



## THE SCOTTISH REFORMATION AND HOW IT DIFFERS FROM ENGLAND'S

S.J. Lamont

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**Abstracts.** The ways in which the Reformation began and developed in England and Scotland were distinct and led to a different type of national church in each country. The Scottish Reformation, led by John Knox, was closer to the ideas developed in Geneva by John Calvin and came to be called Presbyterian because it replaced bishops and dioceses with presbyteries composed of equal numbers of ministers and elders. The Scottish church was non-hierarchical and closer to the people than the model adopted in England. In this contribution Stewart Lamont (who has written in one of his books about the uneasy alliances which national churches have with the state) describes how the Scottish model of Reformation led to Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland, being a centre of the Enlightenment in Europe. Nowadays secularisation has overwhelmed both national churches in the United Kingdom and they have both lost their position at the centre of national life. Membership of the Kirk (the name by which the Church of Scotland is commonly known) is now less than one third of the total fifty years ago. While some evangelical churches are showing growth, the national church is now mostly composed of older members, and its moral authority over individuals has transferred to campaigning on social issues. However, the legacy of Knox and the Presbyterian system gave Scotland an educational system whose seeds started bearing fruit from the time of the Enlightenment between 1750s to 1850s when Scotland was a centre of intellectual achievement, and which is still at the heart of its educational institutions.

**Key words.** Reformation, church, ecclesiology, Presbyterianism, Protestantism, Catholicism, denomination, bishop, minister, elder, Kirk, secularisation, education, Enlightenment.

The tiny nation of Scotland (currently 5.42m population compared with the UK's 66.5m) has always 'punched above its weight'. The Scots are proud of their intellectual heritage - at one point during the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the Enlightenment period began, it was said that if you stood at the entrance to the city of Edinburgh you could seize fifty men of genius by the hand in half an hour. This was the era when David Hume and Adam Smith were liv-

ing there and when Scotland had four universities to England's two.

The source of much of this intellectual energy can be traced to the Protestant Reformation and the way in which Scotland adopted a very different Reformation from the one in England when King Henry VIII broke with the Roman Catholic Church. To examine the reasons for this we have to look to its religious history and the life of a man called John Knox [Lamont, 1991; Kyle, 2009].

At its peak the medieval Catholic Church held sway over most of Europe and had more wealth and power than any king. Its popes even had armies. It was also corrupt and by 1500AD signs of revolt were beginning to show. Luther's ideas in Germany were being spread by the medieval equivalent of the internet - the printing press. The Latin Bible was being translated into common languages and its ideas were feeding an appetite for revolt. Luther's ideas were founded on two principles: *sola fide* and *sola scriptura*: the first implied that salvation came from faith alone rather than through a licence from the church; the second that the Bible was the source of authority, not church dogma or tradition. The counter argument of the Catholic Church was that 'there is no salvation outside the church' (*extra ecclesiam non salus est*). Luther did not intend to abolish the church and the difference was between those who saw the church as essential (Roman Catholics) and those who thought it was necessary (Protestants). Both adhered to the idea that only one religion or church system should be tolerated in a nation. Orthodox churches were of the same opinion, then and now [Douglas, 1974].

Up to this period, Scotland was strongly linked with France, by inter-marriage between the royal families of both countries. Mary of Guise (also called Mary of Lorraine) became Queen consort upon her marriage to King James V of Scotland in 1538. Her infant daughter, Mary, inherited the throne when James died in 1542 and her mother became Regent (effectively monarch of Scotland). Mary's main goal was a close alliance between the powerful French Catholic nation and smaller Scotland, which she wanted to remain Catholic and independent of England. Both countries saw England as a threat and this had bound them closer in an alliance which had begun as far back as 1295.

Many of those who brought Luther's teaching into Scotland were burned as heretics. One of these, George Wishart, died in 1543 in St Andrews, then a centre of pilgrimage which boasted that it housed the bones of St Andrew in a cathedral with the second longest nave in Europe. Revenge was sought for Wishart's death and this ended in the mur-

der of Cardinal Beaton who led the Catholic Church in Scotland. Among the rebels was a priest named John Knox who was fated to become a leading Protestant in Europe.

For his part in the rebellion Knox served a prison sentence in the French galley ships. It toughened his resolve and upon release he opted to live in England in the border town of Berwick as his protestant views would have put his life in danger in Scotland. In 1535, King Henry VIII of England had broken with Rome and put himself at the head of the Church of England. There were still many Catholics loyal to Rome in England but when Henry died in 1547, his son Edward became King aged 9. Despite his youth the boy opted to promote a Protestant church and John Knox became one of his chaplains. Knox might have become a bishop but for the death of the young king in 1553. Edward's step-sister Mary, a devout Catholic, became Queen and she proceeded to try to undo the English Reformation. Her executions of protestants earned her the name of 'Bloody Mary'.

Knox fled to mainland Europe, to Geneva, where John Calvin had firmly established a Protestant city and church system. At this point Knox wrote a tract ("Against the Monstrous Regiment (i.e. rule) of Women") in which he argued that a woman had no right to be a monarch. Knox has been labelled a misogynist because of this tract which owed more to his feelings towards the two Marys than a hatred of women. In fact, he enjoyed cordial relations with women in his personal life. The tract was the main reason he never gained acceptance again in England, because when 'Bloody Mary' died in 1558, she was succeeded by another woman, her step-sister Elizabeth. Despite the fact that Elizabeth was a staunch supporter of the new protestant Church of England she did not want Knox back in her kingdom.

The structure of Elizabeth's Church of England (i.e. its *ecclesiology*) which she inherited from Henry VIII, was not unlike that of the Catholic church it replaced. Both were pyramids with the pope/monarch at the top and beneath them a system of bishops appointed by the head. These bishops governed areas known as dioceses made up of a number of parishes overseen by priests. In the

English protestant system, monasteries were abolished and priests were allowed to marry. The system Knox found in Geneva differed in that there were no bishops. Calvin emphasised the sovereignty of God and the role of the civil magistrate as his agent. Catholic doctrine and priests were replaced by ministers and the 'priesthood of all believers'. This meant that all ministers were equal in status. The hierarchy of persons was replaced by a system of church courts (councils) in which lay 'elders' were represented in equal numbers to ministers. As well as governing the church, these 'courts' shared the exercise of moral discipline in society. By sharing the decision making and abolishing hierarchy, this created a model which worked successfully for the city-state of Geneva and which Knox and his successors developed eventually into the Presbyterian system which became the recognised State religion of Scotland. These Presbyteries were roughly equivalent in size to the old dioceses. It wasn't democracy but it was much closer to the people than the 'top-down' pyramid.

During the Regency of Mary of Guise, the pressure for reform in Scotland was growing. Tired of being ruled by a Frenchwoman, and envious of the lands and riches of the Roman Church, the landowners and noble families in Scotland joined with supporters of protestant ideas to invite Knox to return to Scotland in 1559. His visit can be compared to the return of Lenin to Russia in 1917. Knox's speeches were inflammatory, and the effect was revolutionary. Within a year Scotland had declared itself a Protestant nation. When Mary of Guise's daughter arrived from France as Mary Queen of Scots she found herself at the head of a nation which did not share her religion.

Knox and his fellow ministers introduced other reforms which further integrated the new church into the fabric of the nation. University curriculums were adapted to the new Renaissance age, abandoning medieval scholastic theology and making them more relevant to the needs of society. Schools were set up in every parish administered by the church and a system of moral discipline was introduced which also oversaw welfare payments to poorer families, funded by the land

taxes from which the church derived its income. The emphasis on having a school in every parish had a huge effect on literacy levels. It also bore fruit in developing literary talent. Robert Burns (1759-1796) was the son of a tenant farmer and the international success of writers like Walter Scott and R.L. Stevenson would not normally have been expected from such a small nation. In science and medicine from 1750 right up to the present day, leading figures have emerged from Scotland.

It is not an exaggeration to call what happened in 1560 a revolution and it was achieved in partnership with the state. Tolerance of other systems or religious ideas was unknown in this period and so Scotland went from being a Catholic nation to a Protestant one almost overnight; and when Mary Queen of Scots abdicated, her son James who had been baptised by Knox as a Protestant, was forced to promise that he would uphold the 'Presbyterian system of government' in Scotland. Knox died in 1572, no longer a central figure, but his revolution lived on.

So far so good, but a conflict between the different protestant systems was looming. When James VI became King of both Scotland and England in 1603, he moved to London. James I of Great Britain (as he was now known) saw an English church which was much more open to direction by the monarch. Faced with a church in Scotland which was more critical of what the king did, he and his son Charles sought to introduce bishops to the Church of Scotland. These bishops would owe their appointment to the Crown and be less critical of the King. This move met with strong resistance and when his son King Charles I pushed this policy even further in 1638, it led to a National Covenant being signed by those (some in their own blood) who pledged to resist this.

Thus began a period of religious strife in Scotland. Some adopted the new 'English' system of bishops and others (the Covenanters) carried on the struggle, even worshipping on hillsides out of sight of the king's army, rather than adopting the new system. But Charles I did not have things his way in England either. He was deposed by the English hard-line Protestants led by Cromwell who ruled both England and Scotland as Lord Protector from

1653 until his death in 1658 when Charles II (son of the deposed monarch) was restored. The descendants of James and Charles I & II (the Stuart kings) never really embraced the protestant version of Christianity and in 1688 Britain turned to William of Orange to ensure Protestantism was secured. The Stuart dynasty (now in exile) tried a come-back for themselves which resulted in the unsuccessful rebellions of 1715 and 1745. Had they succeeded Roman Catholicism and the influence of the Pope in Britain would have been restored.

After 1745, exhausted by these religious and civil conflicts, the era known as the Enlightenment came as a relief to Scotland. With it came also a more tolerant approach to religion. (For example, a thinker like David Hume could never have promoted his ideas before this time). There was now less support for the idea that religion had to be a monopoly of one system. The Industrial Revolution brought many Irish Catholics to Scotland as immigrant workers and, while remaining predominantly Presbyterian, Scotland became more religiously diverse [Mackie, 1930].

However, in the nineteenth century another Church/State conflict arose in Scotland (but this time non-violent). In 1843 the Free Church split from the Church of Scotland after the State (through its law courts) asserted the right of landowners to appoint ministers despite an objection by church members. The underlying principle was whether the Kirk (the popular name for the Church of Scotland) had the right to make its own rules and exercise autonomy. The breakaway denomination embarked on a fervent church building programme. In this period, even in a small town there might have been three churches at its centre, all Presbyterian in doctrine and government but all belonging to different denominations [Lamont, 2001]. This was perhaps in addition to a Roman Catholic church or an Episcopalian one. The Episcopal church had survived the sixteenth century conflicts and was now in communion with the Church of England, which had remained content with its system of state patronage and was unaffected by this peculiarly Scottish dispute. In this period religion still played a significant

role in the culture of nineteenth century Scotland, more so than in England [Joyce, 2010: 305-310; Lamont, 1989].

In the twentieth century the conflicts of the past were resolved by church re-unions among the Presbyterian churches and by a more ecumenical climate. In the small town mentioned above the three different Presbyterian churches now found themselves within the same denomination. It was like having three branches of the same bank in the High Street after an amalgamation. Due to the loyalty felt by the worshippers towards their church buildings, it took a long time for closures to take place but many of these church buildings are now used for other purposes, such as social centres, and some have even been taken over as mosques.

Church attendance declined in the past fifty years. In 1962 the Church of Scotland could still boast 1.2 million adult members in a population of less than 5 million. The process known as 'secularisation' has seen the adult membership of the Kirk reduced to a mere 340,000. (see [www.churchofscotland.org.uk](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk)) Although it is still one of the largest national organisations in Scotland, fewer people turn to the Kirk for funerals or to be married. Infant baptisms are even fewer. A quiet revolution has replaced the noisier and violent ones. Some would call it a spiritual crisis.

Against this overall trend is the growth of congregations within the Church of Scotland which have a 'evangelical' ethos (i.e. emphasising the Bible and having a less formal style of worship led by a 'praise band' which uses keyboards and amplifiers to lead the singing). Many independent churches with this style of worship have grown up and have attracted younger families, whereas most churches belonging to the National Church have congregations composed of older people. Faced with this internal haemorrhage of attenders, the response at national level through its committees and councils has been to seek a role in campaigning on social and political issues which have a moral dimension.

For example, the Church and Society Council's remit is to engage on behalf of the Church in the national, political and social issues affecting Scotland and the world today.

This includes a huge range of issues including human rights, asylum, ethics, science and technology, concerns about gambling, climate change and education issues. It aims to do this through the development of theological, ethical and spiritual perspectives when formulating policy and by effectively representing the Church by offering appropriate and informed comments.

The Church of Scotland has in recent years supported nuclear disarmament, campaigned against climate change, expressed solidarity with Palestinians and accepted same-sex relationships for its ministers. (However, it does not yet allow its ministers to conduct same-sex marriages which are now part of the legal system in Scotland and England). There is a contrast between the moral authority of the Kirk in former centuries and today. Previously, the state supported laws which allowed the Church to summon moral offenders (sinners) to be rebuked in public for example if they were drunk, or playing sport on the Sabbath (Sunday), or had children out of wedlock. These powers and the Kirk's involvement in administering education [Duncan, 2017: 1-9] and social welfare ceased in the nineteenth century. The contrast between that era and today is complete. One might say that the Kirk has transferred its moral au-

thority over persons to campaigning on social issues.

Since the Reformation of 1560, the Presbyterian system of Knox and his successors played a big part in making Scotland influential on the world stage through the network of the British Empire. Scots were heavily involved as colonial administrators and emigrants and took their Presbyterian religion with them to parts of the British Empire such as Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand [Duncan, 1997]. Many of the signatories of the US Declaration of Independence were of Scots descent, one a Presbyterian minister from Paisley (Rev John Witherspoon). In all of these countries Presbyterian churches with their Scots heritage have played an influential role in their history, especially in Canada and the USA [McKinlay, 2015: 241-256; McKinlay, 2014]. Today Britain remains a 'United Kingdom' but it is important to note than in historical terms, Scotland was always distinct from England in its ecclesiology (the form which the church takes) and its version of the Reformation. The different forms in which the nations of Scotland and England embraced the Reformation is not simply an accident of who happened to be the monarch at the time, but reflects the culture and national character of the two nations.

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### **About the Author:**

**Stewart J. Lamont** – has degrees in science and divinity from St Andrews University (Scotland), Church of Scotland minister ordained in 1972, author of several books on history, theology and Church and State relationships. Worked as a broadcaster and producer for the BBC in the 1980s and for twenty years had a weekly column in major Scottish newspapers. Represented Church of Scotland at the Conference of European Churches. At the moment lives in Edinburgh.  
E-mail: lamonts@wanadoo.fr.

## **ШОТЛАНДСКАЯ РЕФОРМАЦИЯ И ЕЁ ОТЛИЧИЕ ОТ АНГЛИЙСКОЙ МОДЕЛИ**

**С.Дж. Ламонт**

**Аннотация.** Пути Реформации заметно отличались в разных культурных пространствах. Так было и в случае развития движения, связанного с идеями Реформации на территориях таких стран, как Англия и Шотландия, вследствие чего в каждой из этих стран была создана своя национальная церковь особого типа. Для Шотландской Реформации, возглавляемой Джоном Ноксом, более близкими оказались идеи, разработанные в Женеве Джоном Кальвином. Эти идеи вошли в обиход Шотландской Церкви, получившей название Пресвитерианской, в частности потому, что здесь, как и в случае с кальвинизмом, руководство епархиями осуществляли не епископы, а пресвитеры, состоящие из равного числа министров (священников) и старейшин.

Таким образом, Шотландская церковь, в отличие от модели, принятой в Англии, не имеет жёсткой вертикальной иерархии, и в силу этого, если можно так выразиться, «ближе к людям». Стюарт Ламонт, автор одной из фундаментальных научных работ о непростых союзах, которые национальные церкви имеют с государством, анализирует в данной статье исторический путь Шотландской модели Реформации и прослеживает, каким образом эта модель привела к тому, что Эдинбург, столица Шотландии, стал одним из центров европейского Просвещения.

В настоящее время секуляризация охватила обе национальные церкви в Соединённом Королевстве, и обе они потеряли ведущие позиции в определении национальной жизни. Члены в Кирке (название, под которым Шотландская церковь широко известна в мире) составляют теперь менее одной трети от общего числа верующих, зафиксированного пятьдесят лет тому назад. В то время, как некоторые евангельские церкви демонстрируют рост числа своих приверженцев, национальная церковь Шотландии в настоящее время состоит в основном из пожилых людей, и её моральная власть над своими последователями переросла в основном в агитацию по социальным вопросам.

Однако наследие Нокса и основанного им шотландского пресвитерианства имеет и по сей день широкое культурное значение, так как именно эта модель духовной и социальной организации дала Шотландии существующую по сей день образовательную систему. Духовные семена, заложенные в неё её создателями, дали о себе знать уже в эпоху Просвещения, между 1750-ми и 1850-ми гг., когда Шотландия стала центром интеллектуальных достижений своего времени. И до сих пор именно эта модель является сердцевиной всех образовательных учреждений Шотландии, известных далеко за пределами Великобритании.

**Ключевые слова:** Реформация, церковь, экклесиология, пресвитерианство, протестанство, католичество, деноминация, епископ, министр, старейшина, Кирк, секуляризация, образование, Просвещение.

**Об авторе:**

**Стюарт Дж. Ламонт** имеет дипломы по естественным наукам и теологии университета Сент-Андрюс (Шотландия), священник Шотландской церкви, посвящённый в 1972 году, автор ряда книг по истории, теологии и государственно-конфессиональным отношениям. Работал в качестве комментатора и продюсера BBC в 1980-х годах и в течение двадцати лет вёл еженедельную колонку в центральных газетах Шотландии. Представлял Шотландскую церковь в Конференции европейских церквей. В настоящее время живёт в Эдинбурге.  
E-mail: lamonts@wanadoo.fr.

*Перевод названия, аннотации статьи на русский язык и представление автора выполнены Ларисой Ламонт.*