date he manifestly felt the pressure of her constant applications to him for help. Yet throughout the correspondence his unfailing attitude to her is that of admirably tender solicitude; and when he has to go into exile in the beginning of 1554 he first sits down and writes—still partly in the form of letters to her—a treatise on Affliction. It is of great and permanent value, the subject not being one which our race can as yet claim to have outgrown: but I shall make no reference to its contents. Even in his previous and ordinary letters, however, Knox had reached the conclusion that her case was one of inward Affliction, rather than, as she would have it, of sin. And the treatment of this great subject of 'desertion,' by one who was a standard-bearer of the new doctrine of faith and assurance, is remarkably beautiful. 'It is dolorous to the faithful,' he writes another friend, 'to lack the sensible feeling of God's mercy and goodness (and the sensible feeling thereof he lacketh what time he fully cannot rest and repose upon the same). And yet as nothing more commonly cometh to God's children, so is there no exercise more profitable for his soldiers than is the same.' But to Mrs Bowes he points out, what she certainly would not have observed, that 'it doth no more offend God's Majesty that the spirit sometimes lie as it were asleep, neither having sense of great dolour nor great comfort, more than it doth offend him that the body use the natural rest, ceasing from all external exercise.' And again, varying the figure, 'no more is God displeased, although that sometimes the body be sick, and subject to diseases, and so unable to do the calling; no more is he offended, although the soul in that case be diseased and sick. And as the natural father will not kill the body of the child, albeit through sickness it faint, and abhor comfortable meats, no more (and much less) will our heavenly Father kill our souls, albeit, through spiritual infirmity and weakness of our faith, sometimes we refuse the lively food of his comfortable promises....[52] 'You are sick, dear sister,' he had said elsewhere, 'and therefore,' alluding even to her confidences of scepticism as to Christian doctrine, 'you abhor the succour of most wholesome food.' 'Fear not,' he sums up in a subsequent letter, 'the infirmity that you find either in flesh or spirit. Only abstain from external iniquity'—which he supplements elsewhere with the more positive advice, 'Be fervent in reading, fervent in prayer, and merciful to the poor, according to your power, and God shall put an end to all dolours, when least is thought [according] to the judgment of man.' And in the meantime, 'Dear mother, he that is sorry for absence of virtue is not altogether destitute of the same ... our hunger cries unto God.' Knox himself, he assured his troubled friend, never ceased to pray for her; but 'although I would cease, and yourself would cease, and all other creature, yet your dolour continually cryeth and returneth not void from the presence of our God.'[53]

Mrs Bowes was not the only 'mirror and glass' in whom Knox allows us to see his inner self 'painted,' though the woman-hearted warrior is limned in the letters to her more nearly at full

length. Two ladies in Edinburgh, one the wife of the Lord Clerk Register, and the other of the City Clerk, were his friends and correspondents, at a later date, but while he was still in exile. And in a letter 'to his sisters' in that town, he unbosoms himself as usual as to the principles of his inner life, but adds—

Alas! as the wounded man, be he never so expert in physic or surgery, cannot suddenly mitigate his own pain and dolour, no more can I the fear and grief of my heart, although I am not altogether ignorant what is to be done.'[54] The same sentiment is expanded in one of a number of letters sent to a group of 'merchants' wives in London,' which probably included the 'three honest poor women'[55] of whom we have already heard. Of this group the most remarkable was Mrs Anna Locke, of the family which afterwards yielded the famous John Locke. She, like Mrs Bowes, followed Knox to Geneva amid the stream of exiles from London; and his letters to her give the impression that she was not only wealthy and energetic, but possessed of higher character and more accomplishments than the well-born Elizabeth Bowes. The letters to the latter were written chiefly in 1553. The following, to Mrs Locke, is sent from Scotland after Knox's return there, and is dated on last day of 1559:—

'God make yourself participant of the same comfort which you write unto me. And in very deed, dear sister, I have no less need of comfort (notwithstanding that I am not altogether ignorant) than hath the living man to be fed, although in store he hath great substance. I have read the cares and temptations of Moses, and sometimes I supposed myself to be well practised in such dangerous battles. But, alas! I now perceive that all my practice before was but mere speculation; for one day of troubles since my last arrival in Scotland, hath more pierced my heart than all the torments of the galleys did the space of nineteen months; for that torment, for the most part, did touch the body, but this pierces the soul and inward affections. Then I was assuredly persuaded that I should not die till I had preached Jesus Christ, even where I now am. And yet having now my hearty desire, I am nothing satisfied, neither yet rejoice. My God, remove my unthankfulness!'[56]

Men of this expansive and confiding temperament are attractive, and will occasionally get into trouble, even in later life. We find Mrs Bowes ere long complaining that she 'had not been equally made privy to Knox's coming into the country with others,' and needing to be assured that 'none is this day within the realm of England, with whom I would more gladly speak (only she whom God hath offered unto me, and commanded me to love as my own flesh, excepted) than with you.'[57] Mrs Locke, later on, points out that she has not had a letter for a whole year. And this elicits not only the assurance that it is not the absence of one year or two 'that can quench in my heart that familiar acquaintance in Christ Jesus, which half a year did engender, and almost two years did nourish and confirm,' but also the following striking general statement, which, like many things from Knox, impresses us by a certain straightforward and noble egotism:

'Of nature I am churlish, and in conditions[58] different from many: yet one thing I ashame not to affirm, that familiarity once thoroughly contracted was never yet broken on my default. The cause may be that I have rather need of all, than that any have need of me.'[59]

It may be true that Knox never broke a friendship with either sex. But his friendships with men were masculine and very reserved in tone; and we may be quite sure that the memorable concluding sentence of the above paragraph would never have been written except to a woman. Most people will be delighted to see already fallen under the 'regimen of women' the very man

who was to set the trumpet to his lips against it. But those who study Knox's life are indebted to his familiar correspondence, and especially to the earlier part of it, for far more than the gratification of this not unkindly malice. For these letters, I think, prove to all—what the finer ear might have gathered with certainty from many things even in his public writings—that the main source of that outward and active career was an inner life.

We must part for ever with the idea of Knox as a human cannon-ball, endowed simply with force of will, and tearing and shattering as it goes. The views which at a definite period gave this tremendous impulse to a nature previously passive, are not obscure, and are perfectly traceable. They are views upon which Knox continually insists as common to himself with all Christian men, and which were common to him with the mass of Christian men—and women—who were the strength of that time and the hope of the age to follow. They were views which, when received with full conviction by any individual, led outwardly to suffering on the one hand, or, on the other, to shattering the whole compacted system of opposing intolerance. But they were views which, when thus translated into convictions, not only pressed outward with explosive force, but also, and necessarily, spread inwards in reflux and expansion to refresh and animate the man. They might have done so—in the case of some men of that time they did—without overflowing into the private life and into sympathetic converse and confidence with others. But Knox was so constituted as to need this also and to supply it. And the fragments of his correspondence which are all that remain to us, and which probably were all that an extraordinarily busy public work permitted, are conclusive on some things and instructive on others. They are conclusive as to the existence, under that breastplate of hammered iron with which Knox confronted all outward opposition, of a private and personal life—a life inward, secret, and deep, and a life also rich, tender, and eminently sympathetic. They are conclusive also, I think, of this inner life being the source and spring of the life without, instead of being merely derived from it. And they will thus be found instructive as to the influence of that hidden life, in its strength and its limitations alike, on the external career which we have now to trace.

[32] 'Works,' iii. 395.

[33] 'Works,' iii. 376.

[34] 'Works,' iii. 378.

[35] 'Works,' iii. 358.

[36] 'Works,' vi. 104.

[37] 'Works,' ii. 138.

[38] 'Calvini Epistolae,' Ep. 306.

[39] 'Works,' vi. p. lvii.

[40] 'Works,' iii. 337.

[41] 'Works,' iii. 352.

[42] 'Works,' iii. 379. Compare, or contrast, this scene of the three poor women with another recorded by a still greater master of English. The tinker had gone on business one day to Bedford:

’In one of the streets of that town, I came where there were three or four poor women sitting at a door in the sun, and talking about the things of God.... But they were far above, out of my reach; for their talk was about a new birth, the work of God on their hearts, also how they were convinced of their miserable state.... And methought they spake as if joy did make them speak; they spake with such pleasantness of Scripture language, and with such appearance of grace in all they said, that they were to me as if they had found a new world, as if they were people that dwelt alone, and were not to be reckoned among their neighbours.’—Bunyan’s Grace Abounding.

[43] ’Works,’ iii. 350.

[44] ’Works,’ iii. 360.

[45] ’Works,’ iii. 366.

[46] ’Works,’ iii. 368.

[47] ’Works,’ iii. 357. Browning makes his good old Pope feel, in the later Renaissance, as if Christian heroism had been ’so possible When in the way stood Nero’s cross and stake, So hard now’— and, looking back almost regretfully to Nero’s time, to ask—

’How could saints and martyrs fail see truth Streak the night’s blackness?’

’The Ring and the Book. The Pope,’ line 1827.

[48] ’Works,’ vi. 514.

[49] ’The examples of God’s children always complaining of their own wretchedness serve for the penitent that they slide not into desperation.’—’Works,’ vi. 85.

[50] ’Works,’ iii. 386.

[51] ’Works,’ vi. 513.

[52] It is of the letter from which the above is taken that Knox in publishing it long after says apologetically, ’If it serve not for this estate of Scotland, yet it will serve a troubled conscience, so long as the Kirk of God remaineth in either realm.’—’Works,’ vi. 617.

[53] ’Works,’ iii. 362.

[54] ’Works,’ iv. 252.

[55] ’Honest’ in that age meant something nearly equivalent to ’honourable,’ and that they were ’poor women’ may refer to troubles which they brought to him, other than want of money.

[56] ’Works,’ vi. 104.

[57] ’Works,’ iii. 370.

[58] ’Conditions’ refers to inward nature, not outward circumstances. It may be explained by a letter written nine years later, also to a friend in England, in which Knox apologises for not having written him for years, during which the Reformer had been ’tossed with many storms,’ yet might have sent a letter, ’if that this my churlish nature, for the most part oppressed with melancholy, had not staid tongue and pen from doing of their duty.’—’Works,’ vi. 566. Knox in 1553 was suffering

severely from gravel and dyspepsia; one of these was already an ’old malady’; and both seem to have clung to him during the rest of his life.

[59] ’Works,’ vi. 11.

04 - The Public Life: To the Parliament of 1560

CHAPTER IV THE PUBLIC LIFE: TO THE PARLIAMENT OF 1560

Knox had preached only for a few months in St Andrews in 1547, when the castle capitulated to the foreign fleet, and he and his companions were flung into the French galleys. There for nineteen months he toiled at the oar under the lash, and through the cold of two winters, and the heat of the intervening summer, had leisure to count the cost of the choice so recently made. It is a tribute to his constancy that men chiefly remember this dark time by its spots of colour—as when, at Nantes, he flung Our Lady's image into the Loire—'She is light enough: let her learn to swim!' And when off St Andrews they pointed out to him the steeple of the kirk, the emaciated prisoner replied, 'Yes, I know it well: and I am fully persuaded, how weak that ever I now appear, that I shall not depart this life till that my tongue shall glorify His godly name in the same place.' But this first apprenticeship to sorrow went deep into the man. It was when he was 'in Rouen, lying in irons, and sore troubled by corporal infirmity, in a galley named Notre Dame,' that he sent a letter to his St Andrews friends. And in it he asks them to 'Consider'—his countrymen have scarcely as yet considered it sufficiently—'Consider, brethren, it is no speculative theologue which desireth to give you courage, but even your brother in affliction, which partly hath experience what Satan's wrath may do against the chosen of God.'[60] His spirit indeed was in no wise broken: on his escape from France he became again a garrison preacher, and gained over King Edward's rude soldiers in Berwick an ascendancy, even greater than he had held in St Andrews over the young lairds of Fife. But, though not broken, it was chastened. It was during the following years, and especially in 1553, that he wrote the deeply sympathetic letters from which we have already quoted. And in 1554, when he left England to escape Mary Tudor, he introduces into a short but admirable treatise on Prayer some autobiographical references, which seem to date back to the extreme suffering of his captivity, 'when not only the ungodly, but even my faithful brethren, yea, and my own self, that is, all natural understanding, judged my cause (case) to be irremediable.'

'The frail flesh, oppressed with fear and pain, desireth deliverance, ever abhorring and drawing back from obedience giving. O Christian brethren, I write by experience ... I know the grudging and murmuring complaints of the flesh; I know the anger, wrath, and indignation which it conceiveth against God, calling all his promises in doubt, and being ready every hour utterly to fall from God. Against which rests [remains] only faith.'

Knox's faith sprang readily to whatever active duty was set before it. On his escape from France he spent, as we have seen, five years in England, and at the close of that period we have his own assurance that he had become almost an Englishman.

'Sometime I have thought that impossible it had been, so to have removed my affection from the realm of Scotland, that any realm or nation could have been equally dear to me. But God I take to record in my conscience that the troubles present (and appearing to be) in the realm of England are doubly more dolorous unto my heart than ever were the troubles of Scotland.'[61]

He had laboured incessantly in many parts of England, first as licensed preacher and then as King's chaplain, and this of course brought him in contact with church politics as well as the Evangel. It was owing to Knox's remonstrances that, when King Edward's Council put kneeling at the Sacrament into the Prayer-Book, they accompanied it with the Rubric, which is still retained, and which testifies 'that thereby no adoration is intended or ought to be done.' So far his position was reasonable, and even conciliatory. But as early as 1550, when requested, perhaps by the Council of the North, to 'give his confession' in Newcastle as to the Mass, he repeated the Puritan view of his first St Andrews sermon, but now in his favourite form of a syllogism, and with its major clause dangerously enlarged.

'All worshipping, honouring, or service invented by the brain of man in the religion of God, without his own express commandment, is Idolatry.[62] The Mass is invented by the brain of man without any commandment of God, therefore it is idolatry.' To Knox's five years in England now succeeded five years which may be said to have been spent on the Continent. He first drifted to Frankfort, and was put in charge of the English congregation there. Very soon the two parties, which have ever since divided the Church of England, made their appearance in this representative fragment of it. Knox, of course, took the Puritan side as to the form of worship; but a large part of his congregation insisted on the full service of King Edward's book. The matter was brought to a close in rather an unfortunate way by two of Knox's opponents lodging an accusation against him before the Magistrates, of treason against the Emperor, the English Queen, and her Spanish husband. Frankfort was an imperial city, and Knox was thus no longer safe there. He went to Geneva, which was then, under Calvin's influence, an illustrious centre of the reformed faith; and was at once called to be co-pastor there (along with Goodman) of the English-speaking congregation. Knox's later biographer points out the historic importance of this 'the first Puritan congregation.' It was the source of Elizabethan Non-conformity, and 'it is in the writings of Knox and Goodman that those doctrines were first unflinchingly expounded which eventually became the tradition of Puritanism.'[63] The Church Order, too, which they adopted became afterwards that of worship in Scotland; their Psalms were the model for the English and Scotch versions; and, above all, the Genevan Bible, prepared by the members of Knox's congregation at the very time he was their minister, continued for three-quarters of a century thereafter to be 'the household book of the English-speaking nations.' It is called the happiest and most peaceful time of Knox's life. But it was a time of incessant preparation for still greater things, and in this short biography we must confine ourselves to what bears either on the man himself or on his supreme work for his native country. For during all Knox's life on the Continent he seems to have kept in view the problem of how the Evangel could be set free in Scotland. He never had any doubt as to the duty of the individual to confess it in the teeth of the Magistrate and of the law. But how could men combine together to do so, against authority otherwise lawful? On this and similar points he proposed questions on his first arrival in Switzerland to the leading theologians. Bullinger, with the approval of Calvin, gave an answer which may have suggested to Knox the idea that a people (the Armenians are specially instanced) may revolt against 'their legitimate magistrate' who persecutes the truth, provided they have an inferior magistrate to lead them.[64] And next year, 1555, Knox made a memorable visit to Scotland. There James the Fifth's widow, Mary of Lorraine, was now Regent, and so chief 'Magistrate.' She was during all those years not disposed to be intolerant, and the prospect was everywhere encouraging. From Edinburgh Knox writes to Mrs Bowes (still in Northumberland), thanking her for being

’the instrument to draw me from the den of my own ease (you alone did draw me from the rest of quiet study) to contemplate and behold the fervent thirst of our brethren, night and day sobbing and groaning for the bread of life. If I had not seen it with my eyes in my own country, I could not have believed it. Depart I cannot, unto such time as God quench their thirst a little.’ And accordingly later on he adds, ’The trumpet blew the old sound three days together, till private houses of indifferent largeness could not contain the voice of it. God for Christ his Son’s sake grant me to be mindful that the sobs of my heart have not been in vain, nor neglected in the presence of his Majesty. O sweet were the death that should follow such forty days in Edinburgh as here I have had three!’[65]

It was in the midst of this glowing enthusiasm that Knox attended an Edinburgh supper party in the house of Erskine, the Laird of Dun, where the question was formally discussed whether those who believed the Evangel could countenance by their presence the celebration of the Mass? Knox maintained the negative, and as young Maitland of Lethington and other acute doubters were there, all views were well represented. But in the end the Reformer’s zeal prevailed, and another step was taken to making Protestantism a public if not a permitted thing in Scotland. From Edinburgh he took journeys to Forfarshire, to West Lothian, to Ayrshire, and to Renfrewshire; and after half a year spent in incessant preaching, followed occasionally by administering the Sacraments, he was at last cited to appear before the bishops in the Blackfriars Church, Edinburgh. He went, but attended by so many friends that nothing was attempted against him for the time. And now, at the suggestion of Glencairn and Marischal, two of the lords who were favourable to the new doctrine, Knox sat down to write a letter to the Queen Dowager, as Regent of Scotland. It had hitherto been Mary of Lorraine’s policy to play off the Protestant party, which had leanings to England, against the Catholic side, which was faithful to France. Knox accordingly blesses ’God, who by the dew of his heavenly grace, hath so quenched the fire of displeasure in your Grace’s heart,’ and with unprecedented courtesy apologises ’that a man of base estate and condition dare enterprise to admonish a Princess so honourable, endued with wisdom and graces singular.’ Those whom Knox represented were a small minority of Scotchmen; but that did not prevent him demanding of the Regent far more than mere neutrality or ’indifferency’ between the contending parties. He demands of her the reform of both religion and the church. He admits that ’your Grace’s power is not so free as a public Reformation perchance would require’; you ’cannot hastily abolish superstition, ... which to a public Reformation is requisite and necessary. But if the zeal of God’s glory be fervent in your Grace’s heart, you will not by wicked laws maintain idolatry, neither will you suffer the fury of Bishops to murder and devour.’ The Queen Regent was not disposed to go very far with the bishops, but still less was she fervent for God’s glory and public Reformation. Accordingly, on the first Court day she handed Knox’s letter, perhaps unread, to the Bishop of Glasgow, with the words, ’Please you, my Lord, to read a Pasquil.’ The unwise jest came to Knox’s ears, and some years after he published his letter with resentful additions and interpolations. In these he assumed—much too soon—that there was no longer hope of the Regent becoming personally convinced of the Evangel. But he at the same time modified his ’Petition’ on behalf of his party to this, ’that our doctrine may be tried by the plain word of God, and that liberty be granted to us to utter and declare our minds at large in every article and point which are now in controversy’; and on his own behalf and ’in the name of the Lord Jesus, that with indifferency I may be heard to preach, to reason, and to dispute in that cause.’ But now, in July 1556, letters came to Knox in Edinburgh from his congregation in Geneva, ’commanding him in

God’s name, as he was their chosen pastor, to repair unto them for their comfort.’ He at once complied, sending before him from Norham to Dieppe his wife and her mother. Scotland was not yet ripe. The lay professors of the Evangel indeed were not seriously molested after his departure. But on the other hand Knox himself was at once cited to appear in Edinburgh, condemned in absence as a contumacious heretic, and burned at the Cross in the High Street—in effigy. Neither this, nor his daily work in Geneva, had the effect of withdrawing him for a day from his solicitude for his native country. On leaving it he wrote an admirable ’Letter of Wholesome Counsel’[66] urging the continual study of the word of God in families and in congregations.

’Within your own houses, I say, in some cases, ye are bishops and kings; your wife, children, servants, and family are your bishopric and charge; of you it shall be required how carefully and diligently ye have always instructed them in God’s true knowledge, how that ye have studied in them to plant virtue and repress vice. And therefore, I say, ye must make them partakers in reading, exhorting, and in making common prayers, which, I would, in every house were used once a day at least.’ And for each congregation he urged an order of procedure much nearer that of apostolic times than that which the Reformed Church, at his own instance, afterwards instituted in Scotland.

’I think it necessary that for the conference [comparing] of Scriptures, assemblies of brethren be had. The order therein to be observed is expressed by St Paul,’ ... after ’confession’ and ’invocation,’ ’let some place of Scripture be plainly and distinctly read, so much as shall be thought sufficient for one day or time, which ended, if any brother have exhortation, question, or doubt, let him not fear to speak or move the same, so that he do it with moderation, either to edify or to be edified. And hereof I doubt not but great profit shall shortly ensue; for, first, by hearing reading and conferring the Scriptures in the Assembly, the whole body of the Scriptures of God shall become familiar, the judgments and spirits of men shall be tried, their patience and modesty shall be known, and finally their gifts and utterance shall appear.’

If any difficulty of interpretation occurs, it should be ’put in writing before ye dismiss the congregation,’ with the view of consulting some wise adviser. Many, he hopes, would be glad to help them.

’Of myself I will speak as I think; I will more gladly spend fifteen hours in communicating my judgment with you, in explaining as God pleases to open to me any place of Scripture, than half an hour in any matter beside.’

Before six months had passed, however, Knox, who was again abroad, had become troubled by the too great freedom of opinion and the dangers of consequent freedom of life even in the Protestant community, and his letter ’To the Brethren’[67] in Scotland from Dieppe, against Anabaptists and Sectarians, foreshadows the more rigid form which was to be one day impressed upon Church doctrine and life in his native land.

During the ensuing year, 1557, everything was peaceful and hopeful. The Protestants kept their worship private, but it spread from town to town, and from the land of one friendly baron to his neighbours’ territory. Knox had been formally condemned, but those he left behind were not molested, and in March four of the Lords wrote him to Geneva asking him to return to Scotland. They accompanied this with assurances that though ’the Magistrates in this country’ were in the

same state as before, the Churchmen there were daily in less estimation. After consulting Calvin, Knox said farewell to his congregation, and had got as far homewards as Dieppe, where he was much disappointed to receive 'contrary letters.' His reply, indignantly acquiescing, indicates the plan which by this time he had formed in order to solve the combined difficulties in theory and practice which beset Scotland. He reminded his correspondents—Glencairn, Lorne, Erskine, and James Stewart—in very memorable words, that they were themselves magistrates, or at least representatives of the people, and had duties accordingly.

'Your subjects, yea, your brethren, are oppressed, their bodies and souls holden in bondage; and God speaketh to your consciences (unless ye be dead with the blind world) that you ought to hazard your own lives (be it against kings and emperors) for their deliverance. For only for that cause are ye called Princes of the people, and ye receive of your brethren honour, tribute and homage at God's commandment; not by reason of your birth and progeny (as the most part of men falsely do suppose), but by reason of your office and duty, which is to vindicate and deliver your subjects and brethren from all violence and oppression, to the utmost of your power.'[68] The effect of this and other encouragements was to bring matters to a point in Scotland. The Protestant party, which had now been joined by Argyll and Morton, entered into the kind of engagement which was then called a 'Band,' and afterwards became widely known in Scotland as a 'Covenant.' This document, dated 3rd December 1557, bound the signatories to 'apply our whole power, substance, and our very lives, to maintain, set forward, and establish the most blessed Word of God and his congregation ... unto which holy word and congregation we do join us, and also do forsake and renounce the congregation of Satan.' This important step, which seems to have been represented by rumour in Dieppe as something like rebellion in Scotland, apparently startled Knox. A fortnight after it took place he writes the 'Lords of the Congregation,' as they were henceforth called, a letter of caution, urging them to

'seek the favour of the Authority, that by it, if possible be, the cause in which ye labour may be promoted, or at the least not persecuted, which thing after all humble request if ye can not attain, then, with open and solemn protestation of your obedience to be given to the Authority in all things not plainly repugning to God, ye lawfully may attempt the extremity, which is to provide, whether the Authority will consent or no, that Christ's Evangel may be duly preached, and his holy Sacraments rightly ministered unto you, and to your brethren the subjects of that realm.' The Lords of the Congregation were disposed to be at least as cautious as Knox, and during the following year, 1558, there was a remarkable approximation to a possible settlement in Scotland on the basis of toleration. The 'Band' of the congregation does not at all suggest that the Barons who joined in it, and thereby bound themselves to defend their religion against the pressure and tyranny of outsiders, would think it right themselves to exercise a counter pressure and tyranny upon their own vassals within their own lands. And Knox's intimation that the Authority—i.e., the Regent and Parliament—though refusing to promote the Evangel, ought to be asked at least not to persecute it, was most timely. He held, indeed, at this time, that such a concession, if granted, ought to bar not only insurrection, but even a partial and divided establishment of religion. The state of matters was reflected in two resolutions which the Congregation came to immediately after the Band. By the first, common prayers were to be read on Sundays in the churches—which must mean in the churches where the innovators had influence—by the curates, 'if qualified,' and, if not, by those of the parishioners who were. But the second provided that preaching be, in the

meantime, 'had and used privately in quiet houses,' great conventions being avoided 'till God move the Prince to grant public preaching.' And another influence now entered into the history. Knox had initiated an aristocratic revolution. But the Burghs of Scotland had been there, as in every other country of Europe, fortresses of freedom and the advance-guard of constitutional civilisation. And it was now resolved, that the brethren in every town 'should assemble together. And this our weak beginning did God so bless, that within few months the hearts of many were so strengthened, that we sought to have the face of a church among us.'... And the town of Dundee in particular 'began to erect the face of a public church reformed.'[69] Henceforward the great towns became more and more prepared to be the centres of the future struggle. Meantime, however, early in 1558, the 'First Petition of the Protestants of Scotland' was presented to the Regent. It protested against the existing tyranny, and craved, in general and cautious terms, a 'public Reformation,' laying stress on church services in the vulgar tongue, and offering to submit differences to be publicly decided, not only by the New Testament, but by the writings of the Fathers and the laws of Justinian. The offer seems to have been at once accepted. But, according to the account of Knox, who, of course, was still abroad, the proposed public discussion came to nothing, because both parties fell back upon other conditions of arbitration; the Protestants now demanding that the Scriptures alone should decide all controversy, the Catholics insisting on Councils and Canon Law. The next step was a proposal by the Bishops of 'Articles of Reconciliation,' according to which the Old Church was to remain publicly established, while the Protestants might privately pray and baptise in the vulgar tongue. This the innovating party declined, and pressed for 'reformation.' And now the Regent, whom Knox afterwards came to regard as 'crafty and dissimulate,' and who, no doubt, even now desired to please and 'make her profit of both parties,' announced to the Congregation her decision. 'She gave to us permission to use ourselves godly, according to our desires, provided that we should not make public assemblies in Edinburgh or Leith'—i.e., in the capital. The Queen went so far as to promise positive 'assistance to our preachers,' the assistance no doubt being rather private and personal, and the whole arrangement being an interim one, 'until some uniform order might be established by a Parliament.' It was a great step in advance; indeed, Knox says, 'we departed fully contented with her answer;'[70] and it is impossible not to speculate on what the result might have been had the order finally established by Parliament been that both parties should permanently 'use themselves godly according to their desires,' with a publicly acknowledged right of proselytism or persuasion. But from both sides there still came some things hostile to the advent in Scotland of that toleration which the modern conscience has approved. In April 1558 Walter Myln, a priest eighty-two years of age, was seized by order of the Archbishop of St Andrews, condemned for heresy, and burned there amid the general but ineffectual resentment of the people. The sentence was quite legal under the laws which still enforced membership of the Catholic Church upon all Scotchmen. But the last man who had been so condemned was Knox; and he no longer delayed to publish in Geneva an Appellation or appeal against his sentence, directed to the nobles, the estates and the commonalty of Scotland. His demand for a return to the primitive Gospel under the Divine authority is powerful and eloquent. His reasons, on the other hand, for 'appeal from the sentence and judgment of the visible Church to the knowledge of the temporal magistrate' are difficult to reconcile with the position which Knox afterwards took up when that Church was on his own side; and they are indeed chiefly drawn from the Old Testament. It is not until we observe from his re-statement of the case farther on, that his was an appeal 'against a sentence of death,'

that the argument once more straightens itself out so as to suit the lips even of Paul. But Knox declines now to remain on the defensive. He accuses his accusers of heresy and idolatry, and calls upon the nobles of Scotland to decide against them according to God's Word. Here, again, the appeal, so long as it is made to the conscience of all men and of nobles alike, is very cogent. Nor is it less so as addressed specially to the most representative and intelligent Scotchmen of the time, for such the Lords of the Congregation undoubtedly were. It becomes doubtful only when it insists on the right of these temporal 'Princes of the people' to reform the Church—apparently even without the consent of its majority; and it becomes worse than doubtful when he urges their duty as magistrates to repress false religion and to punish idolatry with death. Along with this, however, was published a shorter letter 'To his Beloved Brethren the Commonalty of Scotland.' To these subjects born within the same, their brother John Knox wishes in it 'the spirit of righteous judgment;' and that in a tone of independence which must have sounded to Scottish peasants and burghers like a call to a new life. For in this treatise, unlike the last, each private Scottish man is urged to judge of what claimed to be the original truth, even against an admittedly ancient system. And 'If that system was an error in the beginning, so it is in the end, and the longer that it be followed, and the more that do receive it, it is the more pestilent, and more to be avoided.'

'Neither would I that ye should esteem the Reformation and care of religion less to appertain to you, because ye are no kings, rulers, judges, nobles, nor in authority. Beloved brethren, ye are God's creatures, created and formed to His own image and similitude, for whose redemption was shed the most precious blood of the only beloved Son of God.... For albeit God hath put and ordained distinction and difference between the king and subjects, between the rulers and the common people, in the regimen and administration of civil policies, yet in the hope of the life to come He hath made all equal.... And this is the equality which is between the king and subjects, the most rich or noble, and between the poorest and men of lowest estate; to wit, that as the one is obliged to believe in heart, and with mouth to confess, the Lord Jesus to be the only Saviour of the world, so also is the other.' And by this time Knox has reasoned out for himself the right of the people to maintain the true Church, and to band in defence of it—though that right he even now recognises only when they cannot do better.

'And if in this point your superiors be negligent, or yet pretend to maintain tyrants in their tyranny, most justly ye may provide true teachers for yourselves, be it in your cities, towns, or villages: them ye may maintain and defend against all that shall persecute them, and by that means shall labour to defraud you of that most comfortable food of your souls, Christ's evangel truly preached. Ye may, moreover, withhold the fruits and profits which your false Bishops and clergy most unjustly receive of you, unto such time as they be compelled faithfully to do their charge and duties.'

These appeals by Knox can only have made their way in Scotland gradually and privately. But as the year 1558 went on, the prospect of union became more hopeful. The Queen Regent acted as if 'the duty of the Magistrate' were to prevent majorities and minorities from laying hands on each other. And, then at least, this was not an easy work. The Bishops tyrannised in details in localities where the barons were still on their side; but Myln was the last Protestant martyr in Scotland. On the other hand, the adherents of the congregation became so bold, especially in the towns, that (as Knox tells us) 'the images were stolen away in all parts of the country, and in Edinburgh was that great idol called St Gile first drowned in the North Loch, and after burned.'[71] This was too

much, and the Regent allowed the Bishops to summon the iconoclast preachers for the 19th of July. But a party of Western lairds heard of it on their way from the army of the Border, and insisted on interviewing the Queen. Knox's vivid account of what followed must be quoted. It includes a delicious phonograph of the Scots speech of Mary of Lorraine, who, to the desire to please all men which was common to her with her more famous daughter, seems to have added real good nature and kindliness of heart. James Chalmers of Gadgirth, a rough Ayrshireman, burst out against the Bishops—

'"Madam, we vow to God we shall make one day of it. They oppress us and our tenants for feeding of their idle bellies; they trouble our preachers, and would murder them and us: shall we suffer this any longer? No, madam, it shall not be." And therewith every man put on his steel bonnet. There was heard nothing of the Queen's part but "My joys, my hearts, what ails you? Me means no evil to you nor to your preachers. The Bishops shall do you no wrong. Ye are all my loving subjects. Me knew nothing of this proclamation. The day of your preachers shall be discharged, and me will hear the controversy that is betwixt the Bishops and you. They shall do you no wrong. My Lords," said she to the Bishops, "I forbid you either to trouble them or their preachers." And unto the gentlemen, who were wondrously commoved, she turned again and said, "O, my hearts, should ye not love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind? and should ye not love your neighbours as yourselves?" With these and the like fair words she kept the Bishops from buffets at that time.'[72] Her daughter Mary, the celebrated Queen of Scots, had been married in April to Francis, the Dauphin of France, and the Regent, rejoicing in this long hoped-for alliance, had one thing more at heart. The Scots Parliament was to meet in November, and she hoped that it would confer the crown 'Matrimonial' of Scotland upon her son-in-law, thus consolidating the two kingdoms. In view of this meeting the Lords of the Congregation prepared a petition, the leading prayer of which would have practically freed Scotland from the intolerance of existing legislation in the matter of religion—

'We most humbly desire that all such Acts of Parliament, as in the time of darkness gave power to the churchmen to execute their tyranny against us, by reason that we to them were delated as heretics, may be suspended and abrogated.'[73]

Here again was a proposal which, if taken by itself, would have satisfied the modern view of liberty of conscience. But the petitioners went on to say that they did not object to a temporal judge of heresy, provided he judged according to the Word of God; and they looked forward to a decision of 'all controversies in religion,' not however by Parliament, but by a General Council. This proposal was first handed to the Queen Regent, who 'spared not amiable looks and good words in abundance, but always she kept our Bill close in her pocket.' Both parties in Parliament being thus pleased, the Crown Matrimonial was consented to, and before the Session closed, the Protestant Lords read an important protest, repeating the positions which they had already taken up.

1. 'We protest, that seeing we cannot obtain a just reformation, according to God's word, that it be lawful to us to use ourselves in matters of religion and conscience, as we must answer unto God.

2. 'That we shall incur no danger in life or lands, or other political pains, for not observing such Acts as heretofore have passed in favour of our adversaries.'

They added a protest that if any tumult should arise 'for the diversity of religion,' and if any abuses should be 'violently reformed,' it should not be imputed to them, who desired a reformation in matters of religion by the Authority. From that Authority, however, they, in closing—somewhat inconsistently but most rightfully—demanded once more the 'indifferency' which becometh God's Lieutenant.

Parliament declined to record the Protest, but the Queen Regent said in her confidential way to the Lords, 'Me will remember what is protested; and me shall put good order after this to all things.' Knox was delighted, and in writing to Calvin commended her 'for excellent knowledge in God's word, and good will towards the advancement of his glory.' There is no reason to suppose that Mary of Lorraine had attained to much more than a kindly appreciation of all parties around her, and to that general sense of justice which is strong in rulers and other men so long as they have no personal interest to the contrary. Yet under this feminine 'regimen' Scotland was now within measurable distance of being, alone among the commonwealths of Europe, the home of liberty of worship and freedom of conscience. But that great time was not come; and the small northern land was now caught up again into the whirl of European politics. On the 17th November 1558 Mary of England, the unhappy wife of Philip, died; and her Protestant sister Elizabeth, the daughter of Anne Boleyn, succeeded. It became at once the chief point in the policy of Catholic Europe that France and Scotland should be fast bound together in religion and turned, along with Spain, as one force for the restoration or re-conquest of England. For if the English queen was an illegitimate heretic, then Mary Stuart, already Queen of Scotland and Dauphiness of France, was now Queen of England too; and without delay the French king quartered the arms of England with those of Mary's own country and that of her adoption. The magnificent bribe of a third crown for that fair 'daughter of debate' was too much for her mother in Scotland, who in any case would have found a continued toleration there irreconcileable with the traditions of their House of Guise. The Regent now, in her mild way, joined the cruel Catholic crusade of the French Court, and from the beginning of 1559 the conciliatory policy which had distinguished the previous year in Scotland was at an end. But its results were not ended. They had spread through all ranks, and had gone down to the foundations of society. On New Year's Day of 1559 there was found affixed to the door of every religious house in Scotland the following document—the most extraordinary imitation of a legal writ that Scotland has seen. It is probably not written by Knox, but by some other strong pen. It bears to be a notice or 'summons' of ejectment for the ensuing Whitsunday, and is called THE BEGGARS' WARNING. The Blind, Crooked, Bedrels [bedfast], Widows, Orphans, and all other Poor, so visited by the hand of God as they may not work, TO The Flocks of all Friars within this realm, we wish restitution of wrongs bypast, and reformation in time coming, for salutation.

* * * * *

Ye yourselves are not ignorant, and though ye would be it is now, thanks to God, known to the whole world, by His infallible word, that the benignity or alms of all Christian people pertains to us allanerly [exclusively]; which ye, being hale of body, stark, sturdy, and able to work, what [partly] under pretence of poverty (and nevertheless possessing most easily all abundance) what [partly] through cloaked and hooded simplicity, though your proudness is known, and what [partly] by feigned holiness, which now is declared superstition and idolatry, have these many years, express against God's word and the practice of His Holy Apostles, to our great torment alas! most falsely stolen from us. And as ye have, by your false doctrine and wresting of God's word (learned of your

father Satan), induced the whole people high and low, into sure hope and belief, that to clothe, feed, and nourish you is the only acceptable alms allowed before God, and to give one penny or one piece of bread once in the week, is enough for us; Even so ye have persuaded them to build to you great hospitals, and maintain you therein by their purse, which only pertains now to us by all law, as builded and doted [given] to the poor—of whose number ye are not, nor can be repute, neither by the law of God, nor yet by no other law proceeding of nature, reason, or civil policy.... We have thought good, therefore, before we enter with you in conflict, to warn you, in the name of the great God, by this public writing, affixed on your gates, where ye now dwell, that ye remove forth of our said hospitals betwixt this and the feast of Whitsunday next, so that we the only lawful proprietors thereof may enter thereto, and afterward enjoy these commodities of the Kirk, which ye have hereunto wrongously holden from us: Certifying you, if ye fail, we will at the said term, in whole number (with the help of God and the assistance of His saints in earth, of whose readie support we doubt not), enter and take possession of our said patrimony, and eject you utterly forth of the same.

Let him therefore that before has stolen, steal no more; but rather let him work with his hands that he may be helpful to the poor. FROM THE WHOLE CITIES, TOWNS, AND VILLAGES OF SCOTLAND, THE FIRST DAY OF JANUARY, 1558 {1559}.[74] As it turned out, this summons was in some cases literally fulfilled, and a revolutionary ejectment carried out by Whitsunday 1559. But now from another side came another warning to put the house of the Church in order. The Catholic barons presented a petition for its reform, and the Regent called a Provincial Council on 1st March. It dealt, however, almost exclusively with the lives and duties of the clergy, and leaving untouched the central grievance—the legal authority of the Church and of the Pope over all subjects—had no effect whatever on the public. Immediately after, all 'unauthorised' preaching was forbidden. The Protestants, astonished, waited on the Regent and reminded her of her promises. She replied, in words which were often recalled during the reigns of her Stewart descendants, that 'it became not subjects to burden their Princes with promises, farther than it pleaseth them to keep the same,' and the preachers were ordered to appear before her at Stirling. But now Knox, who had kept up constant communication from Geneva with his friends, suddenly appears on the scene. On 2d May he writes from Edinburgh to Mrs Locke:

'I am come, I praise my God, even in the brunt of the battle: for my fellow-preachers have a day appointed to answer before the Queen Regent, the 10th of this instant, where I intend, if God impede not, also to be present: by life, by death, or else by both, to glorify His godly name, who thus mercifully hath heard my long cries.'[75] The day after this letter was written, Knox was 'blown loud to the horn,' i.e., declared an excommunicated outlaw: but he had meantime left for Dundee, where he was received with acclamation, and from thence departed to Perth, now the centre of Protestantism. There, day by day, he preached to excited multitudes in the Parish Church; and it was after a sermon there, 'vehement against idolatry,' that a foolish priest, attempting to perform mass in the same building, was set upon by the mob of Perth, who had an old feud with the clergy. From the church the multitude streamed away to the magnificent Religious Houses which had adorned the town, and sacked and burned them so thoroughly that only the walls were left standing. It wanted yet four days to that Whitsunday, for ejection on which the 'rascal multitude' had last New Year's Day warned the Friars! The Queen Regent resented this outrageous violence, but was forced to come to an interim agreement with the Lords of the Congregation. On her entry

into Perth they moved into Fife, and Knox having preached in Crail and Anstruther, resolved to do so also in the Parish Church of St Andrews on Sunday. But the St Andrews populace had not yet declared themselves; the Regent's hostile army was only twelve miles off; and the Archbishop—who had occupied the town with a hundred spears and a dozen of culverins—now threatened his life if he attempted it. It was a moment for a bold man. At the hour fixed Knox made his appearance. No one ventured to attack him. He preached with his usual impetuous eloquence on 'casting the buyers and sellers out of the temple,' and at its close the magistrates and council permitted the majority of the people to destroy most of the monasteries, and strip the churches and cathedral of their apparatus of 'idolatry.' Knox was always more comfortable where he could say that such proceedings were countenanced by the local authority, or by the majority of a civic community. In Edinburgh, to which the Congregation next moved, the majority had hitherto been hostile to them; and now, on the Queen Regent's departure, the pulpits were for the first time opened to what was the legitimate glory of the new movement—free and unfettered preaching. Knox, church-statesman though he was, threw himself into this work with a delight that lifted him above calculation of consequences.

'The long thirst of my wretched heart is satisfied, in abundance that is above my expectation; for now, forty days and more hath God used my tongue in my native country to the manifestation of His glory. Whatever now shall follow, as touching my own carcase, His Holy Name be praised.'[76] The castle, however, still remained faithful to the Regent, and on her forces approaching Edinburgh, both parties agreed to a truce till January, which, as respects the town and its religion, provided that—

'The town of Edinburgh shall, without compulsion, use and choose what religion and manner thereof they please, to the said day; so that every man may have freedom to use his own conscience to the day foresaid.'[77] The truce was to be for six months, to January 1560, and it was employed by both parties in preparing for a renewed struggle, and, on the side of the Congregation, in negotiations with Elizabeth and her ministers. Politically, this last step was of the highest importance. For the first time for centuries, it healed the breach with 'our auld enemies of England,' as the Scots statutes had so often described them, and founded an alliance between the two kingdoms, which has since that date been only changed in order to become a union. And in this negotiation the agent and secretary was Knox.[78] He corresponded with the Queen's great minister Cecil (Elizabeth herself would not hear Knox's name). And it says not a little for the self-command and honesty of the English statesman, that he trusted so fully a man whose first letter, written several years before—a letter, too, asking a favour—commenced by Knox's 'discharging his conscience' in this way:—

'In time past, being overcome with common iniquity, you have followed the world in the way of perdition: for ... to the shedding of the blood of God's dear children have you, by silence, consented and subscribed. Of necessity it is, that carnal wisdom and worldly policy, (to both which, you are bruited to be much inclined) give place to God's simple and naked truth.'

Cecil had made no answer to this or to similar subsequent remarks, but he now wrote asking the Congregation,

'if support should be sent hence, what manner of amity might ensue betwixt these two realms, and how the same might be hoped to be perpetual, and not to be so slender as heretofore hath been,

without other assurance of continuance than from time to time hath pleased France.' And the answer, in Knox's handwriting, is signed by the Protestant lords, and assures England

'of our constancy (as men may promise) till our lives end; yea, farther, we will divulgate and set abroad a charge and commandment to our posterity, that the amity and league between you and us contracted and begun in Christ Jesus may by them be kept inviolated for ever.'

There was to be in the future a still more Solemn League and Covenant between the two nations, it too having for its object the deliverance (and, alas! also the uniformity) of religion in both kingdoms. But that public, and this private, league were alike disavowed by the Sovereign, and both became the badge of rebellion. The Queen Regent, indeed, had now fortified Leith, and was filling it with French soldiers. The Lords of the Congregation, founding on this as a breach of faith, resolved to suspend her from the regency, and did so by a proclamation, strangely signed: 'By us, the nobility and commons of the Protestants of the Church of Scotland.' The preachers approved, Knox, however, demanding that a door be still kept open for her restoration. War, of course, at once followed, and it turned out to be very much a fight between Edinburgh and Leith, then not unequally matched.[79] Soon the Protestants got the worst of it. On the last day of October the French, pouring up Leith Walk, drove them back into the Canongate, attacked Leith Wynd, and sent their horsemen in headlong flight through the Netherbow Port and up the High Street. Five days after, the forces of the Congregation having advanced to Restalrig, were enclosed by two advancing bodies of the enemy, and so jammed in near Holyrood, between the crags of the Calton on the one side and the crags of Arthur Seat on the other, as to be extricated only with most serious loss. Confusion and dismay seized upon all, and at midnight they marched out of Edinburgh, pursued by voices of reproach and execration from the overhanging roofs. Next night they gathered helplessly at Stirling. But on the following day Knox entered the pulpit there, and preached a memorable sermon. It recalled the despairing Congregation to a mood of resolute trust and hope. And yet his text was the Psalm which tells of the vine brought from Egypt to be planted in the land, but now wasted and broken down; and the preacher throughout refused even to suggest to the shrinking multitude any lower hope than the vouchsafed shining again of the Divine countenance. There remains only, he concluded,

'that we turn to the Eternal our God, who beats down to death, to the intent that he may raise up again, to leave the remembrance of his wondrous deliverance, to the praise of his own name ... yea, whatsoever shall become of us and of our mortal carcases, I doubt not but that this cause, in despite of Satan, shall prevail in the realm of Scotland.' But his words were as life from the dead, and the sermon, which Buchanan also commemorates, was long after recalled by the preacher himself in St Giles, in another great crisis of the Evangel.

'From the beginning of God's mighty working within this realm, I have been with you in your most desperate tentations. Ask your own consciences, and let them answer you before God, if that I—not I, but God's Spirit by me—in your greatest extremity willed you not ever to depend upon your God, and in His name promised unto you victory and preservation from your enemies, so that ye would only depend upon his protection and prefer His glory to your own lives and worldly commodity. In your most extreme dangers I have been with you: St Johnstone, Cupar Muir, and the Crags of Edinburgh, are yet recent in my heart: yea, that dark and dolorous night wherein all ye, my Lords, with shame and fear left this town, is yet in my mind; and God forbid that ever I

forget it!'

'The voice of one man,' it was afterwards said of Knox by the English ambassador in Edinburgh, 'is able in one hour to put more life in us than five hundred trumpets continually blustering in our ears.' This day in Stirling was the very lowest point of the fortunes of the Congregation, and from this hour they began to rise. There were reverses still; but Scotland was sick of the French, and the end was to come with the coming year. In April 1560, the English forces surrounded Leith; the Queen Regent withdrew from it into the Castle of Edinburgh; and the Lords of the Congregation, stronger than they were originally by the accession of the Duke of Hamilton and the Earls of Morton and Huntly,[80] made one more 'Band' or Covenant. In it for the last time they fall back on liberty of conscience; for all they bind themselves to is,

'with our bodies, goods, friends, and all that we may do, to set forward the Reformation of Religion, according to God's word; and procure, by all means possible, that the truth of God's word may have free passage within this realm, with due administration of the Sacraments, and all things depending upon the said word.'[81] A copy of this Band, by which each subscriber also bound himself not to make separate overtures to the Regent, was brought to her in the Castle. Knox, who by this time was become very hostile to Mary of Lorraine, and reports much doubtful gossip as to her rejoicing over the victories and cruelties of her soldiers, says that when she read the Band, she spoke in quite another and milder sense.

'The malediction of God I give unto them that counselled me to persecute the preachers, and to refuse the petitions of the best part of the true subjects of this realm.' But the time was past for her co-operating for the welfare of that realm. She had fallen into a dropsy, and, becoming daily worse, sent for the Earls Argyll, Glencairn, and Marischal, and the Lord James (her husband's son). They came to her separately, and to each she confessed that she had made a mistake, and should have acceded to the arrangement they had proposed. 'They gave unto her both the counsel and the comfort which they could in that extremity, and willed her to send for some godly learned man, of whom she might receive instruction.' They proposed Willock; but even that gentle preacher did not set forth 'the virtue and strength of the death of Jesus Christ,' without touching also upon 'the vanity and abomination of that idol, the mass.' The dying woman said nothing, good or bad, of the form in which Christianity had been first presented, long years ago, to her childish eyes. But 'she did openly confess "that there was no salvation but in and by the death of Jesus Christ."' And Knox, holding that in this 'Christ Jesus got no small victory' over her, grudges extremely that to her approval of 'the chief head of our religion, wherein we dissent from all Papists and Papistry,' she added no condemnation of opposing ways. But Mary of Lorraine had uttered the last even of her good-natured 'maledictions,' and on the 10th of June the Regent of Scotland ended her 'unhappy life'—a life, that is, which had pleased neither party, though in its later years a great revolution, carried through at the expense of comparatively little violence or bloodshed, had narrowly missed attaining an even ideal result. And now those troubles were over. Nine months before, her daughter had become Queen of France, and a treaty was now concluded at Edinburgh, between the Queen of England on the one part and the 'King and Queen of France and Scotland' on the other, by which the French troops and officials withdrew from Scotland, and an indemnity was granted to the insurgent nobility for all that the Congregation had done. Elizabeth still looked on them as rebels; but Cecil, with more foresight, instructed her plenipotentiaries to provide 'that the government of Scotland be granted to the nation of the land'; and the treaty provided for a Council

of Administration in the absence from Edinburgh of the Sovereigns, and—more important still—for an immediate meeting of the Estates, which was to be as valid as if presided over by them.[82] The most important Parliament which Scotland has ever seen sat on 1st August 1560, and was very largely attended by nobles, lairds, and burgh representatives. Naturally, a petition was at once laid before it for the abolition of the old Church system. Equally naturally, this was met by a request for a statement of the new Church doctrine—a confession of faith. It was prepared by Knox and three others, and in four days presented to the Parliament.

'I never heard,' says the English envoy to Cecil, 'matters of so great importance, neither sooner despatched nor with better will agreed unto.' Knox's narrative, which is borne out by the records of Parliament, says that

'This our Confession was publicly read, first in audience of the Lords of the Articles, and after, in audience of the whole Parliament, where were present, not only such as professed Christ Jesus, but also a great number of the adversaries of our religion, such as the fore-named bishops, and some others of the temporal estate, who were commanded, in God's name, to object, if they could, anything against that doctrine.' The ministers were present to defend it, but there was no opposition, and a second day was appointed, when the Confession was again read over, article by article, and then a vote was taken. Three, or at the most five, temporal peers voted against ratifying it; 'and yet for their disassenting they produced no better reason but, We will believe as our fathers believed.' Nor was this strange, for the Bishops present, Knox says, 'spake nothing,' Randolph explaining that the three who got to their feet, headed by the St Andrew's primate, said the doctrine was a matter new and strange to them, which they had not examined, and which they could not 'utterly condemn,' or, on the other hand, quite consent to. The vote on the side of the majority was largely a rejoicing outburst of individual conviction. The Earl Marischal indeed, took the obvious ground that

'seeing that my Lords Bishops, who for their learning can, and for that zeal they should bear to the verity, would (as I suppose) gainsay anything that directly repugns to the verity of God—seeing, I say, my Lords here present speak nothing in the contrary of the doctrine proposed, I cannot but hold it to be the very truth of God, and the contrary to be deceivable doctrine.' The rest of the Lords, says Randolph, with common consent, and 'as glad a will as ever I heard men speak,' allowed the same.

'Divers, with protestation of their conscience and faith, desired rather presently to end their lives than ever to think contrary unto that allowed there. Many also offered to shed their blood in defence of the same. The old Lord of Lindsay, as grave and goodly a man as ever I saw, said: "I have lived many years; I am the oldest in this company of my sort; now that it hath pleased God to let me see this day, where so many nobles and others have allowed so worthy a work, I will say, with Simeon, Nunc dimittis."'

It was the birthday of a people. For not in that assembly alone, and within the dim walls of the old Parliament House of Edinburgh, was that faith confessed and those vows made. Everywhere the Scottish burgess and the Scottish peasant felt himself called to deal, individually and immediately, with Christianity and the divine; and everywhere the contact was ennobling. 'Common man' as he was, 'the vague, shoreless universe had become for him a firm city, and a dwelling-place which he knew. Such virtue was in belief: in these words well spoken, I believe.'[83] But being a common

man in Scotland, his religion could not be isolated, or his faith for himself alone. Wherever he dwelt, 'in our towns and places reformed,' he was already a member of a self-governing republic, a republic within the Scottish State but not of it, and subject to an invisible King. 'The good old cause' was already born. It kindled itself, as that son of the Burgher mason in Annandale says again, 'like a beacon set on high; high as heaven, yet attainable from earth, whereby the meanest man becomes not a citizen only, but a member of Christ's visible Church; a veritable hero, if he prove a true man.'

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Day by day at this critical epoch Knox preached in St Giles from the 'prophet Haggeus,' on what he called The Building of the House. In one sense the foundation was laid already. In another, Parliament might be called upon to supply one. What foundation was Parliament to lay, and what structure was promised for the days to come?

[60] 'Works,' iii. 10.

[61] 'Works,' iii. 133.

[62] 'Works,' iii. 34. The rashness of the general proposition here can only be appreciated when we remember Knox's view that it was the duty of the Magistrate not only to suppress idolatry, but to punish it with death.

[63] Hume Brown, i. 203.

[64] 'Works,' iii. 224.

[65] 'Works,' iv. 217, 218.

[66] 'Works,' iv. 129.

[67] 'Works,' iv. 261.

[68] 'Works,' i. 272.

[69] 'Works,' i. 300.

[70] 'Works,' i. 307.

[71] 'Works,' i. 256.

[72] 'Works,' i. 258.

[73] 'Works,' i. 310.

[74] 'Works,' i. 320.

[75] 'Works,' vi. 21.

[76] 'Works,' vi. 26.

[77] 'Works,' i. 378. Knox objected to this unlimited freedom of conscience being granted, even for a time; and actually succeeded in retaining the public worship on the ground that Edinburgh had chosen already, though under compulsion. The interest lies in the fact that, at every turn of the

open struggle which now took place between the two parties, the true ultimate solution, that of toleration, came to the front. But it was proposed, or suggested, by each party only when that party was in the minority, and ignored as soon as it regained the power to do wrong. See the following additional pages in Knox's own History:—'Works,' i. 389, 390, 428 ('idolatry and murder'), 432, 442 ('chief duty'), and 444.

[78] Knox himself takes care in his History 'to let the posterity that shall follow understand, by what instruments God wrought the familiarity and friendship, that after we found in England.'—'Works,' ii. 43.

[79] 'It is not unknown to the most part of this realm, that there has been an old hatred and contention betwixt Edinburgh and Leith; Edinburgh seeking continually to possess that liberty which by donation of kings they have long enjoyed, and Leith, by the contrary, aspiring to a liberty and freedom in prejudice of Edinburgh.'—Declaration of the Lords of the Congregation in 1559. 'Works,' i. 426.

[80] Lesser barons sign too, from Cranstoun and Cessford on the Borders, to Leslie of Buchan and John Innes of that Ilk in the North.

[81] 'Works,' ii. 61. It is dated 26 April 1560.

[82] It does not say that all its acts were to be valid. On the contrary, 'certain Articles concerning religion' having been presented on the part of the nobles and people of Scotland, and not meddled with by the plenipotentiaries 'as being of such importance that they judged them proper to be remitted to the King and Queen,' it was provided that the Estates, on their meeting, should choose some persons of quality 'to repair to their Majesties and remonstrate to them the state of their affairs, particularly those last mentioned.'

[83] Thomas Carlyle.

05 - The Public Life: Legislation and Church Plans

CHAPTER V THE PUBLIC LIFE: LEGISLATION AND CHURCH PLANS The Confession presented to the Parliament of 1560 was one of a group which sprang as if from the soil, in almost every country in Europe. They had all a strong family likeness; but not because one imitated the other. They were honest attempts to represent the impression made on the mind of that age by the newly discovered Scriptures, and that impression—the first impression at least—was everywhere the same. And everywhere it was overwhelmingly strong. So far as Knox at least is concerned, he plainly held the extreme view, not only that no one could read the Scriptures without finding in them the new doctrine, but that—as he quite calmly observed on one memorable occasion in St Giles—'all Papists are infidels,' either refusing to consult the light, or denying it when seen. And, of course, nothing was more calculated to confirm this view than a scene like that which we have just described, and which had been recently rehearsed in innumerable cases in Scotland and elsewhere. But, in truth, the new light dazzled all eyes. Later on, men had to analyse it, and they found there were distinctions to be made as to its value:—for example, between truth natural and truth revealed, between the Old Testament and the New, between the truths even of the New Testament and its sacraments—distinctions which some among themselves admitted, and which others refused. The very last publication, too, of Knox in 1572 was an answer to a Scottish Jesuit; for by that time a counter-Reformation, which also was not without its convictions, had begun. But, in the meantime, the energy and the triumph were all on one side. And although only the first step had been taken, it must be remembered that the first step was, in Scotland, the great one. With the really Protestant party, and, of course, with the Puritans, the confession of truth was fundamental. Subsequent arrangements as to the State, and even as to the Church, were subordinate—they were, at the best, mere corollaries from the central doctrine affecting the individual. In every case truth comes first: and human authority a long way later on. In this transaction, for example, of the 17th August 1560, nothing is clearer than that the Parliament did not adopt the doctrine in any way on the authority of the new-born Church. All the forms of a free and deliberate voting of the doctrine as truth—as the creed of the estates, not of the Church, were gone through. Still less, on the other hand, did the Church really adopt it on the authority of the Parliament; (though it must be confessed that this expression of it—the written creed of 1560—had no formal sanction other than that of the State). But it was the confession 'professed by the Protestants,' and exhibited by them 'to the estates;' and it contained in itself abundant and adequate foundation for that independence of the Church which became so dear to Scotland in following ages, and of which Knox himself has always been recognised as, more than any other man, the historical embodiment. The great confession in this creed that 'as we believe in one God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—so do we most constantly believe that from the beginning there has been, now is, and to the end of the world shall be, one Kirk,' is there so deduced from the everlasting purpose and revelations of God, and is so concentrated upon the duty and the privilege of the individual man, that the church in Scotland, even had it never become national, would have stood square and perhaps risen high upon this one foundation. But it was by no means intended to stand on that foundation alone, however adequate. And it was with a view to further steps—not all of them taken at this time—that

clauses as to the civil magistrate were introduced in the penultimate chapter, assigning to him 'principally' the conservation and purgation of the religion—by which, it is carefully explained, is meant not only the 'maintenance' of the true religion, but the 'suppressing' of the false. One more remark may be made. Theoretically, the Church could improve its creed. In France it was read aloud on the first day of each yearly Assembly, that amendments or alterations upon it might be proposed; and in Scotland also the view was strongly held that the only standard unchangeable by the Church was Scripture. This theoretical view, however, was not to have much immediate practical result; especially as the Confession was now ratified by the Parliament. And this was done without change or qualification, though the preface prefixed to it by the Churchmen admits its fallibility and invites amendment—a view in which Knox had long since been encouraged by his earliest teacher.[84] The congregation had confessed the doctrine to the Parliament, and the Parliament had accepted and approved it. Had the Parliament more to do?

Some things were absolutely necessary. It had to wipe out the previous legislation against the profession of the new faith. The Evangel had to be set free by statute. Once liberated from the ban of the law under which its previous victories had been won, it could finish its work independently, and without difficulty sweep the whole of Scotland. And Knox had no doubt as to the right of the Kirk to act independently, or as to its duty to do so—if it could not do more and better. Already, before the Parliament met, the members of it who were Protestants had gathered together in Edinburgh, and arranged for fixing this and that minister of the word in the various centres of population. And once the legal obstacles to proselytism were removed, the way would be open for a more glorious advance than they had yet seen. But such a work in the future, though comparatively easy, and though in Knox's view certain in its result, would be slow. Why not do it all at a stroke? Instead of merely revoking the intolerant laws, why not turn them against the other side? A very strong petition had been already presented against the Romish Church, and exactly a week after the ratification of the Confession, three Acts were passed.[85] These three Acts, with that ratification, constituted the public 'state of religion' during the seven years of Mary's reign, and they were re-enacted on her abdication in 1567 as the foundation of the regime of Protestantism. Of the three, the first was only ambiguously intolerant, for though it ordained that the Pope 'have no jurisdiction nor authority within this realm,' that might be held to reject mainly the Papal encroachment upon civil power. The second was not intolerant at all, and as being well within the power and duty of the nation, it ought to have come first. By it all Acts bypast, and especially those of the five Jameses, not agreeing with God's Word and contrary to the Confession, and 'wherethrow divers innocents did suffer,' were abolished and extinguished for ever. But the third, passed the same day, proceeded on the preamble that 'notwithstanding the reformation already made, according to God's Word, yet there is some of the said Papist Kirk that stubbornly persevere in their wicked idolatry saying Mass and baptising.' And it ordained, against not only them but all dissenters and outsiders for all time, 'that no manner of person in any time coming administer any of the Sacraments foresaid, secretly or any other manner of way, but they that are admitted, or have power to that effect.' And lastly, with regard to the large minority (if, indeed, it was not a clear majority) of the nation who still clung to their ordinary worship, it provided that no one 'shall say Mass, nor yet hear Mass, nor be present thereat,' under the pains, for the first fault, of confiscation of goods and bodily punishment, for the second, of banishment, and for the third, of death. This has always remained the fundamental positive ordinance among the statutes of the Reformation; though it may be fair to take along with it the first of these three Acts, and especially

a positive clause in it which forbids bishops to exercise jurisdiction by Papal authority. No farther establishment of the Church was at the time attempted; and there was indeed no farther legislation till Mary's downfall in 1567. In that year the three Acts of 1560 were anew passed; and they were followed by the formal statement (more or less implied even in the legislation of 1560) that the ministers and people professing Christ according to the Evangel and the Reformed Sacraments and Confession are 'the only true and holy Kirk of Jesus Christ within this realm.' An Act followed by which each king at his coronation was to take an oath to maintain this religion, and also, explicitly, to root out all heretics and enemies 'to the true worship of God that shall be convict by the true Kirk of God.' It seems difficult for statutory religion to go farther: but the solid system and block of intolerance was completed by a group of statutes in 1572, the year of Knox's death. They ordain that Papists and others not joining in the Reformed worship shall after warning be excommunicated by the Church (of which a previous Act, somewhat inconsistently, had declared them not to be at all members); and that 'none shall be reputed as loyal and faithful subjects to our sovereign Lord or his authority, but be punishable as rebels and gain-standers of the same, who shall not give their confession, and make their profession of the said true religion.'

Scotland had taken the wrong legislative turning. The only defence of these statutes, and it is a very inadequate one, is that they could not be fully enforced and were not, and that perhaps they were not quite intended to be enforced. In point of fact Scotland in the Reformation time had little blood-shedding for mere religion on either side to shew, compared to the deluge which stained the scaffolds of continental Europe. That is no answer to the criticism that the only law now needed was one to 'abolish and extinguish' the persecuting laws which had been enacted of old. But even to such a critic, and on the ground of theory, there is something to be said. It is not true that the new theory was worse than the old. On the contrary, the old theory allowed no private judgment to the individual at all; he was bound by the authority of the Church, and it was no comfort to him to know that the state was bound by it too. On the Protestant theory neither the individual nor the state were in the first instance so bound; both were free to find and utter the truth, free for the first time for a thousand years! It was this feeling—that the state was free truthwards and Godwards—which accounted for half of the enthusiasm in the Scots Parliament a week before. And it was not at once perceived, there or elsewhere, that for the state to make use of this freedom by embracing a creed itself—even though it now embraced it as the true creed and no longer as the Church's creed—was perilous for the more fundamental freedom of the individual. He would be sure to feel aggrieved by his state adopting the creed which was not his. And the state might readily be led into holding that it had adopted it not for its officials only but for its subjects, and might shape its legislation accordingly.

Knox was more responsible for the result than any other man, and for him also there is something to be said. The view that the state must adopt a religion for all its subjects and compel them all to be members of its Church, was common ground in that age; both parties proclaimed it (except when they were in too hopeless a minority), and the few Anabaptists and others who anticipated the doctrine of modern times had not been able to get it into practical politics. Knox too, in his first contact with the Reformed faith (and the contact, as we know, was a plunge), had found the tenet of the magistrate's duty in an exaggerated form. And in that form he now reproduced it. The statement of his Confession of 1560 that 'To Kings, Princes, Rulers, and Magistrates we affirm that chiefly and most principally the conservation and purgation of the Religion appertains,' is not at all

stronger than that in the First Confession of Helvetia which Wishart had brought with him before 1545. Switzerland, taught by bitter experience, exchanged it for a milder statement in its Second Confession of 1566.[86] But Calvin and Beza and Knox's friends in the French Protestant Church generally had held to the stronger view of the magistrate's duty, even amid all his persecutions of them; and Knox's passionate indignation against idolatry had led him, even in his early English career, to maintain the duty not only of the magistrate, but even of the subject in so far as he had power, to punish it with death. Indeed his only chance of escaping from the vicious circle of that murderous syllogism[87] was by going back to the right of the individual to stand against the magistrate, and if need be to combine against him, in defence of truth. On this side even that early Helvetic Confession had proclaimed (in Wishart's words but in Knox's spirit), that subjects should obey the magistrate only 'so long as his commandments, statutes, and empires, evidently repugn not with Him for whose sake we honour and worship the magistrate.' And Knox in later years had travelled so far on the road of modern constitutionalism as to maintain the right of subjects to combine against and overthrow the ruler whose intolerant statutes so repugned. How far he had exactly gone would have appeared had the chapter 'of the obedience or disobedience that subjects owe unto their magistrates' appeared in the Scottish Confession unrevised. Randolph says that the 'author of this work' was advised by Lethington and Winram to leave it out. Something, if not a whole chapter, has been left out; and the consequence is that the first Confession of the Scottish Church and people is very much overweighted on the side of absolute power. But had that chapter gone in, it would have been difficult not to have recognised even then, that there was an inconsistency between the alleged high function of the magistrate as to religion, and the disobedience which on that head his subjects may 'owe unto him'—an inconsistency even in theory. The inconsistency in practice Providence was to make its early care.

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It had been necessary for Parliament to revoke its old persecuting statutes. And on that side it had gone farther, proscribing the old religion and Church, and setting up, if not a new church, at least a new religion. But, on another side, and one with which Parliament alone could deal, there was also something necessary. What was to be done with the huge endowments of the Church now abolished and proscribed? And what provision was to be made by the State for that 'maintenance of the true religion' to which it had bound itself, and for its spread among a people, half of whom were not even acquainted with it, though all of them were already bound to it by law? The question of the endowments was a more difficult one, theoretically and practically, than that of the yearly tithes. For the former had been actual gifts, made to the Church or its officials by kings, barons, and other individuals, when there was no law compelling them to give them. What right had the State now to touch these? Two things are to be recalled before answer. All these individual donors had been by law compelled not only to be members of that Church, but to accept it (whether they wished to do so or not) as the exclusive receiver of whatever charities they might desire to institute or to bequeath. For many centuries past in Scotland the proposal to do otherwise would have been not only futile, but a deadly risk to him who tried it. Then, secondly, the same law which had bound the individual to the Church as the exclusive administrator of charities, had kept him in compulsory ignorance of other objects of munificence than those which the Church sanctioned; or if by chance that pious ignorance was broken, it sternly forbade him to support them. For reasons such as these the modern European state has never been able to treat ancient endowments made under

the pressure of its own intolerance with the same respect as if the donors had been really free—free to know, and free to act. The presumption that the donor or testator, if he were living now, would have acted far otherwise than he did, and that in altering his destination the State may be carrying out what he really would have wished, is in such cases by no means without foundation. Knox and others reveal to us that this feeling was overwhelmingly strong at the time with which we are dealing, especially in the minds of the descendants and representatives of the donors themselves. And in the minds of the common people, and of Knox as one sprung from them, there was lying, unexpressed, the feeling which in modern times has been expressed so loudly, that the claim of the individual, whether superior or sovereign, to alienate for unworthy uses huge tracts of territory which carry along with them the lives and labours of masses of men—and of men who have never consented to it—is a claim doubtful in its origin and pernicious in its results. All over Protestant Europe the conclusion even of the wise and just was, that, subject to proper qualifications, the ancient endowments of the Church were now the treasury of the people. But there was another part of the patrimony of the old Church on which Knox had a still stronger opinion—viz., the yearly tithes or Teinds. To these, in his view, that Church and its ministers had neither the divine right which they had claimed, nor any right at all. The 'commandment' of the State indeed had compelled men, often cruelly and unjustly, to pay them to the Church. But the State was now free to dispose of them better, and it was bound to dispose of them justly. And in so far as they should still be exacted at all, they must now be devoted to the most useful and the most charitable purposes—purposes which should certainly include the support of the ministry, but should include many other things too. One of the positions taken up by Knox in his very first sermon in St Andrews (following the views which he reports as held by the Lollards of Kyle), was, 'The teinds by God's law do not appertain of necessity to the Kirkmen.'[88] And now the Book of Discipline, under its head of 'The Rents and Patrimony of the Kirk,' demanded that

'Two sorts of men, that is to say, the ministers and the poor, together with the schools, when order shall be taken thereanent, must be sustained upon the charges of the church.'[89] And again—

'Of the teinds must not only the ministers be sustained, but also the poor and schools.' The kirk was now powerful, and the poor and the schools were weak; and Knox now as ever put forward the strong to champion those who could not help themselves. But he had long before come to the conclusion,[90] that of the classes here co-ordinated as having a right to the teinds, it was the right of the poor that was fundamental, and the claim of the ministers was secondary or ancillary, and perhaps only to be sustained in so far as they preached and distributed to the poor, or possibly only in so far as they were of, and represented, the poor. Accordingly the Assembly of 1562, in a Supplication, no doubt written by Knox, and certainly breathing what had been his spirit ever since the early days of Wishart, conjoins the cause of both in passionate eloquence:

'The Poor be of three sorts: the poor labourers of the ground; the poor desolate beggars, orphans, widows, and strangers; and the poor ministers of Christ Jesus His holy Evangel: which are all so cruelly treated.... For now the poor labourers of the ground are so oppressed by the cruelty of those that pay their Third, that they for the most part advance upon the poor whatsoever they pay to the Queen or to any other. As for the very indigent and poor, to whom God commands a sustentation to be provided of the Teinds, they are so despised that it is a wonder that the sun giveth light and heat to the earth where God's name is so frequently called upon, and no mercy, according to His commandment, shown to His creatures. And also for the ministers, their livings

are so appointed, that the most part shall live but a beggar's life. And all cometh of that impiety—'[91] The position that the 'patrimony of the Church' is fundamentally rather the 'patrimony of the poor,' and that ecclesiastics are merely its distributors, was anything but new. It is a commonplace[92] among the learned of the Catholic Church—the difference was that at this crisis it was possible for Scotland to act upon it, and that the state was urged to remember the poor by a man who, with all his devotion to God and to the other world, burned with compassion for the hard wrought labourers of his people. For it will be observed that here, as elsewhere, Knox is concerned, not only for the 'very indigent,' and the technically 'poor,'[93] but for those especially whom he calls 'your poor brethren; the labourers and manurers (hand-workers) of the ground.' In the Book of Discipline, before entering upon its provisions for dividing the tithe between the ministers, the poor, and the schools, he urges that the labourers must be allowed 'to pay so reasonable teinds, that they may feel some benefit of Christ Jesus, now preached unto them.' For

'With the grief of our hearts we hear that some gentlemen are now as cruel over their tenants as ever were the Papists, requiring of them whatever before they paid to the Church, so that the Papistical tyranny shall only be changed into the tyranny of the lord or of the laird.'... But 'the gentlemen, barons, earls, lords, and others, must be content to live upon their just rents, and suffer the Church to be restored to her liberty, that in her restitution, the poor, who heretofore by the cruel Papists have been spoiled and oppressed, may now receive some comfort and relaxation.' For Knox had now fully conceived that magnificent scheme of statesmanship for Scotland, which is preserved for us in his book of Discipline, presented, after the Confession, to the Estates of Scotland in 1560.[94] How long this project may have been in incubation in his mind, we do not know. But the germ of it may have been very early indeed. It may have come into existence simultaneously with his earliest hope for the 'liberty' and 'restitution' of the oppressed and captive kirk. For I shall now for the last time quote a passage from that early Swiss Confession which his master Wishart had brought over with him to Scotland so long ago; a passage which in its bold comprehensiveness may well have been the original even in his (Knox's) early East Lothian days, of his later 'devout imagination.' The Church, said the Swiss Reformers, as translated by the Scot (and translated, as there is high authority for believing,[95] for the express purpose of founding a Protestant Church in Scotland—or at least in those burghs of Scotland which had received his teaching), is entitled to call upon the magistrate for

'A right and diligent institution of the discipline of citizens, and of the schools a just correction and nurture, with liberality towards the ministers of the Church, with a solicitate and thoughtful charge of the poor, to which end all the riches of the Church [in German, die Gueter der Kirche] is referred.'[96]

Knox's 'Book' and scheme are an expansion of this one sentence. It was statesmanship in the fullest sense, including a poor-law and a system of education, higher and elementary, for the whole country. But it was in the first place a Book of the Church. And while its 'system of national education was realised only in its most imperfect fashion, its system of religious instruction was carried into effect with results that would alone stamp the First Book of Discipline as the most important document in Scottish history' (Hume Brown). Even on the Church side it is somewhat too despotic. The power of discipline and of exclusion which is necessary to every self-governing society was rightly preserved. But in its application it tended here, as in Geneva, to press too much upon the detail of individual life. So, too, the prominence now given to preaching, and the duty laid

down of habitually waiting upon it, may seem inconsistent with the primitive Protestant authority of the Word of God alone. This, however, would have been modified, had the system of 'weekly prophesyings' (which provided for not one man only but for all who are qualified communicating their views), taken root in Scotland, as it has so largely done in Wales. And even as it was, this work of a trained ministry, and especially the preaching, passed in those early days like a ploughshare through the whole soil and substance of the Scottish character, and left enduring and admirable results. Had Knox been able to throw himself directly upon the people, all would have been well. But the people were to be approached through hereditary rulers, whose consent was necessary for funds with which the Church might administer, not the department of religion and worship only, but those also of national education and national charity. That the Church should be administrator was not the difficulty. Whether, indeed, the selection of one religion, to be by ordinance of Parliament the religion of the subjects of the State, was justifiable, will always be gravely questioned. But, rightly or wrongly, that had already been done; and it was clearly fitting that the body which was thus in a sense made co-extensive with the nation, should undertake national duties, of a kind cognate with those properly its own. No one—except perhaps the Catholics—doubted that the new Church, with both the new learning and the new enthusiasm behind it, was better fitted to administer alike education and charity than either the Estates or the Crown. And Knox's great scheme proposed that the Church, in addition to administering its own religion and worship, should in every parish provide—1. That those not able to work should be supported; 2. that those who were able should be compelled to work; 3. that every child should have a public school provided for it; 4. that every youth of promise should have an open way through a system of public schools on to the Universities. It was a great plan, but a perfectly reasonable one. And there was abundance of money for it. For the wealth of the Church now abolished, which the law held to be, at least after the death of the existing life-renters, at the disposal of the Crown,[97] and which was indeed afterwards transferred to it by statute,[98] is generally calculated to have amounted to nearly one half of the whole wealth of the country. But the crowning sin of the old hierarchy had been that on the approach of the Reformation they commenced, in the teeth of their own canons, to alienate the temporalities which they had held only in trust, to the lords and lairds around them as private holders. And the process of waste thus initiated by the Church and the nobles was continued by the Crown and its favourites; the result being that the aristocracy so enriched became a body with personal interests hostile to the people and their new Church. Even in the first flush of the Reformation all that the Reformers could procure was an immediate 'assumption' by the Crown of one-third of the benefices. And even of this one-third, only a part was to go to the Church, the rest being divided between the old possessors and the Crown; or, as Knox pithily put it, 'two parts are freely given to the devil, and the third must be divided between God and the devil.' Even God's part, however, was scandalously ill-paid during Mary's reign, and in addition the Church objected to receiving by way of gift from the Crown what they should have received rather as due from the parishes and the people. This came out very instructively in the Assembly of December 1566. The Queen was now courting the Protestants, and had signed an offer for a considerable sum for the maintenance of the ministers. What was to be said to her offer? The Assembly first requested the opinion of Knox and the other ministers, as the persons concerned. They retired for conference, and 'very gravely' answered—

'That it was their duty to preach to the people the Word of God truly and sincerely, and to crave of the auditors the things that were necessary for their sustentation, as of duty the pastors might

justly crave of their flock.'[99] This striking reversion to the Apostolic rule—all the more striking because it is easily reconcilable with the now accepted doctrine of toleration—was, no doubt, not only in substance but in form the utterance of Knox. But so also, if we are to judge by internal evidence, was the formal answer of the Assembly. They accepted the Queen's gift under the pressure of present necessity, but Not the less, in consideration [of] the law of God ordains the persons who hear the doctrine of salvation at the mouths of his ministers, and thereby receive special food to the nourishment of their souls, to communicate temporal sustentation on [to] their preachers: Their answer is, That having just title to crave the bodily food at the hands of the said persons, and finding no others bound unto them, they only require at their own flock, that they will sustain them according to their bounden duty, and what it shall please them to give for their sustentation, if it were but bread and water, neither will they refuse it, nor desist from the vocation. But to take from others contrary to their will, whom they serve not, they judge it not their duty, nor yet reasonable.'[100] The principle so admirably laid down by Knox has become the principle of modern Presbyterianism throughout the world. And even in that day it required nothing to be added to it except the recognition that Catholics, and others outside the 'flock,' who were merely statutory 'auditors,' were not bound to its pastor in the tithe, or other proportion, of their means. Elementary as this may now seem, it was of course too much for that age. The same Assembly went on to declare that 'the teinds properly pertain to the Kirk,' and while they should be applied not only to the ministers, but also to 'the sustentation of the poor, maintaining of schools, repairing of kirks, and other godly uses,' such application should be 'at the discretion of the Kirk.' It was all right, provided the intolerant establishment were to remain. For in that case the tithes as a State tax were the proper means for the State maintaining church and school and poor; and as the Church had already been set by the State over both poor and school, it was the fit administrator of all. And all this ascendancy was about to be renewed; for two months after this Assembly Bothwell murdered Darnley, and three months later Mary married Bothwell and abdicated. And the great Parliamentary settlement of 1567 commenced with the long delayed ratification of the three old statutes of 1560; two Acts being now added, one declaring that the Reformed Church is the only Church within the realm, the other giving it jurisdiction over Catholics and all others. It was fit that between these two later Acts should be interposed another,[101] giving the ministers a first claim on the 'thirds' of benefices, 'aye and until the Kirk come to the full possession of their proper patrimony, which is the teinds.' The proper patrimony of the ancient Church was, perhaps, rather the endowments which had been gifted to it; yet Knox, who abhorred the idea of inheriting anything from that old Church, took a share of that money, even from the State, with reluctance. But the tithes, to be enforced yearly from Scotsmen by the law, he claimed freely, for they were due to the poor, were due to learning and the school, and were above all due to the Kirk, as entrusted with these other interests no less than with its own. The battle was not over. The scheme of the Book of Discipline remained, even after the statutes of 1567, a mere 'imagination,' all attempted embodiment of it being starved by the nobility and the crown. And in our own century the Church, retaining its statutory jurisdiction over Catholics and Nonconformists, has lost its statutory control over both the schools and the poor, while it has never got anything like 'full possession' or even administration of the teinds, in which all three were to share, but of which it desired to be sole trustee.

It it easy for us, looking back—superfluously easy—to see the fundamental mistake in Knox's legislation. But taking that first step of intolerant establishment as fixed, I see nothing in his

proposed superstructure which was not admirable and heroic, and also—as heroic things so often are—sane and even practicable. And it was all conceived in the interest of the people—of those 'poor brethren' of land and burgh, with whom Knox increasingly identified himself. No doubt the Kirk had no right to claim administration, even as trustee, of the tenth of the yearly fruits of all Scottish industry. But when we think of the objects to which these fruits were to be applied, we shall not be disposed to deal hardly with such a claim. It is not the divided and disinherited Churches of Scotland alone—it is, even more, the 'poor labourers of the ground'—who have reason, in these later days, to join in the death-bed denunciation by Knox of the 'merciless devourers of the patrimony of the Kirk.'

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Knox's statesmanship may have failed—partly because an unjust and unchristian principle was unawares imbedded in its foundation, and partly because the hereditary legislators of Scotland could not rise to the level of its peasant-reformer. But Knox's churchmanship did not fail. It might well have been contended that the freedom of the Church had been compromised by the legislation which was granted or petitioned for. But that was not the Church's view, and the internal organisation which nobles and politicians refused to sanction, the Church, claiming to be free, instantly took up as its own work. In each town or parish the elders and deacons met weekly with the pastor for the care of the congregation. And these 'particular Kirks' now met half-yearly representatively as the 'Universal Kirk' of Scotland. From its first meeting in December 1560 onwards, the General Assembly or Supreme Court of the Church was convened by the authority of the Church itself, and year by year laid the deep foundations of the social and religious future of Scotland. It was a great work—nothing less than organising a rude nation into a self-governing Church. And there were difficulties and dangers in plenty, some of them unforeseen. The nobles were rapacious, the people were divided, the ministers leaned to dogmatism, the lawyers leaned to Erastianism, the Lowlands were menaced by Episcopacy, the Highlands were emerging from heathenism, and between them both there stretched a broad belt of unreformed Popery. There were a hundred difficulties like these, but they were all accepted as in the long day's work. For in Scotland the dayspring was now risen upon men!

What we have here to remember is, that of this huge national struggle the chief weight lay on the shoulders of Knox, a mere pastor in Edinburgh. And during the first seven years of its continuance this indomitable man was sustaining another doubtful conflict, in which the issues not for Scotland only, but for Europe, were so momentous that it must be looked at separately.

[84] The writers of the Scottish Confession in 1560 protest 'that if any man will note in this our Confession any article or sentence repugning to God's holy word, that it would please him of his gentleness, and for Christian charity's sake, to admonish us of the same in write; and we of our honour and fidelity do promise unto him satisfaction from the mouth of God (that is, from His Holy Scriptures), or else reformation of that which he shall prove to be amiss.'—'Works,' ii. 96.

Wishart, the translator in or before 1545 of the First Helvetic Confession, adds to it this similar and very beautiful declaration:—

'It is not our mind for to prescribe by these brief chapters a certain rule of the faith to all churches and congregations, for we know no other rule of faith but the Holy Scripture; and, therefore, we are

well contented with them that agree with these things, howbeit they use another manner of speaking or Confession, different partly to this of ours in words; for rather should the matter be considered than the words. And therefore we make it free for all men to use their own sort of speaking, as they shall perceive most profitable for their churches, and we shall use the same liberty. And if any man will attempt to corrupt the true meaning of this our Confession, he shall hear both a confession and a defence of the verity and truth. It was our pleasure to use these words at this present time, that we might declare our opinion in our religion and worshipping of God.'—'Miscellany of Wodrow Society,' i. 23. This 'declaration' is not in the original Confession, either in Latin or German, and must have been written, probably by Wishart himself, rather for the English readers or the Scottish churches for whom the rest was translated. It is a remarkable legacy.

[85] As now in the Statute Book, 1567, chaps. 2, 3, and 5.

[86] It may be interesting to read the statement of the First Helvetic in Wishart's translation (though this is one of the paragraphs in which that translation mangles the Latin and German originals). It is given in the 'Miscellany of the Wodrow Society,' i. 21:

'Seeing every magistrate and high power is of God, his chief and principal office is (except he would rather use tyranny) to defend the true worshipping of God from all blasphemy, and to procure true religion ... then after to judge the people by equal and godly laws to exercise and maintain judgment and justice, &c.' (Sec. 26); and (Sec. 24), 'They that bring in ungodly sects and opinions ... should be constrained and punished by the magistrates and high powers.' The Second Helvetic Confession of 1566 rather inverts the order put by the First. 'The magistrate's principal office is to procure and preserve peace and public tranquillity. And he never can do this more happily' than by promoting religion, extirpating idolatry, and defending the Church.... For 'the care of religion belongs,' not to the magistrate simply, but 'to the pious magistrate.'

[87] See page 67 and note.

[88] 'Works,' i. 8, 194.

[89] 'Works,' ii. 221, 222.

[90] Knox's opinion was asked upon the point in or before 1556, and he answered ('Works,' iv. 127), 'Touching Tithes, by the law of God they appertain to no priest, for now we have no levitical priesthood; but by law, positive gift, custom, they appertain to princes, and by their commandment to "men of kirk," as they would be termed. In their first donation respect was had to another end, as their own law doth witness, than now is observed. For first, respect was had that such as were accounted distributors of those things that were given to churchmen, should have their reasonable sustentation of the same, making just account of the rest, how it was to be bestowed upon the poor, the stranger, the widow, the fatherless, for whose relief all such rents and duties were chiefly appointed to the church. Secondly, that provision should be made for the ministers of the church, &c.'

[91] 'Works,' ii. 340.

[92] Thomassin, a very great authority, devotes no fewer than eight chapters of his third folio De Beneficiis to proving from Councils and the Fathers that 'Res Ecclesiae, res et patrimonia sunt

pauperum. Earum beneficiarii non domini sunt sed dispensatores.' After voluminous evidence from all the centuries, he holds it superfluously plain that all beneficed men are 'mere dispensers and administrators, not proprietors nor even possessors, of what is truly the patrimony of the poor,' and what is held as trustee for the indigent by Christ Himself; so much so, that when this property of the poor is diverted to support a bishop or other dignitary, he is not entitled to enjoy his house, table, or garments, unless these have a certain suggestion and savour of destitution—necesse est paupertatis odore aliquo perfundi. Thomassin, of course, holds that the Church has a divine right to tithes; but it is a divine right to administer, not to enjoy, them. Knox and the Reformers denied the divine right even to administer: they urged that the State should make the Kirk its administrators.

[93] For them too, and even for the strong and sturdy and the Jolly Beggars among them, he had a certain fellow-feeling; as is witnessed by the zest with which he records their 'Warning' (p. 82). The one point, indeed, at which Knox and Burns come together is 'A man's a man for a' that!'

[94] 'Works,' ii. 183 to 260.

[95] I am indebted for this view to Dr. A.F. Mitchell, Emeritus Professor of Church History in St Andrews, to whom all are indebted who are interested in the historical learning of either the Reformation or the Covenant.

[96] The 'end' to which or for which all the Church patrimony is here said to be given, does not seem to be merely the 'charge of the poor'; though Protestants as well as Catholics often urge that as fundamentally true. It seems to be rather the whole group of good objects which are gathered together. The Latin and German originals must be consulted.

[97] Stair's 'Institutions,' ii. 3, 36. Erskine's 'Institutes,' ii. 10, 19.

[98] 1587, c. 29.

[99] 'Works,' ii. 538.

[100] 'Book of the Universall Kirk of Scotland,' p. 46. The significance of this utterance was long ago pointed out by the Rev. J.C. Macphail, D.D., of Pilrig Church, Edinburgh.

[101] 1567, c. 10.

06 - The Public Life: The Conflict with Queen Mary

CHAPTER VI THE PUBLIC LIFE: THE CONFLICT WITH QUEEN MARY

Parliament had made a great and revolutionary change. It had acted as if the government had been already granted to it, or, in Cecil's phrase, to 'the nation of the land.' And the change was on one side a breaking off of the old alliance with Catholic France. But the sovereigns of Scotland, now and for the last twelvemonth, were no other than the King and Queen of France. They, rather than Parliament, were the 'Authority,' which, according to the consistent theory of that age, had the right to make and enforce changes of religion; and which, according to the more puzzling theory of Knox, had the right to do so—provided the religion so to be enforced was the true one. Accordingly the new Confession of Faith and the statutes passed by the late Parliament, were sent to Paris by the Lord St John. He waited there long, but, of course, brought back no ratification. But that, says Knox, 'we little regarded, nor yet do regard'; for, he adds, falling back rather too late upon one of those great principles his utterance of which has sunk into the hearts of his countrymen,

'all that we did was rather to shew our dutiful obedience than to beg of them any strength to our religion, which from God has full power, and needeth not the suffrage of man, but in so far as man hath need to believe it, if that ever he shall have participation of the life everlasting.'[102]

It was no wonder that the royal pair did not ratify a Protestant Confession, for during their brief reign over France they were the centre of a keen crusade against Protestantism, conducted far more by Mary's counsellors and uncles, the Guises, than by her feeble-minded husband. Towards the end of 1560 this had gone so far that secret preparations seem to have been made for immediately anticipating the St Bartholomew of twelve years later. But the sudden death of Francis and the widowhood of Mary changed the whole situation. The new King was in the power, not of the Guises, but of his mother, Catherine de Medici; and Mary of Scots would now have to accept a second or a third place in Paris. But in Europe, and in the politics of Europe, the beautiful young widow sprang at once into the foremost rank, and became the star of all eyes. Ex-Queen of France, Queen-presumptive of England, and actual Queen of Scotland, which had always been the link between the other two, and to which she was now to return, the marriage destiny of this girl of eighteen would probably decide the wavering balance of Christendom.[103]

Mary understood her high part, and accepted it with alacrity. Fascinating and beautiful, keen-witted and strong-willed, she would have found herself at home in this great game of politics, even if it had not turned upon an element of intense personal interest for herself. But while all men knew that her hand was the chief prize of the game, almost the first man to act on this knowledge, strange to say, was Knox. The Treaty of Edinburgh had acknowledged the right of the Duke (Hamilton or Chatelherault), and of his eldest son Arran, as the next in succession to the Scottish crown after its present holder. And while that present holder was still married to the King of France, the Scottish nobles had urged Arran as a suitable husband for Elizabeth of England. It would be the best arrangement, they thought, for binding the two countries together, and counteracting the inevitable pull asunder from the Sovereigns in Paris. Elizabeth, however, had

replied, to the grave displeasure of the Estates, that she was not 'presently disposed to marry.' And now a new question was raised. Scotland was, of course, still more deeply interested in the probable second marriage of its own Queen. Arran, an extremely flighty young man, was at this moment much under the personal influence of the Reformer; and it was with Knox's privity, and perhaps on his suggestion, and certainly without the knowledge of the nobility generally, that before Mary had been a widow for a month, her young Protestant cousin sent her a ring and a secret letter of courtship. It was again in vain. When Elizabeth refused him, the Estates had been offended, but Arran himself bore the loss with much resignation. Now, however, the case was different; and though Mary at all times treated her young kinsman with kindness, Arran took her prompt rejection of his present overtures grievously to heart, and his wits, never very stable, were soon completely overturned. Knox, however, had now fair warning that Mary Stuart knew herself to be more than a mere Queen of Scots, and that the infinitely difficult questions, which her approaching return to Scotland must necessarily raise, were not to be evaded on easy terms.

There was among these one theoretical question which ought to have been a difficulty for Knox, but of which he was not now disposed to make much. According to his view women should not be sovereigns at all. But, in truth, this was but one branch of the general grievance of arbitrary power in that age. The Reformation took place, we must always remember, at a time when the hereditary authority of kings was greater than either before or since. And this arbitrary power of one man became, if possible, a little more absurd when it happened to be the power of one woman. In 1557, Knox had found himself confronted with a Queen of England, a Queen of Scotland, and a Queen-Regent in Scotland—all of them ladies immersed in Catholicism, and each in a position which, in his view, implied the duty of selecting religion for all her lieges. We, in our time, have a very simple way of getting rid of such an intolerable difficulty. But in that age a man even of the boldness of Knox was thankful to mitigate it. He thought he found a mitigation in the view (held by thinkers and publicists at the time commonly enough) that women should not be entrusted with such a power; and, in 1558, he published anonymously his 'First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment [Regimen or Rule] of Women.' Though anonymous, the book was well known to be his; and being Knox's it was founded not so much on theory as on Scripture precedents, largely misread according to the exigencies of the argument. But the publication was, in any case, a practical mistake. Mary of England died immediately after, and was succeeded by Elizabeth, who was rather more of a woman than her sister, but to whom Knox and Scotland looked as their only ally against Continental Catholicism. Knox repeatedly tried to explain to the new English Queen; but that very great but very feminine ruler never forgave his book. Meantime he came, as we saw, into more personal contact with the Queen-Regent of Scotland, and had the highest hopes from her. Ultimately she disappointed these; but even when she was deposed by the nobles, to whom he had originally looked as the agents in the Reform, Knox insisted on keeping open a door for her restoration, in the event of her coming in the meantime to think with himself. And now her daughter was come to her native country as Queen in her own right. Knox, taught by experience, had already taken part in private overtures to her, and was no longer disposed to stand on any theoretical difficulty as to the rule of a woman. The practical difficulties were enough. And the practical difficulties were tremendous. Had Mary ruled as a modern constitutional Queen, with toleration of religion all around, things would have been easy. She would have enjoyed the freedom which she granted to the lowest of her subjects, and every one of them would have supported her enthusiastically against domestic and foreign aggression. But the

reign of religion which, according to her first proclamation, she, on her arrival, 'found publicly and universally standing,' was very different. It was one by which half the lieges were forbidden the exercise of their own religion and of their ordinary worship; and by which Scotland and all its rulers were pledged to a faith she had been trained as a child to detest, and as a Queen to suppress. The situation was impossible from the first. The only question was, how long it would last.

Knox would have met it fairly by making her acknowledgment of the Protestant Acts and Confession a condition of her being acknowledged by Scotland. And had the fact been known that Mary, by three secret documents, executed just before her childless marriage to the Dauphin, had already handed over her native kingdom, in the event of her having no issue, to the King of France, the crisis, which was to be postponed for so many years, might have come at once. But an intermediate plan was arranged in Paris through 'the man whom all the godly did most reverence,' and whose weight of character was gradually giving him the foremost place in Scotland—Lord James Stewart, the Queen's natural brother. Mary, quick to understand men, put herself under her brother's guidance, and the result was that she was joyfully received in Edinburgh, and a proclamation was issued forbidding, on the one hand, any 'alteration or innovation of the state of religion' as Her Majesty found it in the realm on her arrival, and, on the other, any tumult or violence, especially against Her Majesty's French domestics and followers. So, on the first Sunday, while the Evangel was publicly preached in St Giles in Edinburgh, and in all the great towns and burghs of Scotland, mass was privately celebrated in her chapel at Holyrood, the Lord James with his sword keeping the door, to 'stop all Scottish men to enter in,' whether to join in the worship or to disturb it. It was drawing a different line from that which had been fixed by the recent Parliament, whose Acts also the new Queen had evaded ratifying. Knox's passion against 'idolatry,' beyond all other forms of false religion or irreligion, was fully shared by the mass of his followers, and he tells us that, on this occasion, he worked in private 'rather to mitigate, yea to sloken, that fervency that God had kindled in others.' But in the pulpit 'next Sunday' he said that 'one Mass was more fearful to him than if ten thousand armed enemies were landed in any part of the realm, of purpose to suppress the whole religion'—an exaggeration of intolerance which is unintelligible, until we remember that the 'one mass' which he was thinking of was that of the ruler who might soon have the power, and perhaps had already the intention, of suppressing religion.

Mary had come to Scotland with the deliberate plan of conciliating and capturing her native kingdom, and she was not the woman to shrink from whatever seemed to be necessary in the process. It may have been her brother who suggested a meeting between two people whom, in different ways, he certainly liked as well as admired. In any case, Knox was now at once sent for to the Court, and there followed the first of the famous interviews between Knox and the Queen, recorded in the Fourth Book of his History. The detailed truth of these Dialogues is not to be inferred merely from their vigour and verisimilitude. It results equally from the fact that, throughout, Knox represents the young Queen as meeting him with perfect intelligence, while on most points she actually has the better of the argument. The vindication of Knox has come, not so much from what he has himself so faithfully recorded, as from the judgment of history on the whole situation, and on the relation to it of speakers who were also actors. The first is probably the most important of the dialogues.[104] Mary and her brother received Knox in Holyrood, two ladies standing in the other end of the room. She commenced by taxing him with his book against her 'regimen.' He explained that, if Scotland was satisfied with a female ruler, he would not object.

’But yet,’ said she, ’ye have taught the people to receive another religion than their Princes can allow: And how can that doctrine be of God, seeing that God commands subjects to obey their Princes?’

Knox, in answer, ignored the article of his Confession which bears closely on this point,[105] and fell back on the more fundamental truth.

’Madam, as right religion took neither original nor authority from worldly princes, but from the Eternal God alone, so are not subjects bound to frame their religion according to the appetites of their Princes.’

He easily illustrated this by instances of men in Scripture, who resisted such commands of Princes, and suffered.

’But yet,’ said she, ’they resisted not with the sword.’

’God,’ said he, ’Madam, had not given unto them the power and the means.’

’Think ye,’ quoth she, ’that subjects, having power, may resist their Princes?’

’If their Princes exceed their bounds,’ quoth he, ’Madam, and do against that wherefore they should be obeyed, it is no doubt but they may be resisted, even by power.’ That Princes should regulate the religion of subjects Knox held to be within their ’bounds,’ but only apparently if they regulated it aright, and according to the Word. Otherwise, he now explained, the prince might be restrained, like a father ’stricken with a frenzy.’ At this remarkable argument the Queen ’stood, as it were, amazed more than the quarter of an hour.’ Recovering herself, she said—

’Well, then, I perceive that my subjects shall obey you and not me.’...

’God forbid,’ answered he, in words which really express his fundamental view, ’that ever I take upon me to command any to obey me, or yet to set subjects at liberty to do what pleaseth them. But my travel is that both princes and subjects obey God, who,’ he added, ’commands queens to be nurses unto His people.’

’Yea,’ quoth she, ’but ye are not the Church that I will nourish. I will defend the Kirk of Rome, for, I think, it is the true Kirk of God.’

’Your will,’ quoth he, ’Madam, is no reason; neither doth your thought make that Roman harlot to be the true and immaculate spouse of Jesus Christ.’...

’My conscience,’ said she, ’is not so.’

’Conscience, Madam, requires knowledge, and I fear that right knowledge ye have none.’

’But,’ said she, ’I have both heard and read.’

... ’Have ye heard,’ said he, ’any teach, but such as the Pope and his Cardinals have allowed?’ The Queen avoided a direct answer,[106] but took the next point with unfailing acuteness.

’Ye interpret the Scriptures,’ said she, ’in one manner, and they interpret in another; whom shall I believe? and who shall be judge?’ And Knox’s answer is from his side perfect—

’Ye shall believe God, that plainly speaketh in His word; and farther than the word teacheth you, ye neither shall believe the one nor the other. The word of God is plain in itself; and if there appear any obscurity in one place, the Holy Ghost, who is never contrarious to Himself, explains the same more clearly in other places.’ The conference was long, and was ended with mutual courtesies. Both parties in the country suspected that the new sovereign might be gradually coming round to the new faith. No triumph could have been more glorious for Knox, and at the opening of the interview he had used every method of conciliation. But he never henceforth deceived himself as to the chances in this case. Outwardly, the Queen remained friendly, and he remained loyal; but his opinion as expressed privately, immediately after this first meeting, was recorded later on.

’If there be not in her a proud mind, a crafty wit, and an indurate heart against God and His truth, my judgment faileth me.’

Induration of heart was not a charitable judgment to pass against a young woman brought up in the worst school of morals in Europe, but whom the speaker held never to have met ’God and his truth’ till that forenoon. Yet, as usual, Knox’s judgment was by no means wholly wrong. There is a certain brilliant hardness about the charm of Mary Queen of Scots, even with posterity; and as to religion, whatever may have been the case in the later years of her sad imprisonment, there is no evidence in her early days in Scotland of personal or earnest interest in the religion even of her own church.[107] And a tender and serious interest in religion was held by the whole Protestantism of that day to be the one gate for the individual into ’God’s truth.’ Had his Queen shown anything of this spirit of earnest enquiry, our rough Reformer might have been precipitate to help her steps, though they should be as yet on the wrong side of the dividing line. But Mary made no pretences on the subject, and it was her misfortune, and that of all around, that her opinion on religion—a matter in which she took no more interest than was natural to her years—should have been all important to her subjects. They at least were, or professed to be, in earnest about it; and the man who in her presence now represented that earnestness made no pretences either. But we may be sure that Knox’s judgment on a ’proud mind’ as to the more central and personal truths of religion, would not be mitigated by that keen ’wit’ which played so freely round its external parts, and transfixed so easily his own theory of Church and State. We know from himself that Mary, having found the weak point of the intolerant legislation, took care to press upon it. She was ’ever crying conscience, conscience! it is a sore thing to constrain the conscience;’[108] and she selected for her ’flattering words’ the best of the men around her, till from the question, ’Why may not the Queen have her own Mass, and the form of her religion? what can that hurt us or our religion?’ there came a formal discussion and a vote of the Lords that they were not entitled to constrain her. This state of matters continued during the year 1562. But the real danger, of course, was from abroad, and Knox had intelligence of all that was going on there. In December 1562 a victory of the Guises in France had been followed by dancing at Holyrood; and Knox preached against ’taking pleasure for the displeasure of God’s people.’ The Queen sent for him, and suggested his speaking to herself privately rather than haranguing publicly upon her domestic proceedings: a proposal which he so promptly rejected that she at once turned her back on him. It was on this occasion that, hearing the whisper as he went out, ’He is not afraid,’ he replied, with a ’reasonably merry’ countenance, ’Wherefore should the pleasing face of a gentlewoman affray me? I have looked into the faces of many angry men, and yet have not been affrayed above measure.’ But the effect of that pleasing face upon others around may be measured by a letter

written next day to Cecil by Randolph, who had for some time been Queen Elizabeth's envoy in Edinburgh. He was an intelligent and well-meaning man; but Mary was far more than a match for him, as she had been in France for an abler diplomatist, Throckmorton. Randolph tells the English minister that Knox is still full of 'good zeal and affection' to England. 'I know also that his travail and care is great to unite the hearts of the princes and people of these two realms in perpetual love and hearty kindness.' In the previous year Randolph had heard an incident of Knox's first interview with Mary, which we only know from his letter. Even then Knox 'knocked so hastily upon her heart that he made her weep, as well you know there be of that sex that will do that as well for anger as for grief.' But since that date the Queen of Scots had turned her caressing courtesy directly upon this Englishman, and even the golden cup which she presented to him at Lord James Stewart's marriage had perhaps less influence with Randolph than the bright eyes of one of her 'four Maries' whom he was now pursuing. So he adds now that Knox 'is so full of mistrust in all the Queen's doings, words, and sayings, as though he were either of God's privy counsel, that know how He had determined of her from the beginning, or that he knew the secrets of her heart so well, that neither she did nor could have for ever one good thought of God or of His true religion.' No criticism could be more acute. And yet the research of later times has shown that Knox's judgment, or information, as to what Mary of Scots was now doing, was superior to that of all around him. This was the very close of 1562, and in the next month of January she extended her Catholic correspondence, which had hitherto been chiefly with the Guises and her Cardinal uncle, by letters to the Pope.[109] On the 31st she writes Pius IV. assuring him of her devotion to the Church, and that for it and for the restoration to it of her kingdom she is ready to sacrifice her life.[110] The bearer, too, of this secret missive was Cardinal Granvelle, from Madrid, and deep at this moment in the persecuting plans of Alva and his master Philip. For a new and greater danger was now rising for Scotland. Hitherto the chief pretenders for the hand of the Queen of Scots had been the Archduke Charles, and the Duke of Anjou. (The new King of France was also supposed to be in love with her.) But now the project was pressed of a marriage between her and Don Carlos, the oldest son of Philip and the heir of the mighty monarchy of Spain. And it was with this full in her mind, and with the determination to take a step forward in her own kingdom, that Mary again sent for Knox—this time to Lochleven, where she was hawking. The occasion was well chosen. The Queen's mass was now tolerated: why should not private subjects also be allowed to have it, provided they worshipped privately? 'Who can stop the Queen's subjects to be of the Queen's religion?' Already many Catholics had acted upon this reasoning at Easter of 1563; but in the West the Protestant barons and magistrates, instead of complaining to the Queen and her Council, had apprehended the wrong-doers and proposed to punish them. 'For two hours' the Queen urged him to persuade the gentlemen of the West 'not to put hands to punish any man for the using of themselves in their religion as pleased them.' Nothing could be more clearly right. But nothing could be more clearly against the law; and Knox assured her that if she would enforce that law herself her subjects would be quiet. But 'Will ye,' said she, 'that they shall take my sword into their hand?'

'The sword of justice, Madam,' he answered, 'is God's; and if the magistrate will not use it the people must do so. And therefore it shall be profitable to your Majesty to consider what is the thing your Grace's subjects look to receive of your Majesty, and what it is that ye ought to do unto them by mutual contract. They are bound to obey you, and that not but in God. You are bound to keep laws unto them. You crave of them service: they crave of you protection and defence against

wicked doers.' The Queen, 'somewhat offended, passed to her supper,' and Knox prepared to return to Edinburgh. But her brother, afterwards the Regent, had heard the result of the conference, and Mary learned that matters could not safely be left in this condition. Next morning the Queen sent for Knox as she was going out hawking. She had apparently forgotten all the keen dispute of the evening before; and her manner was caressing and confidential. What did Mr Knox think of Lord Ruthven's offering her a ring? 'I cannot love him,' she added, 'for I know him to use enchantment.' Was Mr Knox not going to Dumfries, to make the Bishop of Athens the superintendent of the Kirk in that county? He was, Knox answered; the proposed superintendent being a man in whom he had confidence. 'If you knew him,' said Mary, 'as well as I do, ye would never promote him to that office, nor yet to any other within the Kirk.' In yet another matter, and one more private and delicate, she required his help. Her half-sister, Lady Argyll, and the Earl, her husband, were, she was afraid, not on good terms. Knox had once reconciled them before, but, 'do this much for my sake, as once again to put them at unity.' And so she dismissed him with promises to enforce the laws against the mass.

Knox for once fell under the spell. He seems to have believed that this most charming of women was at last leaning to the side of her native land. And so he sat down and wrote a long letter to Argyll. He went to Dumfries, and on making enquiry, he found that the Queen was right in her shrewd estimate of the proposed superintendent, and took means to prevent the election. It turned out, too, that she had kept her promise about citing offenders, and no fewer than forty-eight persons, one of them an Archbishop, had been indicted. The first Parliament since her landing had been summoned for June, and Moray and Lethington seem to have suggested to Knox that the Queen would be glad then to ratify the Acts of 1560, in exchange for the approval by the estates of some suitable marriage. Even now, it was these two heads of the Protestant party whom Knox trusted rather than Mary. But the young Queen had outwitted all of them together. The prosecutions throughout the country had pacified the Protestants, and they did not come up to the Parliament. When it met, it did not even ask that the 'state of religion' should be ratified. Meantime the Cardinal of Lorraine had carried to the Council of Trent the adhesion of the Queen of Scots, and a special congregation was held by it for the private reception of her letter. Worse still, the plan for a Spanish marriage, and for setting a Scoto-Spanish queen upon the throne of the Bloody Mary, was now actively prosecuted. All this spring, while professing to carry out her promises to Knox, Mary was negotiating with Madrid, and 'already, in imagination, Queen of Scotland, England, Ireland, Spain, Flanders, Naples, and the Indies,' she was but little interested in the plans which her Scottish nobility were proposing for her to England. Knox had hoped that if not a Protestant noble like Leicester or Arran, at least a royal Protestant like the King of Denmark or the King of Sweden, would, with Elizabeth's help, be a successful suitor. But Queen Elizabeth, whom Knox pithily describes as 'neither good Protestant nor yet resolute Papist,' was not disposed to help any one to marry before herself, least of all her lovely cousin. And the Scottish statesmen, Moray and Maitland, like her own English advisers often, were now so driven to desperation by Elizabeth's vacillations that they had actually—possibly with the hope of frightening her—pressed both at home and abroad the project of marrying the Queen of Scots to the heir of Spain! This apparently came to the knowledge of Knox along with the refusal to meet his hopes on the part of the Scots Parliament; and now his cup was full. Lord James Stewart, by this time the Earl of Moray, son-in-law of the Earl Marischal, and gifted with great estates of the forfeited Earl of Huntly, had been his chief friend. But 'familiarly after that time they spake not together more than a year

and a half; for the said John, by his letter, gave a discharge to the said Earl of all farther intromission or care with his affairs.' In this stately letter Knox recalled all their past career in common, and added that, seeing his hopes had been disappointed,

'I commit you to your own wit, and to the conducting of those who better please you. I praise my God, I this day leave you victor of your enemies, promoted to great honours, and in credit and authority with your sovereign. If so ye long continue, none within the realm shall be more glad than I shall be; but if that after this ye shall decay (as I fear that ye shall) then call to mind by what means God exalted you.' But the pulpit remained to him, and the pulpit in those days had sometimes to combine the functions of free Parliament and free press. Knox went into St Giles', and in a great sermon before the assembled Lords, from whose retrospective eloquence we have already quoted,[111] he drove right at the heart of the situation.

'And now, my Lords, to put end to all, I hear of the Queen's marriage; dukes, brethren to emperors, and kings, all strive for the best game. But this, my Lords, will I say—note the day, and bear witness after—whensoever the nobility of Scotland, professing the Lord Jesus, consent that an infidel (and all Papists are infidels) shall be head to your Sovereign, ye do as far as in you lieth to banish Christ Jesus from this realm; ye bring God's vengeance upon the country, a plague upon yourselves, and perchance ye shall do small comfort to your Sovereign.' That sovereign could scarcely be expected to take the same view, and for the last time the Queen sent for Knox. No one knew so well as she that he had laid his finger on the true hinge of the political question, and that her opponent would have a far stronger case now than at any of their previous interviews. She burst into tears the moment he entered. 'I have borne with you,' she said most truly, 'in all your rigorous manner of speaking; I have sought your favour by all possible means.' 'True it is, madam,' he answered, 'your Grace and I have been at divers controversies, in the which I never perceived your Grace to be offended at me.' Knox's complacency is sometimes thick-skinned: but he was not wrong in thinking that Mary, a woman with immensely more brains than the generality of her posthumous admirers, had from the first understood and, perhaps, half liked her uncompromising adversary, and that she had at least enjoyed the dialectic conflicts in which she had held her own so well. But the matter was more serious now. 'What have you to do with my marriage?' she demanded. Knox in answer hinted that she had herself invited him to give her private advice; but what he had said was in the pulpit, where he had to speak to the nobility and to think of the good of the whole commonwealth.

'What have you to do,' she persisted, 'with my marriage? or what are you within this commonwealth?'

'A subject born within the same,' said he, 'Madam. And albeit I neither be earl, lord, nor baron within it, yet has God made me (how abject that ever I be in your eyes) a profitable member within the same.'

Under the new discipline the preacher claimed a right to utter opinions even as to private marriages, and used it much beyond what the fundamental principles of Protestantism could justify. But Knox was now dealing with his Queen, and he felt himself well within the line of his duty in repeating to herself the deadly consequences to Scotland if its nobility ever consented to her being 'subject to an unfaithful husband.' It was unanswerable, except by a new passion of tears, under which the Reformer stood at first silent and unmoved. He broke silence at last with a clumsy

attempt to explain or to console; and Mary's indignation was not diminished by Knox's quaint protest that he was really a tenderhearted man, and could scarcely bear to see his own children weep when corrected for their faults. She broke with him finally; and Knox, dismissed to the ante-chamber, found himself so solitary, though among the ladies of the Court, that (as we have already seen) he attempted to 'procure the company of women' by moralisings which they too may have found impressive rather than delightful. From this point—June 1563—the history slopes steadily downwards. Mary's ambition was still to be Queen of Spain. Messengers on the subject went to Spain and came to Scotland. But her plans were secretly counterworked by her old enemy Catherine de Medici, the French Queen-mother, and Philip changed his mind continually. In December an incident happened which shewed Knox's new position. A riot arose in the Queen's absence between Catholics who wished to worship in her private chapel and Protestants who wished to prevent or denounce it. The latter were indicted for 'invading' the palace. Knox instantly wrote a letter summoning the faithful to attend in a body along with them; and he was cited to appear before the Queen in Council on a charge of 'convocation of the lieges.' Once more he stood before Mary, but now it was at her bar. Knox had the weakness of listening to gossip, especially as to what his feminine adversaries said; and he records not only what he saw, that 'her pomp lacked one principal point, to wit, womanly gravity,' but also that she was heard to observe—this time apparently in admirable Scots—'Yon man gart me greet, and grat never tear himself. I will see if I can gar him greet.' Knox absolutely refused to withdraw his letter or to apologise for it: and though the Council did not desire to justify his conduct, they heard with some sympathy his plea that Papists were not good advisers of princes, being sons of him who was 'a murderer from the beginning.' Lethington, the Secretary, conducted the prosecution, and it was probably he who at this point remarked—

'You forget yourself: you are not now in the pulpit.'

'I am in the place,' said Knox—and again his word has become memorable—'where I am demanded of conscience to speak the truth, and therefore the truth I speak, impugn it whoso list.' The votes were taken twice over; but the nobles steadily refused to find Knox guilty, and 'that night there was neither dancing nor fiddling in the palace.' During the whole of 1564, however, Knox and the General Assembly were divided from the Protestant courtiers, who argued, with perfect justice, that the attitude of the Reformer and his fellow preachers to the Queen was one of scarcely veiled disloyalty. In a long and formal conference upon the subject, Knox said some things so plainly that Lethington answered—

'Then will ye make subjects to control their princes and rulers?'

'And what harm,' said the other, 'should the Commonwealth receive, if that the corrupt affections of ignorant rulers were moderated, and so bridled by the wisdom and discretion of godly subjects that they should do wrong nor violence to no man?' But even the leading men of the Court, themselves Protestants, were now beginning to be disquieted by a sense that they did not know what their queen was planning, and that they could not be responsible for her actions. During this year, 1564, she was making herself more independent, both of them and of her old advisers in France; one great step being the promotion of the Italian, Rizzio, who was now her confidential secretary. The Spanish marriage was becoming more hopeless, and the eyes of Mary's Catholic friends were now turning in another direction. The man at the English court nearest to the English throne was

young Henry Darnley, and Elizabeth had herself jealously suggested that 'yonder long lad' might possibly please her Scottish cousin. Mary and he were both great-grandchildren of Henry VII., and their union would consolidate the Scottish claim to the English crown—a dangerous result for the daughter of Ann Boleyn. That was a sufficient reason for Darnley not being encouraged to go to Scotland; but he was at last allowed to leave London secretly in February 1565. The young people met in Wemyss Castle, and it was soon plain that Mary and her handsome cousin were on the best terms. Archbishop Beaton, acting as her secretary in Paris, was still pressing King Philip, and on the 15th of March he warned the Spanish ambassador that unless his master came to the rescue Mary would have to throw herself away on her English relative. There was no response, and between the 7th and 10th of April, Mary of Scots and Henry Lord Darnley were privately married in Rizzio's apartment in Holyrood. No one knew it; and nearly two months after, the Archbishop again urges the King of Spain to consent, for his Queen is not yet married, and there is still time for the greater alliance. Seven weeks more passed, and on the 29th June the public marriage took place, and Mary gave her husband the title of king.

It was the downfall of Moray, and, as Knox points out, of the whole temporising Protestant policy since the Queen came to Scotland. Moray saw that clearly enough, and confederating with a number of the other Lords to protest against the marriage and the proposed kingship, the whole party were within three months driven out of Scotland by the energy of the Queen. In the field, Knox confesses, 'her courage increased manlike so much, that she was ever with the foremost.' And in her proclamation she frankly made it her case against the recalcitrant nobility

'that the establishment of Religion will not content them, but we must be forced to govern by Council, such as it shall please them to appoint us; a thing so far beyond all measure, that we think the only mention of so unreasonable a demand is sufficient ... for what other thing is this but to dissolve the whole policy, and in a manner to invert the very order of nature, to make the Prince obey and subjects command?' For now the triumph of absolutism and of Rizzio, as the Papal agent, was complete—more so than Moray or Knox knew. France and Spain, long divided, seemed at last to be working together for the faith. And the greatest of European monarchs, though he declined to wed his heir in Scotland, had by no means abandoned the cause there. On the contrary, in this very spring of 1565, while the Darnley-marriage was preparing, the savage Alva and Granvelle were laying down at Bayonne, by Philip's authority, the first lines of the plan for sending an Armada against Protestant England, in order to place Mary on its throne: and the assurance to that effect, given by Alva's own lips to Mary's envoy, was carried by him to Scotland in time to swell the exultation of her nuptials.[112]

One man was left in Scotland, and he now had at least the people of Edinburgh with him. Darnley, though a Catholic, thought it prudent to come to Knox's preaching on a Sunday very soon after the marriage, but was so unfortunate as to hear a sermon on the text—'Other lords than Thou have had dominion over us.' The preacher explained that in very bad cases of ingratitude of the people, God permitted such lords to be 'boys and women,' and the weakness of Ahab was specially dwelt upon in not restraining his strong-minded wife. Worse than all, the service was an hour longer than he had expected; and the king, characteristically, 'would not dine, and with great fury passed to the hawking.' Knox was summoned to the Council, and ordered not to preach while the Court remained in town. He gave the particularly cautious answer that 'if the Church would command him either to speak or abstain, he would obey, so far as the Word of God would permit him'; but

times were changed, and in this matter the Church had now to obey the Authority. The Lords of the Congregation, for four years the Queen of Scots' nominal advisers, were very soon in exile in England; and Queen Elizabeth, in mortal dread of the apprehended union of France and Spain in a Catholic crusade against her own crown, received 'her sister's rebels' with upbraiding and almost menace. Knox and the General Assembly maintained a defensive warfare all through the year 1565-6. But they had no representation in the Court, and Rizzio succeeded so far that Mary herself tells[113] how she had arranged for the counter-revolution being commenced by a Parliament in April 1566, 'the spiritual estate being placed therein in the ancient manner, tending to have done some good anent restoring the old religion.' Two things prevented this smooth programme being carried out. Mary's rather weak fancy for Darnley seems to have only lasted for a few weeks after her marriage. He turned out to be a fool; and his wife and the nobility declined to promise him the Crown-matrimonial, i.e., to make him successor to her in case there were no children. Darnley now courted the banished lords, and made a 'Band' with them according to the old Scots fashion, a fashion which was to break out nearer home in more savage survival still. For Mary's imprudent favouritism of Rizzio had roused the deadly jealousy both of her husband and of the nobles who remained at home. And on the 9th of March a band of men headed by Morton and Ruthven dragged the Italian out from her supper-table at Holyrood, and stabbed him to death in the ante-chamber; Darnley and the lords remaining in order to make terms with their Queen. The outrage was unavailing; in two days Mary had talked over her husband, escaped with him from Holyrood to Dunbar, and summoned her new favourite, Lord Bothwell, to her aid. Years before, when fighting the Earl of Huntly in the far North, she had expressed to Randolph her regret 'that she was not a man to know what life it was to lie all night in the fields, or to walk on the causeway, with a jack and knapschalle, a Glasgow buckler, and a broadsword.' And now, as before, her energy swept the field clear of her enemies, and she returned to Edinburgh victorious. Knox may not have known of the formal Band; but he was even more opposed to his Queen than were those who signed it, and on 17th March 1566 he 'departed of the Burgh at two hours afternoon, with a great mourning of the godly of religion.' Five days before, on the very day, indeed, after Mary had ridden away through the night from Holyrood, he had penned, 'with deliberate mind to his God,' his retrospective confession,[114] prefixing to it the prayer—

'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit, and put an end, at thy good pleasure, to this my miserable life; for justice and truth are not to be found among the sons of men!'

It was the old sigh, which has been breathed from the most heroic hearts in times of crisis and failure; 'Let me now die, for I am not better than my fathers!' And here once again it was premature. For the Queen, now awakened to the whole situation, saw how rash had been her recent aggressive policy. After the birth of her son in June 1566, instead of framing Parliamentary enactments against the new religion, she vaguely proposed to make some provision for the ministers, and allowed the banished lords, one by one, to come back. And though they now found their unfortunate confederate, Darnley, in neglect and disgrace, they found also their sovereign passing rapidly under a new and more controlling influence; and the Earl of Bothwell was a nominal Protestant. Knox at first was forbidden to return to his pulpit, and he visited the Churches in Ayrshire and Fife, occupying himself among other things in revising the first four books of his history—the only part which is finished by his trenchant pen. But in December the General Assembly met in Edinburgh, and Knox was with them. We have already seen the striking answer

sent by this Assembly[115] as to the proposed gifts of the Queen. But their attention was arrested at this moment by another and very inconsistent order of the Crown restoring the Archbishop of St Andrews, the head of the old hierarchy, to his consistorial jurisdiction, contrary to the law of 1560. It was either a very absurd, or a very alarming, step; and Knox, at the request of the Assembly, prepared a powerful manifesto on the subject. He then went away, with their approval, on a long-meditated visit to England, to visit his sons in Northumberland or Yorkshire, and to strengthen his friends on the more Puritan side of the English Church in their new troubles under Elizabeth. Little is known of his proceedings there; though he remained in England during the whole time between the Assembly of December 1566 and another which sat on 25th June 1567. But between these dates, and in Knox's absence, the most amazing tragedy in the history of Scotland had unrolled itself in Edinburgh. Week by week, the increasing power of Lord Bothwell over the Queen, and her increasing dislike of her husband, had attracted the attention of men. But before February there was a sudden reconciliation between her and Darnley. She brought him to a house in Kirk of Field, near Edinburgh, and at midnight of the 9th it was blown up with gunpowder by the servants of Bothwell, the body of the King being found in the garden. On 21st April Bothwell waylaid and carried off Mary to Dunbar. But he was still a married man, having wedded Lord Huntly's sister fourteen months before. And now in May, came in the new consistorial jurisdiction of the Archbishop, for the only act which that prelate ever performed under it was to confirm a sentence of nullity of this very marriage, and that on the ground that Bothwell and his wife being too nearly related, had not procured a Papal dispensation (the Papal dispensation having not only been procured before the marriage, but having been granted by the hands of the Archbishop himself as Legate). Ten days after this divorce, and in spite of dissuasions from her friends at home and abroad, the ill-fated Queen publicly married the murderer of her husband, and the strong shudder of disgust that passed through the commons of Scotland shook her throne to the ground. So upon Mary's half-compulsory abdication, Moray became Regent for the infant King, who was crowned at Stirling, Knox preaching the coronation sermon. (There were men present on this triumphal occasion before whom he had preached once before in the same place, when sunk in despair after that 'dark and dolorous' flight from Edinburgh.) And now came that great winding up already discussed in our last chapter, the Protestant legislative settlement of Church matters in 1567.

It was the second great climax of Knox's life; and now his public work was done. We shall not find it necessary to follow his later years in detail. They were troubled by ineffectual attempts to reverse the verdict of the people already given. For Mary had a majority of the nobles still with her, and Elizabeth of England resented the claim of a nation to judge its sovereign. An appeal to arms followed: the Regent was victorious at Langside, and the Queen of Scots fled to a long captivity in England. But her claims threw Scotland into civil war during most of the remaining life of Knox. Moray was assassinated in 1570 by one of the Hamiltons whose life he had spared upon Knox's intercession; and next Sunday Knox, who had long since returned into friendship with him, preached on 'Blessed are the dead,' and 'moved three thousand persons to shed tears for the loss of such a good and godly governor.' But Lethington had now gone over to the exiled Queen, and took with him even Kirkaldy, who had fought with Moray at Langside. Henceforth the Castle, where they resided, was a danger to Edinburgh, and in July, 1571, Knox, by agreement of both parties there, was sent for a twelvemonth to St Andrews to be out of harm's way. He had left Edinburgh in wholly broken health, after a fit of apoplexy: he returned feebler still, and had a colleague at once appointed. Yet when the news came from Paris, in September, 1572, of the great massacre of St

Bartholomew, Knox himself took charge of organising the protest of Scotland against the gigantic crime. But that crime of France saved Scotland, and the voice of Scotland's leader was no longer needed. The end was now near, and while 'so feeble as scarce can he stand alone' he sends a farewell message to 'Mr Secretary Cecil' through Killigrew, the new English envoy.

'John Knox doth reverence your Lordship much, and willed me once again to send you word, that he thanked God he had obtained at His hands, that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is truly and simply preached throughout Scotland, which doth so comfort him as he now desireth to be out of this miserable life.'[116] And with an explosion, equally characteristic, against one who had anonymously accused Knox of 'seeking support against his native country,' we may close our notices of this great public life.

'I give him a lie in his throat!... What I have been to my country, although this unthankful age will not know, yet the ages to come will be compelled to bear witness to the truth.... To me it seems a thing most unreasonable, that, in this my decrepit age, I should be compelled to fight against shadows and howlets, that dare not abide the light!'[117] [102] 'Works,' ii. 126.

[103] So much was this looked forward to, that two months before the death of her husband King Francis, the English ambassador, writing from Paris to London of the King's feeble health, says: 'There is much talk of the Queen's second marriage. Some talk of the Prince of Spain, some of the Duke of Austrich, others of the Earl of Arran.

[104] 'Works,' ii. 277.

[105] 'To Kings, Princes, Rulers, and Magistrates we affirm that, chiefly and most principally, the reformation and purgation of the Religion appertains, so that, not only are they appointed for civil policy, but also for maintenance of the true Religion, and for suppressing of idolatry and superstition whatsoever.... And, therefore, we confess and avow that such as resist the supreme power (doing that thing which appertains to his charge) do resist God's ordinance, and therefore cannot be guiltless.'—'Works,' ii. 119.

[106] Mary may not have met a Protestant teacher before, except those whom she and her husband had more than once viewed suffering on the scaffold; but she had read books like the Colloquies of Erasmus with keen appreciation, she was instructed in the great controversy from the Catholic side, and one of the youthful exercises which remain written in her girlish hand is a letter to John Calvin in defence of purgatory.

[107] See Hume Brown, ii. 171, note.

[108] 'Works,' ii. 276. Her answer to the General Assembly in 1565, was that 'she prays all her loving subjects, seeing they have had experience of her goodness, that she neither has in times past, nor yet means hereafter to press the conscience of any man, but that they may worship God in such sort as they are persuaded to be best, that they also will not press her to offend her own conscience.'—'Book of the Universall Kirk,' p. 34.

[109] The Pope had already, since her husband's death, sent her the Golden Rose, with the suggestion that in Scotland she must be a rose among thorns.

[110] Labanoff's 'Lettres de Marie Stuart,' i. 177.

[111] Page 89.

[112] The dates are indicated generally in Hill Burton's 'History,' iv, 133.

[113] Labanoffs 'Lettres de Marie Stuart,' i. 342.

[114] Page 28.

[115] Page 113.

[116] 'Works,' vi. 633.

[117] 'Works,' vi. 596.

07 - Closing Years and Death

CHAPTER VII CLOSING YEARS AND DEATH

It is time to part from the public life of the greatest public man whom Scotland has known. That side of Knox's work, attractively presented to the world at first in the memorable biography of Dr Thomas M'Crie, has been admirably restated by Dr Hume Brown for a later age and from his own judicial standpoint. But Knox's public life was not the whole of his work: in bulk, it was a small part of it. When he became minister of Edinburgh in 1560 there was only one church there; St Cuthberts and Canongate were country parishes outside. It was some years before he got a colleague; and, as sole minister of Edinburgh, he preached twice every Sunday and three times during the week to audiences which sometimes were numbered by thousands. Once a week he attended a Kirk Session; once a week he was a member of the assembly or meeting of the neighbouring elders for their 'prophesying' or 'exercise on Scripture.' Often he was sent away to different districts of the country on preaching visitations under the orders of the Church. But when Knox was at home, his preparations for the pulpit, which were regular and careful, and his other pastoral work, challenged his whole time. And this work was carried on in two places chiefly; in St Giles, which now became the High Church of Edinburgh, and in his house or lodging, which was always in or near the Netherbow, a few hundred yards farther down the High Street. The picturesque old building 'in the throat of the Bow,' which attracts innumerable visitors as the traditional house where Knox died, was not that in which he spent most part of his Edinburgh life. From 1560 down to about the time of his second marriage he lived in a 'great mansion' on the west side of Turing's or Trunk Close; and thereafter for some years in a house on the east side of the same close. Neither of them now exists; but the entrance into the High Street from both was under the windows of the third or Netherbow house, which is shewn in modern times, and which was probably ready for Knox's reception, if not earlier, at least when he came back from his latest visit to St Andrews. In these he kept his books, which constituted much the larger part of his personal property—('you will not always be at your book,' Queen Mary had said, as she turned her back upon him in closing their second interview). And with them, and with helps from the old logic and the new learning (for while abroad he had added Hebrew to his previous instruments of Greek and Latin) he studied hour by hour for the sermons which he delivered—and their delivery also lasted hour after hour—in the great church. In that church there was occasionally much to draw even the vulgar eye. One day it was Huntly, the great Catholic Earl, the most famous man in Knox's opinion among the nobility of Scotland for three hundred years for 'both felicity and worldly wisdom,' whose huge bulk as he had sat opposite to the preacher (the year before he died 'without stroke of sword' on the field of Corrichie) was afterwards, thus vividly recalled.

'Have ye not seen one greater than any of you sitting where presently ye sit, pick his nails, and pull down his bonnet over his eyes, when idolatry, witchcraft, murder, oppression, and such vices were rebuked? Was not his common talk, When the knaves have railed their fill, then will they hold their peace?'[118]

Or, again, it was the French Ambassador, Le Croc, sitting in state on the first Sunday after the news of St Bartholomew, who heard the preacher denounce his master, King Charles, as a 'murderer,' from whom and from whose posterity the vengeance of God would refuse to depart. But these were incidents dramatic and political. And noble as a political calling may be, there have always been some to believe that drawing men and women up to a higher moral life, especially when that life is fed from an immortal hope, is nobler still. But Knox, let us remember, was throughout his early ministry the witness of a still more fascinating and indeed unexampled spectacle—a whole generation suddenly confronted with the moral call of primitive Christianity, and striving to respond to it, no longer in dependence on Church tradition, but by each man moulding himself directly upon Christian facts and Christian promises in the very form in which these were originally delivered by the apostolic age. He was witness of it; and more than witness, for beyond any other man in Scotland Knox was its guide. And while the guidance of the great theological leaders of that generation tended naturally—and quite apart from their usurped statutory ascendency—to press too heavily upon the recovered freedom of Scotland, that danger was but little felt in those early days of enthusiasm in the High Church of Edinburgh.

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What like was the man who was seen, almost every day during all those years, pacing up and down between the Netherbow and St Giles?

Knox, as we are told by a surviving contemporary (who enclosed a portrait of him along with the description), was a man of slightly less than middle height, but with broadish shoulders, limbs well put together, and long fingers. He had a rather swarthy face, with black hair, and a beard a span and a half long, also black, but latterly turning grey. The face was somewhat long, the nose decidedly so, the mouth large, and the lips full, so that the upper lip in particular seemed to be swollen. The chief peculiarity of his face was that his eyes—sunk between a rather narrow forehead, with a strong ridge of eyebrow, above, and ruddy and swelling cheeks, below—looked hollow and retreating. But those eyes were of a darkish blue colour, their glance was keen and vivid, and the whole face was 'not unpleasing.' We can easily believe that 'in his settled and severe countenance there dwelt a natural dignity and majesty, which was by no means ungracious, but in anger authority sat upon his brow.'[119] This seems to be a true portraiture of Knox in the days of his vigour; if we are to speak of vigour in the case of a man with a small and frail body (one of his early biographers speaks of him as a mere corpuscle), and a man throughout his whole public life struggling with disease. In the last year of his prematurely 'decrepit age,' we have another description of him; and this time it is taken in St Andrews. Edinburgh and Leith were now again at war, and the quarter of Knox's house was the most unsafe in the city. The 'King's Men' outside were always attempting to force the Netherbow Port; and their guns, planted close by on the Dow Craig,[120] and a little farther off on Salisbury Crags, smote from either side. They were crossed and answered, not only by the great guns of the castle, held by the Queen's Men under Kirkaldy, but by a nearer battery on the Blackfriars' Yard, and by guns planted on the roof of St Giles (the biggest of which the soldiers of course christened 'John Knox'). In these circumstances Knox was safer away; and from May 1571 to August 1572 his residence was St Andrews. There the mild James Melville, a student at St Leonards, watched the old man with the wistful reverence of youth.

’I saw him every day of his doctrine go hulie and fear,[121] with a furring of martricks about his neck, a staff in the one hand, and good godly Richard Ballanden, his servant, holding up the other oxter,[122] from the Abbey to the parish kirk; and by the said Richard and another servant, lifted up to the pulpit, where he behoved to lean at his first entry; but before he had done with his sermon, he was so active and vigorous that he was like to ding that pulpit in blads,[123] and fly out of it!’[124] And the impact on the mind of the youthful Melville was scarcely less than that on the pulpit. He had his ’pen and little book,’ and for the first half hour of Knox’s sermon, took down ’such things as I could comprehend’; but when the preacher ’entered to the application of his text he made me so to grue[125] and tremble that I could not hold a pen to write!’[126] But his day was rapidly moving to its close; and Knox, without waiting for his return to Edinburgh, now wrote his Will. In it, after an unexpectedly mild address to the Papists, and a prophecy (which was not fulfilled) that his death would turn out a worse thing for them than his life, he turns to the other side, and in one striking paragraph sums up the work that was now to close.

’To the faithful I protest, that God, by my mouth, be I never so abject, has shewn to you His truth in all simplicity. None I have corrupted; none I have defrauded; merchandise have I not made (to God’s glory I write) of the glorious Evangel of Jesus Christ. But according to the measure of the grace granted unto me, I have divided the sermon [word] of truth into just parts: beating down the pride of the proud in all that did declare their rebellion against God, according as God in His law gives to me yet testimony; and raising up the consciences troubled with the knowledge of their own sins, by the declaring of Jesus Christ, the strength of His death, and the mighty operation of His resurrection in the hearts of the faithful.’ When (still before leaving St Andrews) he publishes his last book, he dedicates it to the faithful ’that God of His mercy shall appoint to fight after me;’ and he adds, ’I heartily salute and take my good-night of all the faithful of both realms ... for as the world is weary of me, so am I of it.’ In those darkening days, even when he is merely to write his subscription, it is ’John Knox, with my dead hand but glad heart.’ For in this inevitable anti-climax of failing life, Knox found his compensations not in the world, nor even in the Church. When he returned to Edinburgh, he had become unable for pastoral work. ’All worldly strength, yea, even in things spiritual,’ he writes to his expected colleague, ’decays, and yet never shall the work of God decay.... Visit me, that we may confer together on heavenly things: for, in earth, there is no stability, except in the Kirk of Jesus Christ, ever fighting under the cross. Haste, ere you come too late.’ His colleague hurried from Aberdeen to Edinburgh, and at his induction Knox appeared and spoke once more in public. But it was the last time, and at the close of the service the whole congregation accompanied the failing steps of their minister down to the Netherbow. And from that 9th November 1572 he never left his house.

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We have at least two accounts of his death—one in Latin from a colleague, one in Scots by his old servitor and secretary; and the latter seems to have the merit of admiring and indiscriminating faithfulness. It is often said that such death-bed narratives are worthless, unless judged by the light thrown upon them from the previous life. It is true. Yet Death, too, is a great critic; and, at least when that previous life has included a problem, (as we have thought to be the case here), it may be well before we volunteer a verdict to listen to his summing up. It may finally divide, or it may reunite, the inward and outward elements which have co-existed in the life. And it may at least reveal which of them was the ruling and radical characteristic. For while Knox had long been a

beacon-light to Scotland, we have had reason to think that the flame was first kindled in this man's own soul. But now that the fuel which fed it is withdrawn, will that flame sink into the socket? Will it flicker out, now that the airs which fanned it have become still? How will it behave in the chill that falls from those winnowing wings? The day after Knox sickened he gave one of his servants twenty shillings above his fee, with the words, 'Thou wilt never get no more from me in this life.' Two days after, his mind wandered; and he wished to go to church 'to preach on the resurrection of Christ.' Next day he was better; and when two friends called he ordered a hogshead of wine to be pierced, and urged them to partake, for their host 'would not tarry until it was all drunk.' On Monday, the 17th, he asked the elders and deacons of his church, with the ministers of Edinburgh and Leith, to meet with him; and in solemn and affectionate words, nearly the same with those above quoted from his will, reviewed his ministry and took leave of them all. But here too trouble from his past awaited him. He had not long before accused from the pulpit Maitland of Lethington, now in the Castle, of having said that 'Heaven and hell are things I devised to fray bairns;' and Maitland's demand for evidence or apology was brought to him. Knox had never been able to bear contradiction, especially when he was somewhat in the wrong; and those who wish to acquire new virtues must not postpone them to their last hours. His defence was roundabout and ineffectual; and all were glad when he parted from these details of his long life-struggle, so that his friends, with tears, might take their last look of his worn and wearied face. The effort had been too much for him, and henceforth he never spoke but with great pain. Yet during the rest of the week he had many visitors. One after another the nobles in Edinburgh, Lords Boyd, Drumlanrig, Lindsay, Ruthven, Glencairn, and Morton (then about to be elected Regent) had interviews with him. Of Morton he demanded whether he had been privy to the murder of Darnley, and receiving an evasive assurance that he had not, he charged him to use his wealth and high place 'better in time to come than you have done in time past. If so ye do, God shall bless and honour you; but if ye do it not, God shall spoil you of these benefits, and your end shall be ignominy and shame.' When so many men pressed in, women, devout and honourable, were of course also present. One lady commenced to praise his works for God's cause: 'Tongue! tongue! lady,' he broke in; 'flesh of itself is overproud, and needs no means to esteem itself.' Gradually they all left, except his true friend Fairley of Braid. Knox turned to him: 'Every one bids me good-night; but when will you do it? I shall never be able to recompense you; but I commit you to One that is able to do it—to the Eternal God.' During the days that followed, his weakness reduced him to ejaculatory sentences of prayer. 'Come, Lord Jesus. Sweet Jesus, into Thy hands I commend my spirit' But Scotland was still on his heart; and as Napoleon in his last hours was heard to mutter tete d'armee, so Knox's attendants caught the words, 'Be merciful, O Lord, to Thy Church, which Thou hast redeemed. Give peace to this afflicted commonwealth. Raise up faithful pastors who will take charge of Thy Church. Grant us, Lord, the perfect hatred of sin, both by the evidences of Thy wrath and mercy.' Sometimes he was conscious of those around, and seemed to address them. 'O serve the Lord in fear, and death shall not be terrible to you. Nay, blessed shall death be to those who have felt the power of the death of the only begotten Son of God.' On his last Sabbath a more remarkable scene occurred. He had been lying quiet during the afternoon, and suddenly exclaimed, 'If any be present let them come and see the work of God.' His friend, Johnston of Elphinstone, was summoned from the adjacent church, and on his arrival Knox burst out, 'I have been these two last nights in meditation on the troubled Church of God, the spouse of Jesus Christ, despised of the world, but precious in His sight. I have called to God for her, and have committed her to her head,

Jesus Christ. I have been fighting against Satan, who is ever ready to assault. Yea, I have fought against spiritual wickedness in heavenly things, and have prevailed. I have been in heaven and have possession. I have tasted of the heavenly joys where presently I am.' Gradually this rapture of retrospection and assurance wore itself down, with the help of recitation by the dying man of the Creed and the Lord's Prayer—Knox pausing over the clause 'Our Father,' to ejaculate, 'Who can pronounce so holy words?'

Next day, Monday, 24 November, 1572, was his last on earth. His three most intimate friends sat by his bedside. Campbell of Kinyeancleugh asked him if he had any pain. 'It is no painful pain,' he said; 'but such a pain as shall soon, I trust, put an end to the battle.' To this friend he left in charge his wife, whom later of the day he asked to read him the fifteenth chapter to the Corinthians. When it was finished, 'Now for the last [time],' he said, 'I commend my soul, spirit, and body' (and as he spoke he touched three of his fingers) 'into Thy hands, O Lord.' Later of the day he called to his wife again, 'Go read where I cast my first anchor!' She turned to the seventeenth chapter of John, and followed it up with part of a sermon of Calvin on the Epistle to the Ephesians. It seems to have been after this that he fell into a moaning slumber. All watched around him. Suddenly he woke, and being asked why he sighed, said that he had been sustaining a last 'assault of Satan.' Often before had he tempted him with allurements, and urged him to despair. Now he had sought to make him feel as if he had merited heaven by his faithful ministry. 'But what have I that I have not received? Wherefore,[127] I give thanks to my God, through Jesus Christ, who hath been pleased to give me the victory; and I am persuaded that the tempter shall not again attack me, but that within a short time I shall, without any great pain of body or anguish of mind, exchange this mortal and miserable life for a blessed immortality through Jesus Christ.' During the hours which followed he lay quite still, and they delayed reading the evening prayer till past ten o'clock, thinking he was asleep. When it was finished, his physician asked him if he had heard the prayers. 'Would to God,' he answered, 'that you and all men had heard them as I have heard them; I praise God for that heavenly sound.' As eleven o'clock drew on he gave a deep sigh, and they heard the words, 'Now it is come.' His servant, Richard Bannatyne, drew near, and called upon him to think upon the comfortable promises of Christ which he had so often declared to others. Knox was already speechless, but his servant pleaded for one sign that he heard the words of peace. As if collecting his whole strength, he lifted up his right hand heavenwards, and sighing twice, peacefully expired.

* * * * * Such a life had such a close.

[118] 'Works,' ii. 362.

[119] Sir Peter Young's letter to Beza, 13th Nov. 1579.—'Life of Knox,' by Hume Brown, ii. 323.

[120] That is, the Craig Dhu or Black Rock. So the Calton Crags were called, which now look green amid surrounding buildings, but which then were a dark and frowning patch in a semicircle of green hill that stretched from St Cuthberts to Holyrood.

[121] Slowly and warily.

[122] Armpit.

[123] Smite it into shivers.

[124] 'Autobiography and Diary,' p. 33.

[125] To grue = to thrill and shudder.

[126] 'Autobiography and Diary,' p. 26.

[127] It will be recognised that this sentence is translated from the Latin.

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* * * * * Transcriber’s notes:

Obvious typographical and other printer errors and misspellings have been corrected. Archaic spellings have been retained.

Footnotes are placed at the end of the chapter in which they appear. In the Index, page 1 as a reference for "Reticence of Knox" has been changed to page 11 since there is no page 1, but page 11 does refer to the subject of Knox’s reticence.

Page 141, omitted in the Index as a reference for "Kirk of Field", has been added.

Omission in the Index of a page reference for "Bothwellhaugh" has been retained as there is no mention of "Bothwellhaugh" in the text. The date 1563 on page 47 is a best guess since the final number of the date is completely unreadable due to an ink blot. The names Campbell of Kinzencleuch and Kirkcaldy of Grange have been changed to Campbell of Kinyeancleugh and Kirkaldy of Grange in the Index to agree with spelling in the text. THE END