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## **“Monstrous Regiment of Women”: Catholic Women’s Reactions to Reform in Sixteenth Century Scotland**

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“Monstrous Regiment of Women”: Catholic Women’s Reactions to Reform in Sixteenth Century  
Scotland

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in History

by

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## Abstract

The Reformation in Scotland brought with it a substantial theological shift in perspective toward the place of women in religion, society, and politics. Women under Catholicism had established a pseudo-realm of agency as religious heads of the household and religious guidance from leaders outside their husbands and fathers, which changed drastically in the wave of Protestantism. The contemporary theological arguments most relevant in Scotland from John Knox and John Leslie are discussed to establish the basis of thought with which society would adjust women's roles. This thesis will ultimately emphasize the reactions and negotiations of Catholic women to this new wave of thought, which represented the on-the-ground realities during this time of change.

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## **Introduction**

The Scottish Reformation has been thoroughly studied as a period of substantial change in the religious and societal lives of the Scottish people. Modern Scottish national identity ties heavily to the humanistic and protestant reforms to education of the reformation period in which this thesis focuses, including the turn towards simplified religion and literacy-based devotion. However, the narratives and areas of research most prominent in historiography neglect two important areas in which this thesis will focus on: Women and Catholics, specifically in the early periods of Reformation.

This thesis analyzes Scottish Catholic women's interactions with the changing conditions of religious life for females in the period directly following the Protestant Reformation (roughly 1560-1603). These reactions were incredibly varied, from nuns who actively chose to remain in the cloisters post-reformation to elite women sheltering priests in their homes. These varied narratives of Catholic women, who navigated a landscape in Scotland discordant with their beliefs, help illuminate an often forgotten and under-researched aspect of the reformation era.

This research takes place in the late sixteenth century, starting around the period of reform of Scotland in the mid-century to the turn of the seventeenth century. 1603 served as the cutoff point of this study for two primary reasons: the inheritance of James VI of the thrones of England and Scotland and the starting point of the counter-reformation in Scotland. The joining of the two nations of Scotland and England was a turning point in ideology, allegiances, and priorities, due to the vast differences between the two recent reformations in both nations. This led to cataclysmic shifts in tactics from both the Protestant and Catholic sectors in Scotland.

In 1603 and beyond, the small Scottish counter-reformation began in response to protestant reform. This meant that more Catholics became confident and actively devoted to the

cause. Post-restoration in the late Seventeenth century had a markedly different narrative in terms of the actions of Catholics and specifically women than the period leading up. According to Alasdair Roberts, there were no reports of secrecy in devotion and housing of priests, showing that the threat to open Catholic worship had waned by this time.<sup>1</sup>

The Catholic actors from the early period of Protestant dominance discussed were exceptions to the average actions of Catholics, with most choosing the practice quietly and covertly. This was why their actions were both more interesting from a research perspective, as well as worthy of memorialization. This does not discount the actions of later actors in the religious and political battleground of Scotland. However, these early actions are less studied and documented; therefore, offering a critical intervention into the field.

Starting in Chapter One, titled “Sixteenth Century Scotland,” the grassroots movement and theological underpinnings in Scotland are discussed; primarily to emphasize both the passionate oratory focus in Scotland, as well as the inspirations from humanism which resulted in seismic reforms. Additionally, the conditions in which all Catholics in Scotland were living post-1560 are discussed as vital context to the atmosphere in which Scottish women were reacting to and negotiating with protestant reforms.

In Chapter Two, women’s realities before and during reformation are illustrated; specifically, the areas of societal expectations, religiosity, education, and love and marriage. In these sections, the traditional assumption of women residing within the home are refuted and the barriers imposed upon them (i.e., education, workplace equality) are examined to provide historical context and highlight frequently un-emphasized realities for women.

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<sup>1</sup> Alasdair Roberts, “The Role of Women in Scottish Catholic Survival,” *The Scottish Historical Review* (70, no. 190 October 1991), 140.

In Chapter Three, “Theological Battleground: Perspectives on Women in Religion, Society, and the Family,” the highly controversial arguments and opinions toward female rule and the place of women in general are analyzed and juxtaposed with pro-female writings. The aim of this chapter is to explore the popular rhetoric of the time coming from both Protestants and Catholics to explain the wide societal and religious changes occurring. Although this thesis discusses women of the Reformation era Scotland and their untold stories, it required analyzing contemporary male-focused arguments and reasoning as well. *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the monstrous regiment of Women* by John Knox was analyzed alongside *A Defence of the honour of the... princesse Marie, with a declaration as well of her right, title and intereste to the succession of the crowne of Englande, as that the regiment of women ys conformable to the lawe of god and nature* by John Leslie to fully understand each side’s position. Additionally, a brief summary of the Scottish Protestant female reaction and realities in the face of this change is discussed as further context for Catholic women’s reactions.

In Chapter Four, “Special Cases of Sixteenth Century Female Catholics in the Archives,” women’s reactions and negotiations within the new era of protestant reform are analyzed through exceptional cases found in the archives. A common theme discussed modernly by historians in terms of gender relations and women’s narratives is the power imbalance created by male authority. Catholic Scottish women reacted to the ideal of protestant religiosity by trying to reclaim and protect power provided by a system (i.e., religious agency and avenues such as monasticism within Catholicism) that had originally supported them well.

With many of the noblewomen in this chapter, they used their connections as ladies of a prestigious house and their relationships to make a determined choice of religion. They acted to secure religious agency for themselves, as well as to provide Catholic religious instruction for

younger generations of women. As we will see, women within the nunneries had a unique set of circumstances to contend with, and nuns often chose to continue living within the cloister. Several questions arose about the nature of the monastic system on the eve of reformation, leading to the vital question of why women chose to stay. These examples are begging for further research into the implications and reasoning for these decisions and a closer look into the stakes and rewards of reacting to reform in such a way.

As with most topics on the margins—and it can certainly be argued that women in Scotland have been relegated to the side until recently—sources and historical discourse are often scant throughout much of this research. However, what will hopefully be found within this thesis is generative discussion and thoughtful reading against the grain of sources available, in order to stoke avenues for further research.



## Chapter 1 – Sixteenth Century Scotland

Late Medieval and Renaissance-era Scotland is often thought of in terms of their frequent wars with the English and between clansmen, as well as generalized as far behind intellectually, culturally, and socially from the rest of Europe. This has created a bleak and turbulent depiction of Scotland during this period. However, Scotland frequently experienced periods of peace, was deeply connected to the intellectual movements on the continent and enjoyed many of the same elements of more well-studied European monarchies.<sup>2</sup> This led to a highly nuanced, theological, and often articulate expression of reformation within Scotland.

One of the most important monographs for developing a better understanding of Scotland's interactions with Protestantism was *The Reformation in a National Context* by Bob Scribner, Roy Porter, and Mikulas Teich. While the reformation period across Europe was informed by similar frustrations with a corrupt religious system in place, the localized interactions changed each national reformation drastically. Different areas had completely varied access to texts and verbal knowledge, as well as exposure to different key figures. Political circumstances and allegiances drastically affected the outcomes, trajectories, and motivations of reformers and traditionalists alike. With these differences in mind, setting Scotland and its individual experience with reform is a relatively recent endeavor. Often the history of the Scottish people has been deeply embroiled with that of England, given their political joining in 1603.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Brown and Steve Boardman, "Late Medieval Scotland" in *Scotland: A History* ed. Jenny Wormald (Oxford University Press), 77-106. Tom Turpie, *Kind Neighbours: Scottish Saints and Society in later Middle Ages* (Boston: Brill, 2015), 7-8.

<sup>3</sup> Patrick Collinson, *The Reformation: A History*, (New York: Modern Library, 2004), 125. Carlos Eire, *Reformations: The Early Modern World, 1450-1650*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 219-222.

## 1.1 – Scottish Reformation and it's Continental Inspirations

Comparatively, the Scottish Reformation's early emergence was much more grassroots than its southern cousin. Public mass meetings were common in Scotland, in which influential preachers and theologians would evangelize against the Pope, Catholic Scottish Royals, and French influence. Seven 'privy kirks,' or protestant cells were formed across Scotland, which essentially symbolized a people's army to work with the politically influential 'Lords of the Congregation.' Their rhetoric was built on resisting tyranny, making it the duty of all men, noble or common, to rebel against the current church and crown; thus, showing the highly anti-monarchical aspect of the Scottish movement.<sup>4</sup>

The trajectory of the Scottish Reformation was much slower than other contemporary protestant movements in the sense that it would not be confirmed by the government until the *Scots Confession* was approved by Parliament in 1560. However, it gained traction in this period (which will be the primary years discussed in this research). Crises and executions, such as that of Patrick Hamilton who is considered the first martyr of the Scottish Reformation, were abundant in Scotland.<sup>5</sup>

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Note: The English reformations emergence as a governmental movement in the early sixteenth century was pivotal for the relatively early success it obtained; obviously, this is a broad generalization detached from nuance. Aptly described by Patrick Collinson, "In England, the reformation was made by the monarchy; in Scotland, its inception and forward progress were for much of the time anti monarchical." The English Reformation was spearheaded by Henry VIII's disagreements with the tenants of marriage and divorce, desire for property held by ecclesiastical buildings, and overall fear of corruption and power within the Catholic Church system. This official government-level acceptance of Protestantism in England in 1532 is vital to its rapid and strong conversion, not to detract from the violence that will occur between religious groups.

<sup>4</sup> Julian Goodare "Scotland" in *The Reformation in National Context*, ed. Scribner, Porter, and Teich, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 98-99. Eire, 356-365.

<sup>5</sup> Goodare, 98-99. Eire, 319, 322, 356-365.

Protestant Scotland was concerned first and foremost with the elimination of “superstitious” ceremonial Christianity, as were most protestant movements in Europe. The degree to which this was implemented varied obviously but appeared and developed in Scotland into what is today called “Presbyterianism.” In Scotland, the theological ideal of stripping ceremony and grandiose decoration was expressed physically through simple and non-decorated spaces. With the focus on spoken word and congregational singing, the value of stone walls that influenced echo, reverberation, and an “otherworldly” sound in the Middle Ages were replaced with wood or retrofitted with sound-absorbing material. Congregational singing stripped down the more polyphonic and elaborate music of medieval worship to the word and message-focused psalms that became popular even into modernity.<sup>6</sup>

These deep theological inspirations did not discount any political motivations occurring in Scotland; in fact, there were deep stratifications in Scotland between pro-French conservatives and reformers in the mid-sixteenth century. James V also had monetary gain from acquiring the wealth of rich parishes, as Henry VIII had done in the south. The monasteries would not be dissolved in Scotland in the same drastic and starkly financially motivated fashion as in England.<sup>7</sup> Relations with France in its “auld alliance,” particularly to aristocratic circles, were a heavy motivation point for those wishing to push out reformers and English “sympathizers.” The age-old rivalry between England and France would show its ugly head in loyalties from Scotland

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<sup>6</sup> Jane E.A. Dawson, *Scotland Re-Formed, 1488-1587* (Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 227. James White, *Protestant Worship and Church Architecture: Theological and Historical Considerations*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 30.

<sup>7</sup> Goodare, 95-97.

but in numerous ways it became a political and theological battleground between reformed England and Catholic France.<sup>8</sup>

Major players on the continent such as Luther and Calvin profoundly reached Scotland; primarily from Scots studying abroad and their interactions with one of the main temporal motivators of the reformation: Humanism. The turbulent period of reformation that surged originally through continental Europe was fueled by frustration, disillusionment with the papacy, and humanist reasoning which illuminated the flaws of religion at the time. Similarly, it was this surge in humanist reasoning which empowered reformers to push for change and create sweeping reforms, many of which affected women greatly.<sup>9</sup>

In Scotland, humanistic values were less focused on prose, poetry, and immaculate Latin, and more on oratorical prowess in debates and persuasion of humanist ideals. John Durkan famously stated about Scottish humanism:<sup>10</sup>

“The Scot, with his passion for dialectic, was never merely interested in elegant writing or accurate Latinity. Always the Scots humanists are concerned above all with what they call “philosophy,” and if anything impeded the advance of the new learning it was probably less the *odium thaologicum* than the national relish for argument.”

Erasmus, famously known as the father of Christian humanism, had a significant impact on the beginnings of Scottish humanism and its heavy skew towards religious reasoning. He, and Christian humanism for that matter, were influenced by the need for religious reform and incorporating humanist study into religious scholarship. He saw humanism as a new path, away

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 95-96. Eire, 356-358.

<sup>9</sup> Eire, 84-85.

<sup>10</sup> John Durkan, “The Beginnings of Humanism in Scotland,” (*The Innes Review* 4, no.1: 1953), 17.

from the popular Scholasticism with which he disagreed, to interpret and discuss religion in an enlightened manner from the past.<sup>11</sup>

As shown with Erasmus, the desire to reform the church was highly inspired by the humanist focus on rhetoric and oration to discuss and debate dogma within the church; and in turn, spurring the heavy focus on passionate sermon delivery that became popularized in protestant churches and Scotland specifically. The focus on the classics and Latin opened a wider intelligentsia beyond the clergy to reading and deciphering biblical texts. Additionally, the human and history-focused aspects of humanism lent to a more focused study of individuals and “heroes of the faith” rather than old Israel and the Church.<sup>12</sup>

In Scotland, this materialized in the heavy promotion of education and education reform, as a means of instilling protestant beliefs through parish schools. Additionally, the belief in establishing protestant universities centered on producing “godly and civic-minded citizens and ministers well versed in reformed doctrine,” was a core tenant of Scottish Protestantism.<sup>13</sup>

Overall, the humanist education reform movement only lasted through the seventeenth century in Scotland. It had a massive impact on universities and grammar schools that shifted the culture of learning and progress of intellectual culture, even once the era of humanist classical focus had ended. One of the ear markers of the humanist boom in Scotland was the political and

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<sup>11</sup> Desiderius Erasmus and John C. Olin. *Christian Humanism and the Reformation: Selected Writings* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 3-8. J.R. Hale, *Renaissance Europe, 1480-1520*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 225.

<sup>12</sup> Lewis W. Spitz, "Humanism and the Protestant Reformation" in *Renaissance Humanism, Volume 3: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy*, ed. Rabil Albert (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 382-384.

<sup>13</sup> Steven Reid, *Humanism and Calvinism: Andrew Melville and the Universities of Scotland, 1560–1625 (St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History)* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 1-5. Spitz, 381-382.

practical aspects of the movement. It was meant to instill civic values and prepare the lay elite for serving their kingdom and communities.<sup>14</sup>

Where this importantly ties in with the lives of Scottish women was the fact that this reality never quite reached females in Scotland during the reformation period. The lack of education for women in Scotland prior to the reformation is a well-known fact; however, this plan for widespread education and its early implementation in the Sixteenth Century period being discussed simply does not exist. It would take centuries for this ideal to reach Scottish women—particularly non-elites—in any meaningful way.

## **1.2 - Regional Divides**

Another important aspect to consider within the turbulent post-reformation period was demographic divides and imbalances. The highlands had long been ignored politically and looked down upon by Lowland Scots in Fife (Edinburgh, Glasgow, and St. Andrews). Therefore, the trend of continuing popular folk religion, including certain Catholic ceremonies which had been prohibited, in the region was often cited as backward and unevolved.<sup>15</sup>

Reported sometime within the vicinity of 1577-1595, an anonymous source who detailed the Islands of Scotland stated:

“Anes in the year ane Priest or Minister cummis to thame and baptizes all the bairnis born amanis thame sin his last being thair, and celebrattis marriage to the parties desyrand, and makes sic uther ministration of the sacraments to thame as he thinkis gude...”

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<sup>14</sup> Denis Hay, “Scotland and the Italian renaissance” in *The Renaissance and Reformation in Scotland: Essays in honour of Gordon Donaldson*, Ian B. Cowan and Duncan Shaw ed. (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1983), 114-117, 120-121. Mason, 3-5.

<sup>15</sup> Goodare, 101.

Although reformers promised to bring protestant priests to every parish in the realm of Scotland, it is clear the Gaelic-speaking islands and the west highlands were not prioritized and relegated to yearly visits. Therefore, the atmosphere for continuing Catholic ceremony and its intertwined forms of popular religion were supported through a simple lack of access.<sup>16</sup>

This cannot be blamed on opposition or unwillingness on the part of those in the west highlands and Scottish isles. Several Earls and Lords of the region signed the ‘First Band’ of the Lords of the Congregation in 1557, which established a pact of protection and support for those seeking protestant reforms.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, the same anonymous source from earlier reported that on the island of St. Kilda, when priests requested tithes during their yearly visits, “quhilck thai pay maist thankfullie and justlie of only people,” establishing that they not only complied but were actually some of the most thankful of all Scottish laity to receive the ministry. Additionally, whereas access to the bible in vernacular Scots was stressed heavily by reformers and put quickly into the hands of those who could afford such luxuries, a bible in Gaelic was far from being compiled. In the seventeenth century, the *Book of Common Order* was translated into Gaelic (as *Foirm na n-Urrnuidheadh*) but based on classical versions of the language and far from vernacular, showing the effort as a half-hearted attempt.<sup>18</sup>

Class divides were also a factor during this time, with the majority of sources from this period coming from aristocrats and upper-level politicians, whom we can assume were also in the upper classes of Scots. As discussed earlier, the reformation in Scotland is largely considered

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<sup>16</sup> W.F. Skene, *Celtic Scotland*, vol.III (Edinburgh, 1876), p. 432

<sup>17</sup> Gordon Donaldson, *The Scottish Reformation*, (Cambridge [England]: University Press, 1960), 88-89.

<sup>18</sup> Skene, 432. Goodare, 101.

a bottom-up movement, with active support from the laity. This means that there would certainly have been reactions from the less affluent, had they been recorded and saved. What this means for this research is that it unfortunately has a skewed perspective in terms of what can be learned from the sources. As will be seen from much of the research to come, narratives of upper-class women tend to be more available, with those of the average women left to be found with close reading and in the margins.

### 1.3 - The Conditions of Catholic Life in a Reformed Scotland

“The attempts of modern Roman Catholics to describe the Roman Church in Scotland have been, with the exception of Bellesheim's *History*, disfigured not only by uncritical partisanship, which is perhaps unavoidable, but by a glaring lack of scholarship, which makes them both useless and harmful.” - 1926 Reverend James Houston Baxter, in the *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*.<sup>19</sup>

Prior to the Reformation in Scotland, the church had been considered in a state of flux and weakness in the medieval period. Popular criticisms of the state of the church in Scotland, such as *The Gude and Godlie Ballatis* and several works by Sir David Lindsay, show that discontent with what had become a decadent and stagnated church was shared by much of Scottish society. However, evidence of efforts to reform the Catholic church from within were present in Scotland. Historians such as Julian Goodare argued that the church of Scotland was functioning well, despite the abuse of revenue disparity within the system. These discoveries of the history of the Scottish church within modern historiography complicate the traditional portrayal and popular sentiment of its reformation.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> J.H. Baxter, ‘Some Desiderata in Scottish Medieval History,’ *Scottish Church History Society* 1.4 (1926), 200-8. Holmes, 303.

<sup>20</sup> Ian B. Cowan, *The Scottish Reformation: Church and Society in Sixteenth Century Scotland*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 72-88. Goodare, 96.



The primary narrative most often told of the Scottish Reformation has been through a protestant and victorious lens. Thus, the Scottish national myth of the ‘Heroic Protestant’ was created, as those who fought for religious purity against the ‘clerical ignorance, redulity, rapacity, and depravity’ characterized by the pre-reformation Catholic church.<sup>21</sup>

The ‘heroic protestant’ myth was argued by Stephen Mark Holmes as propagated and continued through the primarily presbyterian leaning of divinity and church history programs in Scottish universities. The *Innes Review*, named after the compiler of Scottish Catholic histories during the sixteenth century Thomas Innes, was created in 1950 to provide alternative narratives of the Catholic Scottish church and their roles in the nation, with a specific focus on reformation Scotland. From this ongoing research, many of which are cited throughout this work, the disparaging and underdeveloped views of Scottish Catholic histories are slowly being changed.<sup>22</sup>

Partisanship and the prevalence of Protestant historiography in Scotland leave the narrative from a Catholic point of view still lacking comparatively. However, a secondary motive of this research was to shed light on this lesser studied history, particularly from an even less studied female perspective. This section will look at the conditions Scottish Catholics faced during this period, to begin with.

The most substantial and complete text within the field of Catholicism in post-reformation Scotland is *Underground Catholicism in Scotland* by Peter F. Anson. While this was a landmark text, it covers the period after 1622, starting with the sending of priests by the Congregation of Propaganda as a pivotal part of Catholicism’s “fighting back” against protestant

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<sup>21</sup> Stephen Mark Holmes, “Historiography of the Scottish Reformation: the Catholics Fight Back?” (*Studies in Church History* 49: 2013), 306-308.

<sup>22</sup> Holmes, 307-308.

oppression.<sup>23</sup> If this were the period this research dealt with, it would be an incredibly important source. However, the late sixteenth century narrative for underground Catholics is still lacking in proper attention.

Catholics in Scotland were presented with a challenging set of circumstances in the period between 1560 and 1600. In multiple interactions in 1560, 1564, and 1567, the *Act against the Sayers and Wilful hearers of Mass* from the official records of parliament of Scotland was ratified, “against the sayers of mass, Jesuits, seminary priests, trafficking papists and receivers of any of them,” with a hefty fine and threat of execution as the attached consequence; it is important to note that no executions for the hearing of mass ever occurred in Scotland.<sup>24</sup>

Kirk sessions, in the same style as the consistory courts that John Calvin instilled in reformed Geneva, began soon after 1560 in Scotland and regularly targeted practitioners of Catholicism, in addition to adultery and other sexual crimes. This encouraged neighbors and other members of the parish to serve as witnesses and informants for rooting out clandestine Catholicism. These worked in conjunction with the ecclesiastical sanctions meant to suppress Catholicism as the mechanism in which Catholics could repent and convert. Many protestant

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<sup>23</sup> Peter Anson, *Underground Catholicism in Scotland*, (Montrose: Standard Press, 1970), 5-6.

Note: Scotland’s catholic community in the late sixteenth century is far less studied and documented than that of England. The simple and easy availability of the wealth of monographs and collections surrounding English Catholics—*The English Catholic Community 1570-1850* by John Bossy and *Catholics in England* by M.D.R. Leys, for example—demonstrate this fact on their own.

<sup>24</sup> “Act regarding the union of Scotland and England,” *RPS*, 1607/3/12. Ryan Burns, “Enforcing Uniformity: Kirk Sessions and Catholics in Early Modern Scotland, 1560–1650” (*Innes Review* 69, no. 2: November 2018), 112.

ministers and reformers in Scotland expressed hope for conversion openly and believed Catholics would eventually succumb to the protestant mission.<sup>25</sup>

These are surprisingly more lenient acts against Catholics compared to those in other protestant reformed nations of the sixteenth century. However, with these reforms on its followers, Catholicism had turned into an underground group having to struggle for its survival.

Scotland was incredibly prominent as a Catholic center prior to the reformation and brought a large audience to Scotland through the pilgrimage site of St. Andrews Cathedral—verifiably one of the largest medieval cathedrals in Europe prior to its destruction and home to relics of Saint Andrew. The practice of pilgrimage, called “the perverse inclination to superstition through which the dregs idolatry still remain...,” was condemned by Scottish Parliament in 1581, in the belief that papists were congregating at these pilgrimage sites in secret. This accusation was not far off, as primarily women would often still walk old pilgrimage routes in search of divine blessing.<sup>26</sup>

In terms of underground Catholicism, an interesting tactic termed “Crypto-Catholicism” has been described by historians such as Ryan Burns as Catholics who would entertain the ideas of the Protestant Kirk without the intent of stopping Catholic behaviors or being fully Protestant. Many were accused of “officially” converting simply to spare themselves or their family from the punishments of the Kirk or the ramifications of excommunication.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Burns, “Enforcing Uniformity: Kirk Sessions and Catholics in Early Modern Scotland, 1560–1650,” 111-114.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 120.

<sup>27</sup> Ryan Burns, “Gender, Resistance, and Conformity in Early Modern Scotland, 1560-1650” *International Review of Scottish Studies* 44 (2019): 64, 70-71. Burns, “Enforcing Uniformity: Kirk Sessions and Catholics in Early Modern Scotland, 1560–1650,” 113.

Excommunication was considered the worst punishment a person could receive, next to death, as they were essentially non-persons to the Kirk and community. Their property was confiscated after a forty-day grace period and they could not interact with any Scot outside of their immediate family including matters of business, except with other ex-communicates. Before the punishments would come to this point, however, a series of public penance and shaming would occur to enforce conformity in Catholics. This included sackcloth and barefoot parades through town, ‘repentance’ stools in the town square, and public humiliation during sermons.<sup>28</sup>

While certainly one of the least violent revolutions during the reformation era of Europe, Scotland and its Catholic establishments did see targeted mob violence and iconoclastic actions towards parish churches and cathedrals; or as the protestants called it: “cleansing.” Protestant contingents would join across the rural and smaller cities of Scotland to forcefully rid the towns of catholic sites of worship. This resulted in sites either being destroyed, as with the St. Andrews Cathedral, or being altered and stripped to be suitable for reformed worship. During these raids, Catholic communities did not mobilize to fight off protestants, as was seen in France during similar events. The one documented differing instance occurred in Aberdeen at King’s College. Students gathered to defend the chapel of their university and did succeed in withdrawing the Protestant mob. Unfortunately, it did not save St Machar’s Cathedral in Aberdeen from being stripped.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Burns, “Enforcing Uniformity: Kirk Sessions and Catholics in Early Modern Scotland, 1560–1650,” 122-123, 127.

<sup>29</sup> Dawson, 205-206.

The argument for these actions against Catholic establishments and groups often revolved around “protecting the flock” of the laity of Scotland. From the *Acts and Proceedings of the General Assemblies of the Kirk of Scotland, 1560-1618*, in January of 1589:<sup>30</sup>

“The greevances of every Province and Presbytry were givin in, whereby might be perceived cleerly how the land was defiled all throughout, specially the North and South, with popery, superstitione, bloodshed, and all kind of villany: Whereupon the brethren were stirred up to watch diligently over their flocks, and to have a care of the well of the whole Kirk.”

Catholic imagery continued to be important within underground Catholicism and devotion post-reformation, even despite its outlawing. Archeological and preservation evidence shows that buildings built in the period after the reformation and before the counter-reformations of the seventeenth century had catholic symbols, imagery, and devotional messages carved into the structure.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Maitland Club. "Acts and Proceedings: 1589, January," in *Acts and Proceedings of the General Assemblies of the Kirk of Scotland, 1560-1618*, (Edinburgh: [s.n.], 1839). *British History Online*, 740-744. <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/church-scotland-records/acts-proceedings/1560-1618/pp740-744>

<sup>31</sup> Bryce and Roberts, “Post-Reformation Catholic houses of north-east Scotland,” 371.

## Chapter 2 – Women of Scotland

This section's crucial aim is to display the realities of women within the spheres of society and the workforce, religion, love and marriage, and education. This information is needed in order to understand the vast changes women will contend with following protestant reform.

When discussing the lives of Scottish women during this period, an important clarification needs to be made in terms of researching women's history in Scotland and any study of pre-modern women worldwide: the lack of sources for non-elite women. Much of the research in Chapter Four will pertain to noblewomen and their actions. This comes down to nothing more than what has survived in the archives. As will be discussed in this chapter, generalized ideas of the lives of lower and middling women can be made despite larger narratives to draw from.<sup>32</sup> With this in mind, much of this section looks toward pivotal texts surrounding the lives of women in the sixteenth century to create a broad view of women's place in society.

Three pivotal texts for tracking the sixteenth-century Scottish female experience were *Virgins & Viragos* by Rosalind Marshall, "Women in the Economy and Society of Scotland, 1500-1800" by R.A. Houston in *Scottish Society 1500-1800*, and "Gendering the Reformation" by Elizabeth Ewan in *A Companion to the Reformation in Scotland, C. 1525-1638*.

This source is used for its breadth of context into women's social interactions, family lives, work, and education within the period; specifically, it provides a contrast with women's

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<sup>32</sup> Maureen Meikle, "Victims, Viragos, and Vamps: Women of the Sixteenth Century Anglo-Scottish Frontier" in *Government, Religion, and Society in Northern England 1000-1700* (Thrupp, Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton Pub, 1997), 173-74.

roles leading into the reformation period and how it changes. As much as Rosalind Marshall goes into the livelihoods and family lives of women from this period with remarkable detail and importance, she does not touch on the spheres of religion and politics, in which the reformation was deeply embroiled. This reinforces the idea that women strayed from those circles, despite evidence that displays the contrary.

R.A. Houston's work in *Scottish Society, 1500-1800* offers critical glances into the areas of industry and workforce that women worked in during the period, rebuking the idea that their place both ideally and practically was within the domestic sphere.

Last, Elizabeth Ewan offered a wide range of knowledge to this research as a prominent historian of women's contributions and lives during the period. Her coverage of areas such as family, piety, and political and religious resistance rounds out the fabric of this chapter's aim to see the female experience in relation to changing ideals of Protestantism.

## **2.1 - Society, Expectations, and Marginalization**

As discussed in the aptly named article "A New Trumpet? The History of Women in Scotland 1300-1700" by Scottish women's historian Elizabeth Ewan, the development of the field of Scottish women's history has recently grown beyond those of Mary Queen of Scots. Included were advancements in the areas of work, family, crime, and, important to this research, religion. Until modern scholarship, the story of the Reformation period has been told through the male lens, ignoring the actions and thoughts of women from all sides of the religious spectrum.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ewan, "A New Trumpet," 431-434.

This does not discount the early mentions, and perceived adoration, of women in early Gaelic and Pictish histories. The *Cáin Adomnáin* was known as “The Law of Innocents,” and is one of the first documented protections of women and non-combatants in war and harm, being official in its recognition by kings and the clergy. It is still used in the Geneva Conventions today.<sup>34</sup>

Medieval Scottish women remain painfully hard to access within the archives. They were mentioned in relation to their families in most historical documents, within brief allusions to their work, livelihood, and contributions. It was with this barrier that historians look for women and their narratives between the lines, as well as utilizing a variety of sources, from legal and economic documents to literature and poetry.<sup>35</sup>

The famous Bannatyne manuscript—a literary compendium of Scottish writers—can illuminate much about the state of women and their expectations within society, seeing as it was a collection of popular poetry collected by George Bannatyne to preserve those works: “most godlie mirrie and lustie rapsodie.”<sup>36</sup> Within this collection, women were mentioned in the works of two sections: “Ballettis Mirry, And Uther Solatius Consaittis, Set Furth Be Divers Ancient Poyettis” and “Ballatis Of Luve Devydit in Four Pairtis.” “Ballettis Mirry ” contains works considered satire and usually mocking societal conventions and assumptions, such as the trope of “Wantoun Wemen.” In the Chapter “Ballatis of Luve Devydit in Four Pairtis,” women were

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<sup>34</sup> Wormald, *Scotland*, 17-18.

<sup>35</sup> Rosalind Marshall, *Virgins and Viragos: A History of Women in Scotland from 1080 to 1980* (Chicago, Ill: Academy Chicago, 1983), 11-12, 17.

<sup>36</sup> George Bannatyne and Tod Ritchie, *The Bannatyne Manuscript: Written in Tyme of Pest, 1568* (Edinburgh and London: Printed for the Scottish Text Society by William Blackwood & Sons LTD., 1958), 19. Evelyn Newlyn, “Images of Women in 16th-Century Scottish Manuscripts,” in *Women in Scotland c. 1100-1750*, 56-64.



physical love interests and temptresses out to destroy the hearts of men. These depictions of women in the texts show examples what ideas for women would have existed within the cultural fabric of sixteenth-century Scotland.<sup>37</sup>

Legal rights for women, specifically concerning their property after marriage, were mostly lacking; however, a few caveats were given in women's favor. When dealing with movable property that was either inherited or purchased, such as furniture and artwork, a woman was unable to dispose of or sell without the permission of the husband; with the expectation of "Paraphernalia" such as clothing and jewelry. Otherwise, the husband was able to sell and trade his wife's movable goods for any reason. Where women had stronger rights was in "heritable or immovable" property such as land or buildings. While the woman in question could not sell or otherwise transact with the property, neither could the husband without her permission.<sup>38</sup>

Women, and specifically those of non-noble lineage, were involved and worked in their communities actively. While much of the research in Chapter Four will pertain to noblewomen, with a speckling of devout women in the cloisters, discussing the lives of the average woman and their unique circumstances was vital for creating a whole picture of societal expectations.

The average woman during this time held a variety of employment, according to R.A. Houston, Rosalind Marshall, and Elizabeth Ewan. Agrarian jobs and working in the fields were the most common avenues of employment for women. Other common trades included: "teacher,

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<sup>37</sup> Evelyn Newlyn, "Images of Women in Sixteenth-Century Scottish Literary Manuscripts" in *Women in Scotland, c.1100-1750*, 56-67.

<sup>38</sup> R.A. Houston, "Women in the economy and society," in *Scottish Society 1500-1800*, 129-134.

brewer, midwife, trader, bonnet maker, postmistress, shopkeeper, alehouse keeper, bookseller, printer, and lodging housekeeper.”<sup>39</sup>

A surprising number of women in Aberdeen and Edinburgh from records in 1509 and 1530 respectively were brewers, which was usually an individual operation and not one someone was hired for. When registered, however, they were listed under their husband’s name unless they were a spinster or widow. According to R.A. Houston and I. Donnachie, about 230 women in Edinburgh and 150 women in Aberdeen were recorded brewers in the early sixteenth century. Brewing was considered a domestic occupation because it was made in the home, leading to its popularity as a female trade. Unfortunately, this trend would only last until 1596, when the Society of Brewers of Edinburgh was established which would only allow the participation of males; this worked as a crafters guild of sorts and managed to push out female brewers from visibility and status.<sup>40</sup>

Women were notoriously underpaid, only making a reasonable living when pooled with the wages of a man. This culture of lower wages amounted to a fifty to sixty percent differential in wages between males and females, being the norm purportedly established and endorsed by male authorities to keep wages for men higher, as they were considered the primary household income. Women were paid the same wage as boys in the trade of picking wool; an estimated forty-six percent of male picker’s wage at the time.<sup>41</sup>

As can be seen from women's presence in the workforce, the average non-elite woman was not expected to reside primarily in the home and see to domestic work. For most households,

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<sup>39</sup> Houston, 121-123.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 122. I.Donnachie, *History of Brewing industry in Scotland*, 6. Dawson, 22.

<sup>41</sup> Houston, 122. W. Scott, *Records of a Scottish Cloth manufactory*, 163.

it was essential for women to provide income for the family or work on family farms and the concept of a housewife was not feasible. The ability for a woman to stay home actually coincided logistically and socially with her husband's wealth and would have been considered a luxury.<sup>42</sup>

As much as these small glimpses into women's occupational roles can be informative, Ian D. Whyte—a prominent geographic historian in the field of economy and society in early-modern Scotland—claims that even into the seventeenth century, evidence of women's occupation (apart from domestic servants) and lower classes of urban society were woefully underrepresented, creating a generalized few based on “pollable” men. While we can get an idea of which areas women participated in, there was no way of obtaining their narratives on how occupations interacted with family life and personal subsistence.<sup>43</sup>

Although there was little evidence for the lives of women outside of marriage, what can be found was that it was common for unmarried women and single servants to live in the homes of their employers.<sup>44</sup> While the domestic ramifications of this arrangement have been discussed by scholars such as Laura Gowing in *Common Bodies Women Touch and Power in Seventeenth-Century England*, the subjugation and boundaries for women based on social standing were not imperative to this research, as they were a reality for women well before Protestantism and continued in kind. It speaks volumes, however, about the ways women were exposed to a variety of power imbalanced systems.

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<sup>42</sup> Houston, 122.

<sup>43</sup> Ian D. Whyte, “The Occupational Structure of Scottish Burghs,” in *The Early Modern Town in Scotland*, 242.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 120.

An issue for most of the female sex revolved around pregnancy and procreation. Marriage at this time centered solely on conceiving and providing heirs or extra manpower for the household. While preventing conception at the time was possible for women, through “abstinence, abortion, coitus interruptus, and prolonged breastfeeding,” most women once they enter married life would frequently, if not always, be at risk of conceiving. However, demographics on fertility from the Early Modern period show that women would only spend five years of their married and fertile years pregnant.<sup>45</sup>

## 2.2 - Religiosity in Scottish Women

While the religious experience of all Scottish women cannot possibly be defined or even tracked, general trends of female religiosity are accessible. Women as a whole have been considered historically as sensitive and suited to religious matters and devotion. Protestant women themselves will demonstrate an active interest in the Protestant cause, in the same ways that women from Chapter Four will for Catholicism.<sup>46</sup>

Religion throughout history has been divided into public and private spheres, with women usually denied access to many of the public portions reserved for men. Therefore, worship in the private and domestic sphere was where women truly found religious expression and agency.<sup>47</sup> Upkeeping traditional Catholic and folk rituals in the family was a traditional role of women prior to the reformation, including daily prayers, devotional readings, imagery in the

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<sup>45</sup> Houston, 127-128.

<sup>46</sup> Christine Peters, *Patterns of Piety*, 157-158.

<sup>47</sup> Elizabeth Ewan, “Gendering the Scottish Reformation,” in *A Companion to the Reformation in Scotland, C. 1525-1638*, 524-527.

household, and feasting and fasting on saints' days. One written example is the upholding of "The Fast of St. Ninian" by "poor women" as seen by Philosopher John Major:<sup>48</sup>

"which is practiced by some poor women in our country: they begin by taking bread and water at noon on Friday, and then eat nothing until noon on Sunday. Thus they eat nothing for the space of two natural days. Moreover, those who fast in this fashion are women of the people, who live frugally enough as it is."

Even beyond the domestic act of feeding the family, women engaged in the ritualistic determinations of sustenance when coming to periods of fasting or abstaining from certain foods.<sup>49</sup>

Around the twelfth century, according to Rosalind Marshall, feminine virtues and qualities became part of contemporary literary and cultural vernacular through the *lives* of female saints. The cult of the virgin in terms of women's purity and Christ's mother reached its peak around this time, with interest in female characters having a forefront in many popular stories. An even more marked popular genre were those of virgin martyrs, argued by Audrey-Beth Fitch as an earmark of women's obsession with the body and sexual matters. This is evident in the publishing of the widely read *Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine, whose most popular and read *lives* were those of virgin martyrs.<sup>50</sup>

St. Margaret, also known as Queen Margaret during her time, is a pure Scottish example of feminine relationships with saints. As Queen of Scotland in the eleventh century, she established Dunfermline Abbey, north of the river from Edinburgh, and created the well-traveled

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<sup>48</sup> James Burns, "The Scotland of John Major," *Innes Review* 2 (1951), pp.73. Mairi Cowan, *Lay Piety in Scotland Before the Protestant Reformation: Individuals, Communities, and Nation*, University of Toronto (2003), 50-51. Ewan, "Gendering the Reformation," 524,

<sup>49</sup> Roberts, "The Role of Women in Scottish Catholic Survival," 130.

<sup>50</sup> Marshall, 60.

Queensferry to aid pilgrims traveling north to the shrine at St. Andrews Cathedral due to its popularity as an international pilgrimage site. Beyond her establishments, her pious nature that was reported by the monks of Dunfermline Abbey and the miracles described in her *life* made her a well-known and venerated saint in the Catholic church, even beyond Scotland.<sup>51</sup>

She was canonized in 1250 and is the only official Scottish saint of canon; not without attempts to have other figures such as Waltheof of Melrose, Kentigern of Glasgow, and David I recognized by the Pope without success. She appeared regularly on the calendar of Saint's feast starting in the thirteenth century, which would have been religiously observed by women in Scotland. Additionally, her shrine and burial place in Dunfermline Abbey as a frequent pilgrimage site of local, international, and royal patronage after her death and canonization shows the wide appeal and notoriety her piety received in the eyes of medieval Catholicism.<sup>52</sup>

The representation that Margaret as a Scottish saint, but also other female saints, would give to women of femininity within the Christian and pious lens had massive effects on their everyday lives. The tales of virgin martyrs were seen as inspiration for how to overcome the supposedly lusty and sinful nature of womanhood. They were to overcome their weakness by displaying strength and loyalty in their relationship with God and Christ.<sup>53</sup>

The idea of chastity even existed within the confines of marriage, with women often choosing to concentrate on their spiritual purity rather than conjugal pleasure. One popular example of this type of marriage is through *The Book of Margery Kempe*, in which Margery was

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<sup>51</sup> Sangdong Lee, "The Miracles and Cult of St. Margaret of Scotland," *Scottish Historical Review*, 1-3.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 1-12.

<sup>53</sup> Audrey-Beth Fitch, "Power Through Purity: The Virgin Martyrs and Women's Salvation in Pre-Reformation Scotland," in *Women in Scotland, c. 1100-1750*, 16-17.

greatly concerned with ending sexual relations within her marriage (at the consent of her husband, of course) in order for her to focus on sexual purity that would strengthen her relationship with Christ. However, this form of purity becomes obsolete with the new ideas of marital obligation popularized by protestant doctrine.

### **2.3 - Education**

One of the primary goals of Scottish reformers that shines as an earmark nationally during the period was the desire for education reform and access. The goal of opening a school in each parish to provide centers of learning across Scotland was a goal incorporated from humanist thinking which was discussed previously. On one hand, the popular reformers of the time cited this as a basic human necessity for a well-cultivated mind. On the other, it was a necessity of getting the bible and other teachings into the hands of the masses, taking religious literacy from the clergy to everyone. Before this point, most religious patrons learned from retellings and artwork. Latin was the primary language used in Catholic services and texts as well, and protestants aimed to have preaching more accessible along with texts.<sup>54</sup>

Women's traditional role in the household and with domestic affairs naturally affected the type of education young girls were expected to receive. Training mostly consisted of vocational training that would prepare females for the role of wives and servants. One exception to this tradition is the emergence of Renaissance ladies of the court who had been exposed to humanist educations, often having the privilege to study on the continent. While young female aristocrats had increasingly received more education before the sixteenth century, this marked

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<sup>54</sup> Turpie, 7-8. Goodare, 95-97. Eire, 397.

increase did inspire optimism that women would finally have the opportunity to stand on intellectual ground with men that had historically been denied to them.<sup>55</sup>

The Privy Council of 1616 was the first to state the aim of establishing a school in every parish, making this goal of widespread education more established. However, the immediate reactions from 1560 to 1600 that are being investigated in this study would not have a boost of confidence in the feasibility of this idea just yet. It is with this caveat that their viewpoints on female education will be postulated.<sup>56</sup>

According to John Durkan, when girls did receive education in the sixteenth century and before, it came from nuns who were instructed to teach embroidery and some reading but never writing.<sup>57</sup> The number of girls who in reality attended school was incredibly low, especially in rural areas where they were needed for domestic duties and harvest. The established advantage given to males with academic achievement had not yet been transferred to females by this period, making the economic value of their education lesser and their value in the household much higher.<sup>58</sup>

In Scotland, the culture of sending daughters from prestigious families to the convent existed similarly to elsewhere in Europe. However, one clear distinction that has been established by historians such as Rosalind Marshall is the quality of education young girls would

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<sup>55</sup> Marshall, 123-125. Goodare, 96-97.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 125.

<sup>57</sup> John Durkan, "Education in the Century of the Reformation" 155.

<sup>58</sup> Marshall, 125-127.



be receiving during their time there. It has been uncovered that very few nuns in Scotland were literate, even towards the end of monastic life.<sup>59</sup>

Remarkably few works exist from women in the Early Modern Period in general, much less in the early reformation period of 1560-1600 in which this research involves. Elizabeth Melville, known as Lady Culross, was the only known surviving published woman, cited from roughly 1579 to 1630. She is known for her *Ane Godlie Dreame*, which described an ideal Protestant world.<sup>60</sup>

Women were arguably less interested in the bible and literacy-focused ideas of Protestantism in reaction to lower education rates and availability for women that continued to exist. Catholicism was built on ritual, devotion, and focused prayer, with the ability to read the bible not being required—thus making it a more approachable option.<sup>61</sup> This fact alone does not explain the catholic devotion of educated elite women that will be discussed in Chapter Four, as their personal motivations were obviously varied.

To close out this section, the lack of literacy and preserved writing of women helps to explain why female narratives barely exist in the archives. When searching for their stories, it often requires reading between the lines of documents left behind by the males around them. Rarely, women of high status have been remembered in their letters and will be utilized throughout this paper. As fortunate as researchers are and should be for these valuable resources, it is also bittersweet to remember that this was not the norm, and the majority of the female

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 56-57.

<sup>60</sup> Stevenson, Jane. "Reading, Writing and Gender in Early Modern Scotland." *The Seventeenth Century* 27, no. 3 (Autumn, 2012: 335-336).

<sup>61</sup> Peters, *Patterns of Piety*, 156.

experience is left up to guesswork. While this challenge is both exciting and rewarding, it also illuminates the true value of education and literacy that is modernly taken for granted, as it grants the potent ability to leave behind an accessible legacy for previously marginalized groups.

## **2.4 - Love and Marriage**

Within this new religious and ethical standard set by the reformed protestant movement, so too did the societal rules for Christian virtue in terms of family and relationships change. In traditional Catholic teaching, chastity had been the ultimate form of virtue, with holy men and women who had dedicated their life to celibacy being the ultimate moral exemplar. Cardinal Bellarmine described the Catholic notion of chastity: “marriage is a thing humane, virginity is angelical.”<sup>62</sup>

In contrast, holy matrimony became an earmark of protestant piety, with preachers describing conjugal married relations as, “the prescribed satisfaction of an irrational heat...the promiscuous draining of a carnal rage,” and by William Perkins as, “a state in itself far more excellent than a single life.” With this focus on the joy and piousness of marriage, comes a similar focus on the notion of “wifely duties” including but not limited to obedience towards the husband.<sup>63</sup>

With all of this said, women prior to the reformation did often end up betrothed; it was still considered incredibly important and sacramental before the reformation. Additionally, it was tied to furthering dynastic households, establishing ties between families, and, of course, love.

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<sup>62</sup> Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 135-136.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, 135.

However, these changes to the ideal of marriage and pure devotion caused one cataclysmic change during the reformation. The alternative route for women of life in the nunnery was eliminated with the reforms to end monasticism. This had traditionally been an available avenue for women either undesiring or “unfit” for marriage to avoid the social pariah status as a spinster, therefore providing more opportunities for women outside of marriage. Additionally, women once widowed would often enter the convent to avoid marrying again for personal or virtuous reasons, which was also a common occurrence during this time; this option was also now cut off. The Christian and feminine values of purity and chaste devotion can also not be overstated, obviously having a profound effect on women’s choice to forgo marriage. Whatever the reasons for their decision to enter monastic life, this was an avenue of agency no longer provided.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Stone, 135-136, 141. Fitch, 22-24.

### **Chapter 3 – Theological Battleground: Perspectives on Women in Religion, Society, and the Family**

In this chapter, the changes that women had to contend with based on Protestant reform and rhetoric will be examined. This analysis will take a three-fold approach: the Protestant movement in Europe's stance of females in general, analysis of pivotal Scottish texts from Protestant preacher and reformer John Knox and the rebuttal by Catholic bishop and devout Marian John Leslie, and finally, the actualities of Protestant women's changes and behaviors in society which illustrated and reinforced these rhetorical ideals.

One (arguably over-researched) aspect of these shifts came from political rather than religious debates of the time. The issue of gynocracy, or the rule of female leaders, was crucial and controversial in the sixteenth century because of the rules of Mary Tudor, Elizabeth I, and Mary Queen of Scots. Their rules stirred up questions such as women's ability to rule over men and long-accepted inferiority of women in the social hierarchy.

The rhetoric from both Protestant and Catholic sides will be considered, as these arguments at this time formed a veritable battleground centered around women's roles and abilities. The arguments from John Knox in his *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* and the *Scots Confession* will be counter-examined with the most prominent contemporary rebuttal by John Leslie, *A Defence of the honour of the... princesse Marie, with a declaration as well of her right, title and intereste to the succession of the crowne of Englande, as that the regiment of women ys conformable to the lawe of god and nature.*

The widespread influence and diffusion of these ideas is important to highlight, as their arguments greatly shifted the everyday lives of women despite the targeted focus on royal

women. By discussing both of these texts within their individual contexts, a clearer view of the societal discourse which would permeate into the lives of women can be obtained. The tangible effects of protestant ideals and rhetoric toward women will be emphasized through evidence of change in the lives of protestant women, who would be most profoundly and noticeably affected by these reforms.

### **3.1 – Protestant Arguments on a European Scale**

To begin, the broader views being disseminated in Europe as a whole by reformers must be established in order to provide the base for the ideas of Scottish reformers. Their ideas were certainly not new and were heavily influenced by Lutheran and Calvinist rhetoric.

In the same manner that protestant culture revolved around restraint—shown in the stripping of architecture and religious ceremony discussed previously—so were the expectations societally for behavior. Temperance was expected of all reformed Christians and women were expected to be shining examples of purity and motherhood exclusively within a marital context.

Women often acted as a reflection and extension of their husband’s interests politically and religiously, especially when looking at the dynamics of elite women and families.<sup>65</sup> Consistent with women's roles until uncomfortably recently, Scottish women traditionally answered to their fathers and husbands. Women often functioned as a reflection and extension of their husband’s interests politically and religiously, especially when looking at the dynamics of

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<sup>65</sup> Susan C Karant-Nunn and Merry E. Wiesner. *Luther on women: a sourcebook* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 28.

elite women and families. Their place within society typically revolved around the day-to-day workings of the home and family, as governess of the domestic sphere.<sup>66</sup>

In a famous sermon from this period by William Whatley, published under the name *The Bride-Bush*, the role of woman as wife and her place within the hierarchy of marriage is described as: “If ever thou purpose to be a good wife, and to live comfortably, set down this with thyself: my husband is my superior, my better; he hath authority and rule over me; nature hath given it to him...God hath given it to him.”<sup>67</sup> In sixteenth and seventeenth-century sermons from Protestant preachers, the obsession with marital bliss, “holy matrimony,” and conjugal satisfaction came to the forefront of the expectations of male and female relations; and therefore, part of the expectations for devout women.

At this same time, the role and importance of the male head of the household as a means of providing order and discipline was emphasized, coming specifically from Martin Luther himself. Several quotations from his sermons display his views on dominance of the husband in the household.<sup>68</sup>

In 1523/24, he stated:<sup>69</sup>

“And beyond this, she is obligated to submit to the man; authority pertains to the husband in all the matters of this life. Women shall have grief and misery. Indeed, stupid women try not to submit to their husbands, but they are not able to govern cities and territories, etc. In short, wives have their part, are mildly punished if only they have faith.”

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<sup>66</sup> Dawson, 63. Michael Lynch, *Oxford Companion to Scottish History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 645.

<sup>67</sup> William Whatley, *A Bride-Bush: or A vvedding sermon compendiously describing the duties of married persons: by performing whereof, marriage shall be to them a great helpe, which now finde it a little hell*, (London: Early English Books Online Text Creation Partnership, 1617), 36. <http://name.umd.umich.edu/A14989.0001.001>,

<sup>68</sup> Stone, 154.

<sup>69</sup> Karant-Nunn and Wiesner, 93.

Similarly, in 1525, he stated:<sup>70</sup>

“Men should govern their wives not with great cudgels, flails, or drawn knives, but rather with friendly words and gestures and with all gentleness so that they do not become shy...and take fright such that they afterward do not know what to do. Thus, men should rule their wives with reason and not unreason, and honor the feminine sex as the weakest vessel and also as coheirs of the grace of life”

While these quotes are among the most extreme of their kind from Luther, they illuminate the great zeal for patriarchal control of women that cropped up in Lutheran and Protestant rhetoric.

If Luther’s thoughts on the subject were anything to go by, the age-old debate of physical differences between men and women contributed heavily to this idea in protestant circles. Taking inspiration from Luther’s discourse, sixteenth-century protestant minister and theologian John Weemes argued that since Christ as man was the head of the Church, making man ‘the more excellent sexe,’ it was, therefore, natural for man to rule over woman as ‘the infirmer sexe.’ Therefore, it was the man's obligation to ‘instruct and teach her’ and that she should respond with ‘subjection, obedience, and reverence.’<sup>71</sup>

In England, the text *A Godly Forme of Household Governement* (1598) could be looked to as a guidebook on the reforming of household worship and how it was to be led by the male head of the house. However, in Scotland, no such book exists, meaning that Scots would either look directly at local doctrine or informal rules being passed along from England and the continent.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 95.

<sup>71</sup> David G. Mullan, “Women in Scottish Divinity, c.1590-1640” in *Women in Scotland, c. 1100-1750* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1999), 30-31.

<sup>72</sup> Keith M Brown, *Noble Society in Scotland: Wealth, Family and Culture, from Reformation to Revolution* (Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 233.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctvxcrpwb>.

### 3.2 - The “Heroic Protestant” John Knox

The Scottish Reformation is often found synonymously with one individual: John Knox. As the primary showpiece and example of the “Heroic Protestant” narrative, he spearheaded the reform movement of the sixteenth century and must be mentioned specifically for the fact that his doctrine, thought, and popularity influenced the rise of reform to expectations of female protestant devotion.<sup>73</sup>

He was a prolific preacher and primary writer of the *Scots Confession of Faith* for Parliament in 1560. His religious revolts were known for being marked by passionate speeches and their calls for violent iconoclastic actions against the iconography of the Catholic church. These revolts led to the destruction of St. Andrews Cathedral, the arguable center of Catholicism in Scotland and a prominent site of pilgrimage for large international crowds. Its loss and the violent revolts in other places are remembered as metaphorical and literal representations of the forceful destruction of the Scottish Catholic Church.<sup>74</sup> His popular designation as the archetypal “heroic protestant” shows the influence and weight that his words carried contemporaneously, shown from his ability to incite and move crowds. Knox was undoubtedly vital to the success of the reform movements and deserves credit for leading the passionate devotion and humanism-minded education reform for which the Scottish reformation was known. He influenced future generations of protestants and created the mindset of heroic vitriol with which Scottish Presbyterianism charged forward with.

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<sup>73</sup> Stephen Mark Holmes, “Historiography of the Scottish Reformation: the Catholics Fight Back?” (*Studies in Church History* 49: 2013), 306-308.

<sup>74</sup> Eire, 358. John Knox, *History of the Reformation in Scotland*, 2 vols. (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), i.181-182.



However, in regard to his writings and impact on the lives of women, both rulers and otherwise, have not been quite as well-regarded. The two most prolific and controversial sources by Knox were: *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstruous Regiment of Women* and *The Scots Confession*, the last of which was largely written by John Knox but included other authors. These two sources can help determine what sort of protestant rhetoric was being used in Scotland to describe the roles of women.

As can be gathered from the ever-mentioned *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstruous Regiment of Women*, Scotland was actively discussing the role of women in terms of power and societal roles during the period in question. In the opening declamation, Knox lays out the following protests:<sup>75</sup>

The Proposition. To promote a Woman to bear rule, superiority, dominion or empire above any realm, nation or city is:

A. Repugnant to nature.

B. Contumely to GOD.

C. The subversion of good order, of all equity and justice.

A. Men illuminated only by the light of nature have seen and determined that it is a thing most repugnant to nature, that Women rule and govern over men.

B.

1. Woman in her greatest perfection was made to serve and obey man, not to rule and command him.

2. After the fall, she was made subject to man by the irrevocable sentence of GOD. In which sentence there are two parts.

(a) A dolour, anguish and pain as oft as ever she shall be a mother.

(b) A subjection of herself, her appetites and will to her husband and his will.

Through this declaration, it is made clear that Knox was not only concerned with the ruling class of women to which this was addressed, but the inferiority of women to men, and their husbands

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<sup>75</sup> John Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstruous Regiment of Women: 1558*, (Southgate, London, N., 1878), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/9660/9660-h/9660-h.htm>.

specifically, in all areas of life. This tactic used the traditional dynamic within the household as a justification for women's inability to rule.

First and foremost, the intense and accusatory language of 'odious' and 'traitress' are perhaps what makes this particular well-known attack against the female sex and their roles within society so memorable and quoted to this day. In relation to women as a whole, not just those in power, he stated, "Nature I say, doth paynt them furthe to be weake, fraile, impacient, feble, and foolishe; and experience hath declared them to be vncostant, vairable, cruell, and lacking the spirit of counsel and regiment." In order to not linger on the flagrant language used by Knox, a few more of the wordage used to describe women with the *First Blast* are: sicke, impotent persones, madde, phrenetike, phrensied, pollute, profane, haynous, falshed, coutesousnes, deceit, and so on.<sup>76</sup>

In his writings against Mary Tudor—and therefore Mary of Guise, Elizabeth I, and Mary, Queen of Scots—Knox argued primarily that women's inability to rule was natural, innate, and "God-given." Knox made clear in the first paragraphs of his polemic his views on women having any position of influence: "And therefore, I say, that of necessity it is that this monstiferous empire of women (which amongst all enormities that this day do abound upon the face of the whole earth, is most detestable and damnable)...," as well as: "She is not born to rule over men".<sup>77</sup>

He condemned female rulers as simply not possessing those abilities which men possess to reign properly, claiming: "Where women reign or be in authoritie, that there must nedes

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<sup>76</sup> Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women: 1558*.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. Constance Jordan, "Woman's Rule in Sixteenth-Century British Political Thought," in *Renaissance Quarterly* (40, no. 3 1987), 425-426. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2862518>

vanitie be preferred to vertue, ambition and pride to temperancie and modestie, and finale, that auarice the mother of all mischefe must nedes devour equitie and justice.” When Knox makes these arguments of an innate difference in the disposition of the sexes, it was clearly tying into the claim that female rule goes against and was “repugnant” to laws of nature.

While formulating his arguments against the rule of women, Knox looked supremely to scripture, and included his interpretations heavily as evidence. He cited their inability as God-given and biblical: “That is, they must acknowledge that the regiment of a woman is a thing most odious in the presence of God... because she is a traitress and rebel against God.”<sup>78</sup>

Many of the examples with which Knox first uses against the regiment of women come from Genesis. First Eve, as the bringer of “curse and malediction...by the reason of her rebellion,” which biblically and in the eyes of man placed her beneath man. Additionally, her creation through the ribs of Adam designates her as an inferior, being a part of his body and not vice-versa. Knox, inspired by Genesis 3, states: “So, I say, that in her greatest perfection woman was created to be subject to man.”<sup>79</sup>

Knox directly rebukes in his *First Blast* a few of the common arguments from pro-gynocracy writers:<sup>80</sup>

1. Biblical examples (such as Deborah, Huldah, and the daughters of Zelophehad) of females chosen by God to shepherd or inherit.
2. Historical consent and success of female rulers in other nations.
3. Female rulers do not absolutely reign and are checked by “Lieutenants, Deputies, and Judges substitutes.”

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<sup>78</sup> Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women: 1558*.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

He first designates the cases of Deborah and Huldah as exceptions and part of God's divine plan, rather than a rule to follow. With these specific cases, he claims that neither women ruled over man nor usurped authority. While this point will be disputed by John Leslie, these prophetesses did not convince Knox of any biblical notions towards female rule. Additionally, he added further salt to the wound by remarking on the "spirit of mercie, truthe, justice, and of humility," biblical examples of women possessed, while remarking on the women "in these ages" as possessing all of the negative traits explained previously.<sup>81</sup> Therefore, to Knox, contemporary women were not worthy of the same praise as the holy women of scripture by means of decreased values and piety.

In the case of historical examples, he shut them down immediately with the argument that God's law as laid down in scripture supersedes all historical and mortal laws, even when based on interpretation, making the historical argument void in his eyes. Genesis, as well as Timothy 2 which stated, "I permit not a woman to teache, nether yet to vsurpe authority aboue man," took highest precedent in the mind of Knox; making the authority of women and their place below men an inarguable fact.<sup>82</sup>

Finally, on the point of limits to female rulers and their authority, the fact that women "were not borne to rule ouer men" means that they were not suitable for selecting worthy men to serve and council. Her base status as female negated her ability to even choose worthy men, tarnishing them in the eyes of God, according to Knox: "Howe can it be then, that she being criminall and giltie of treason against God committed, can apointe any officer pleasing in his sight?" In this argument, Knox proposes that any man worthy of serving in God's eyes would

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

refuse to serve under a woman, as she was a “traïtoresse and rebell against God.”<sup>83</sup> The strength of her corruption was so heavy, that it could affect the spiritual nature of those around her; a heavy claim to make and one with great potential to offend female rulers and those in power around her.

From the perspective of Knox, he had much to lose and took great risk in publishing this polemic with his name attached. As we will see in the next section, this similarity was not fully present for those that opposed him in writing. In the preface and beginnings of the *First Blast*, Knox acknowledged these risks, lining them out as:

- (a) It may seem to tend to sedition
- (b) It shall be dangerous not only to the writer or publisher, but to all as shall read the writings, or favour this truth spoken
- (c) It shall not amend the chief offenders, because
  - a. It will never come to their ears
  - b. They will not be admonished

Nevertheless, as he admits these dangers, he further emphasized his perceived importance of speaking out against the rule of women, which was “most damnable and detestable,” as his duty as one of “Goddes messengers.” Despite the clear societal and potentially mortal risks of publishing such a work against the powerful ruler of England, he declared “Yea it is a triumph that will sound in despite of the aduersarie.”<sup>84</sup> Perhaps it is this possibility which has landed Knox as a “heroic protestant,” despite the controversial nature of this work. A man willing to put his head on the line for what he believed to be a biblical truth rings loud within the protestant and presbyterian rhetoric that would follow his early post-reformation period.

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

Going beyond his personal treatises, John Knox's views had an effect on women's roles and perception on a national level, evidenced in the *Scots Confession*, being the official and ultimate example of the Protestant ideology in 1560. John Knox was a primary contributor to this national document, which offered more covert commentary on women.

The role of women within the house was demonstrated as a metaphor for the relationship of the new Protestant Kirk in the Scots Confession. In Chapter Nineteen:<sup>85</sup>

“We affirm, therefore, that those who say the Scriptures have no other authority save that which they have received from the Kirk are blasphemous against God and injurious to the true Kirk, which always hears and obeys the voice of her own Spouse and Pastor, but takes not upon her to be mistress over the same.”

The subordination of the Scottish people to the Kirk and the scriptures were detailed as that between women and “her own spouse,” which they are expected to hear and obey. No other quote could show the official and widespread mindset of Scottish society regarding the expectations of a married woman more than this.

Portions of the Scots Confession shows the relationship that the movement held to women in terms of their bodies and uses thereof. The purity of the female body was a concern of men for time immemorial. The regulation and control over the female body as a repeating factor of Christianity lends itself once again in the verbiage used to provoke their ideas with the masses. While this aspect of protestant views of femininity is not pertinent to the research in Chapter Four, it is an important facet of the tumultuous relationship the female body had shared with society and religion.

In Chapter Eighteen of the Scots Confession, the comparison of the “vile” Catholicism with the “purity” of Protestantism was evoked through the female qualifiers of “bride” and

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<sup>85</sup> George Henderson ed, *The Scots Confession, 1560* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1960), Chapter 19

“harlot”: “The notes, signs, and assured tokens whereby the spotless bride of Christ is known from the horrible harlot, the false Kirk.” This distinction attributed the qualities of female purity through virginity or marital relations to Protestantism and described the supposedly unworthy and false Catholicism as a harlot, and unclean and debased woman. The use of this imagery in a touchstone document of the nation shows just how embroiled this notion of physical purity or pollution in terms of female sexual matters was in the late medieval and early modern periods.<sup>86</sup>

### 3.3 – Catholic Perspective: John Leslie and his *Defense of Mary*

As one of the most trusted advisors to Mary Queen of Scots, John Leslie was heavily remembered for his defense of her character and ability to rule; notably tackling the claims made by John Knox in his *First Blast* with his own: *A Defence of the honour of the... princesse Marie, with a declaration as well of her right, title and intereste to the succession of the crowne of Englande, as that the regiment of women ys conformable to the lawe of god and nature.*

While Knox directed his *First Blast* primarily at Mary Tudor, his arguments were broadly appealing to the base question of the female ability to rule. His arguments brought issue with all female rulers based on biblical assertions, therefore offending supporters of both Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots.<sup>87</sup> While others within the Catholic and Marian communities would speak out against Knox’s arguments, such as the Englishman John Alymer’s *An Harborowe for Faithfull and Trewe Subjectes* and Ninian Winzet in several tracts, Leslie remains the most circulated Scottish opponent.

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<sup>86</sup> Henderson, *Scots Confession*, Chapter 18.

<sup>87</sup>Margaret Beckett, “The political works of John Lesley, Bishop of Ross (1527-96)”, Ph.D. Thesis, (University of St. Andrews, 2002), 60.

Prior to the writing of his *Defense* in 1569, Leslie served as one of the commissioners of her trials in York, which were ultimately unsuccessful. Leslie was actively involved in championing Mary's claim and viability to the throne, even going so far as to publish a treatise in direct opposition to Queen Elizabeth, titled *A Treatise of treasons against Q. Elizabeth and the crowne of England : diuided into two partes; whereof, the first parte answereth certaine treasons pretended that never were intended; and the second, discovereth greater treasons committed that are by few perceiued, as more largely appeareth in the page folowing*. His motive with this treatise was to argue the treason committed by Queen Elizabeth as a—in his and many Catholics views—illegitimate child of Henry VIII from his highly controversial second marriage to Anne Boleyn.<sup>88</sup>

His *Defense* began first-and-foremost with the first book titled *The Defense of the Honour*, with Mary's reputation being the most important aspect of his work. He focused on clearing her honor from the accused murder of King Consort Henry Stuart (her second husband) and her character as a rightful and noble ruler. The second book, *Declaration of the Right, Title and Interest to the Succession of the Crown of England*, pertained to her right to the English throne. It garnered the most attention of all books from this treatise for its direct arguments against the legitimacy of Elizabeth I. Both of these tracts were incredibly political and, while fascinating for a detailed study of Mary's political life, contain nowhere near the broadly appealing and influential arguments defending the female sex as book three.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Beckett, 27. Richard L. Greaves, *Theology and Revolution in the Scottish Reformation: Studies in the Thought of John Knox* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Christian University Press, 1980), 167.

<sup>89</sup> John Leslie 1527-1596, *A treatise concerning the defence of the honour of the right high, mightie and noble Princesse, Marie Queene of Scotland, and Douager of France with a declaration, as wel of her right, title, and interest, to the succession of the crowne of England: as that the regiment of women is conformable to the lawe of God and nature* (Made by Morgan



Book three titled *The Regiment of Women*, takes John Knox's assertions of the inferiority of women and any position they maintain over men as unnatural and vile, and argues directly against them from multiple standpoints. While this book still heavily focuses on the defense of Queen Mary, it adds substantially more to the defense of womankind and refuting the broad statements made by Knox in the *First Blast*.

What was clear from this treatise as a whole was that where Knox looked towards biblical logic before all else in terms of female rulers, Leslie and other defendants of female rulers relied heavily of absolutism and divine right as justification. Faith in Parliamentary superiority and ability to check the monarch made gender of the ruler inconsequential, even looking beyond the dual responsibility for a female as wife and leader.<sup>90</sup>

In book three, however, Leslie discussed and critiqued this fundamental difference, stating: "...the world most conformable also to reason, nor any thing els wil satisfy you, vnlesse it be derived and taken out of Holy Scripture." Further, he questioned the principles of the anti-gynocracy faction, declaring their judgement "so vnbrotherly, and so vnchristianly" and their interpretation of scripture and nature as "so most wretchedly to corrupt, deprauē, and maim both the law of God and Nature." Leslie took the highly scripture and religion focused arguments of Knox and turned them on their head, calling into question the morality and Christian-like nature of this viewpoint.<sup>91</sup>

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Philippe, Bachelor of Diuinitie, An. 1570), Book 1 and 2. Beckett, 4, 50-86, 87-141. Greaves, 167.

<sup>90</sup> Jordan, 439.

<sup>91</sup> Leslie, *Defense*, 10.

The true meaning of “the law of nature,” which within context of the *First Blast* was defined by Knox as women’s innate inferiority to man, was tackled and described more elaborately by Leslie as:<sup>92</sup>

“it is called the law of Nature, because the discourse of natural reason forced al Natioes, to obey and kepe this law, as to honour God, to obey our Parents, and Magistrats, to kepe and mainteine our bargains and promises, to defend ourself fro violece and inirue, with a number of such other.”

In the opinion of Leslie, the laws of Nature involved much more than that subscribed within scripture, as it is also affected by reason. He points that Knox, “th’Aduersarie,” is only concerned with the nature to honour God despite the other essential aspects. In this context, we can surmise that he is emphasizing the respect for authority—and therefore, his main concern of Queen Mary—as well as the respect of both parents which includes natural respect towards women.

From this point, he asserts his historical based argument with a series of examples of female governesses, including but not limited to: Artemisia, Ada, Semiramis, Nitorchris, Thomiris, Dido, Queene of Saba, Atossa, Irene, Theodora, Zoe, Eudocia, Teuca, and Iohanna. He punctuates this section with a quote from Virgil, declaring the opening of the father’s seat to the daughter in lieu of a son, showing that for time immemorial, females had taken the throne acceptedly by even the ancient thinkers (despite the frequent quotes by Aristotle from the opposing camp).<sup>93</sup>

In addition, he also includes extensive lists of learned women who had reason, wit, and understanding, which Knox claimed women could not possess. These included: Atossa, Aspasia,

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 11-15, 21. Note: “filius huic fato divum prolesque virilis nulla fuit, primaque oriens erepta iuventa est. sola domum et tantas servabat filia sedes” - Virgil, *The Aeneid*

Diotina, the Sybilles, Paula, Eustochia, Sappho, Cornelia, Hyptachia, the nine Muses, Minerva, Cabra, Martia Proba, and Helena. With these examples he argues that these women, clearly worthy of praise, should not be lesser than an underage king or one of the many who lacked wit and reason through history purely on the reasoning of their sex.<sup>94</sup>

Last to note, Leslie makes several appeals to empathy and equality between the treatment of the sexes within the confines of Christian treatment of their fellow man. First:<sup>95</sup>

“Now when the holy Scripture saith, thou shalt not hate they brother: Thou shalt not lend vpon vsurie to thy brother: let euery man vse his brother mercifully: if thy brother trespace against thee, forgeue him: withdrawe your selfe from euery brother walking disorderly: he that hateth his brother, is in darknes, with a number of like sort: shal we inferre therevpon, that we may hate our sister, that we may oppresse our sister with vsurie, that we may vse our sister as vnmercifully, as we wil, without any remorse of conscience, and are not bound to forgeue her, nor to eschewe her companie being excommunicated, or a notorious offendour?”

Second:<sup>96</sup>

“And why, I pray you? Was not she created to the image of God, as wel as man? And doth not she represent the Maiestie of God? Did not God blesse them both? Did not God bid them rule ouer the fish of the sea, and ouer the foule of heauē, and ouer euery beast, that moueth vpō the earth? But what thing meane you by th'image of God? Meane you, as S. Paule seemeth to meane, that man was created in righteousnes and true holines? This is true also in the woman.”

Although it does not need to be said, a disclaimer must accommodate any discussion of Leslie's *Defense*, especially in terms of what it meant contemporaneously. There was no doubt that much of what John Knox and other anti-gynocracy writers proclaimed was refuted by the public and grossly mis-aligned with most sentiments towards the roles of women. However, in such a work as Leslie's with its bold and heavy defense of women and their right to rule, his

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 21-23.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 21.

attachment to Queen Mary and assuring her reign for the Catholic cause cannot be ignored. He stood to personally gain from her success and perhaps might have protested so heavily with ulterior motives rather than for the pure sake of justice, truth, or honor. In a work such as this, where his statements towards the legitimacy of Mary are first and foremost and the defense of womankind being an afterthought, it is hard to not see the political motivations with a grain of cynicism.

That said, works such as Leslie's were vitally important to balance the discourse of the time surrounding women in Scotland, despite their motivations. This myriad of tactics that Leslie used to argue against Knox and other writers employed the usage of historical and logical reasoning, with which Knox called useless in the face of God's word and law. Regardless, within the realm of public opinion, his arguments would have been deeply needed to juxtapose the controversial tracts against womankind and female rule of the time. His was the most prominent circulated through Scotland, and would have had the greatest chance of affecting the narrative in which the public (and therefore, the women discussed in Chapter Four) would have been interacting with.

### **3.4 - Brief Discourse on Protestant Women**

While the aim of this research is to focus on Catholic women's response to change, it would be remiss to neglect mention of the Protestant women in a general sense; namely, in order to see the tangible results and examples that Catholic women were to contend with. Importantly, women from all religious leanings could break the mold established by the male rhetoric previously discussed and no one religion suddenly made women submissive or defiant. There is

a wealth of evidence for protestant women who were active in their communities and acted in the face of adversity despite the rhetoric discussed that placed women quietly within the home.

As previously discussed, Protestantism heavily focused on literacy, which was mainly offered to middle to high-class males. Therefore, with the new importance of the written word in the household's spirituality, men became the center of religious life and devotion; an area which usually awarded females a semblance of agency and control. The lack of outside confessors or counsel for religious matters put a strain on wives and children as they relied on the husband and father, who would often be lacking in training and compassion. With this change toward literacy-focused devotion and away from the symbolic, oral, and visual worship, which often involved saints, women lost a large portion of their individualized access.

A traditional feminine element of Christianity up to this point had been the Virgin Mary and Saints, who were to be receivers of devotion and prayer as well as examples of purity for women to follow. However, the reverence of saints and saintly imagery was vehemently opposed by the reformers, with the claim that they distracted from the primacy of devotion that was supposed to be given to God and akin to idolatry. This removed the presence of female figures from within Protestant worship, turning the religion into one centered on a male deity, being God and Jesus Christ, who had dominion over all. This lack of gendered representation within Protestantism can be seen as a reflection of the male-dominated space that was forming in this new religious climate and the aimed elimination of women from any publicly acknowledged religious roles.<sup>97</sup>

To juxtapose, a role and example that women gained through protestant feminism was that of the "minister's wife." The end of chastity for the clergy and emphasis on marriage

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<sup>97</sup> Eire, 716.

changed the roles of women involved with men of the cloth from “clergy’s whores” to something respectable and admirable. Wives of ministers would be significant in their local communities and would often form bonds and networks between the families of ministers.<sup>98</sup> As shown in the ongoing project, “Mapping the Scottish Reformation” which takes a prosopographical approach to data of Scottish clergy from 1560 to 1689, the spouses of ministers were highly documented showing a level of status and respect akin to those of noble and elite women. Their database currently shows the name and locations of 462 women.<sup>99</sup>

In the household, families were now held to a standard of worship which centered around the parents as spiritual leaders. While the main executive of family religion became the husband and father under this new system, women were still included and expected to be actively engaged in the religious upbringing of the children. The catechisms were published in ‘plain and easy’ language (which, when looking at the large literacy disparity between the sexes, was the least the Kirk could do). Families were given a recommended set of prayers to perform morning, evening, and at mealtimes, as well as expected to sing psalms and read scriptures led by the parents. Additionally, parents became the primary givers of discipline rather than the church for correcting behavior in their children.<sup>100</sup>

This new focus on marriage and the family led to practical and innovative approach by the Kirk to supervise relationships with the goal of keeping families together and content. This included what we would call “marriage counsellors” of the Kirk that were focused on mediating

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<sup>98</sup> Dawson, 221. Ewan, “Gendering the Reformation,” 517.

<sup>99</sup> *Mapping the Scottish Reformation: A database of the Scottish clergy, 1560 to 1689*, <http://mappingthescottishreformation.org/>.

<sup>100</sup> Margo Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 312.

spousal stress such as financial disagreement, alcoholism, quarrels, and cases of abandonment. Additionally, cases of verbal and physical spousal abuse were acknowledged on a scale not previously seen from the church. A clerk in Perth noted the following outlook in the 1580s: “The minister and elders having respect to the good love and amity that should be betwixt a man and his wife...,” showing a changed outlook for martial relations which perhaps changed many women’s domestic lives for the better.<sup>101</sup>

Active Protestant women often had trouble accounting for their husband’s conversion, or lack thereof, funnily enough. In the case of Margaret Hay, she openly negotiated with the Kirk of Deer to avoid excommunication of her recusant husband Michael Fraser. She mediated between the Kirk and her husband, displayed a degree of agency and authority on her part to confer directly rather than through a male party. Additionally, she advocated herself for the baptism of her child within the Protestant church, despite the issues and disagreements between the Kirk and her husband. As will be discussed in the following chapter, women often had their own religious belief and will separate from their husband or family; this situation very much happened for women choosing both Protestant and Catholic camps.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Todd, 275-276.

<sup>102</sup> Catherine McMillan, “‘Scho refuseit altogidder to heir his voce’: Women and Catholic Recusancy in North East Scotland, 1560–1610.” *Scottish Church History* (45, no.1: 2016), 44-47.

## Chapter 4 - Special Cases of Sixteenth Century Female Catholics in the Archives

In this concluding chapter, we will be looking at Catholic women's lives in reaction to Protestantism; specifically, those ideals of female spirituality (marital piety and husband as the religious head of the family) that were established previously. As seen from Knox's critiques of feminine leaders and rules established for women's place as devoted to domestic and family issues, women during this time were not expected to be exceptional in their activism, whether religious or political. Their education was in theory important, but not pertinent enough to make a reality; their use of this supposed education to be able to read scripture and devotional texts by no means meant that they should use that knowledge outside the home or without the guidance of a husband or father.

That is why the cases examined in this final chapter were so important for expressing an alternative female narrative of the time. Additionally, women's action in aiding and advocating for Jesuit missionaries as they begin arriving in the mid-seventeenth century is an area of wide research. While important in its own right, this period of recorded activism also emphasizes the significance of women's actions during the early periods of reform in the late sixteenth century as they were much less recorded and accessible. As the political and religious atmosphere in Scotland became more of a back-and-forth between Protestants and Catholics during the seventeenth-century restoration, Catholic populations no longer practiced the same underground worship that they had previously and were bolder with their actions against reformer ideas.<sup>103</sup>

There are several well-known examples from the English and continental reformations of women aiding priests or working to maintain the monastic habit, such as "the Pearl of York"

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<sup>103</sup> Roberts, "The Role of Women in Scottish Catholic Survival," 139-140.



Margaret Clitherow and Abbess of Denny Elizabeth Throckmorton.<sup>104</sup> However, in Scotland, there is not a clear Catholic heroine to call on. No women were made martyrs for their devotion, while the threatened expulsions from the church, court, and country will be discussed. Therefore, the women of Scotland have had a much slower time gaining historical notoriety for their actions on the Catholic side of the reformation landscape. Protestant women, by virtue of the wider scholarship on the revolutionary aspects of their movement, have received slightly more attention.

As discussed throughout this research, finding women's narratives has proven incredibly difficult in sixteenth-century Scotland. Therefore, the following examples explored gain greater significance, but also more substantial difficulty in unpacking. However, the aim of explaining their reactions to changes towards their sex was bolstered through contextual analysis and evaluation of potential avenues and questions for further research within the field.

#### **4.1 - Women in Underground Catholicism**

This section is dedicated to women who broke the patterns being set by the new ideals of Protestantism. The women discussed throughout this chapter took agency in securing their access to religion, advocacy and protection of Catholic clergy members, and worship spaces that had been the traditional primary places for female devotion.

This early period of persecution primarily involves narratives of high-rank and noblewomen. A few probable causes can be considered. First, potentially only wealthy women

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<sup>104</sup> Robert Tittler and Jones, Norman L., eds, *A Companion to Tudor Britain* (Williston: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2004), 263. ProQuest Ebook Central. "Houses of minoresses: Abbey of Denney," in *A History of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely: Volume 2*, ed. L F Salzman (London: Victoria County History, 1948), 295-302. *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/cambs/vol2/pp295-302>.

had the means of opposition at this time. To combat a forceful movement like the protestant reforms, a person would need funds and space. As we will see in many examples throughout this section, noblewomen often used their large homes or had secret spaces built on their land; an action that would not be possible for the average woman. Another explanation could come from which sources have survived. Potentially, the only sources from this period that were ever preserved dealt with high-ranking women as will be seen in the case of Lady Ferniehurst. Had it not been for her connection to Mary Queen of Scots, and position within the court of James VI, her letters and actions would most likely have not been preserved. These letters are part of the *Calendar of State Papers: Scotland*, which is reserved for only those correspondences related to the crown and its interests. Last, it is possible that at this time the actions of the average woman went unnoticed or were done in such careful secrecy that they went undocumented.<sup>105</sup>

#### **4.1.1 - Janet Scott, Lady Ferniehurst**

Janet Scott, famously known as Lady Ferniehurst (or contemporaneously *Farnyhurst*), is remembered for two prominent reasons: the remarkable fact that Scott was given power of attorney for her exiled Catholic husband and her connection to Mary Queen of Scots and her son James VI of Scotland and I of England. As will be discussed, these are not the reasons for her inclusion in this research but are both necessary and worthy of highlighting briefly.

Lord James Ker of Ferniehurst was one of the most vocal Marian border lords, which ended in the destruction of his family home and exile by Queen Elizabeth I to France. Lady of Ferniehurst, Janet Scott, managed the affairs of their estate and took care of his political correspondence in the royal court and beyond. Additionally, she advocated for his safe return to

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 149.

Scotland after exile directly to Mary, Queen of Scots, showing powerful connections and brazen resolve.<sup>106</sup>

She was a close contact with Mary, Queen of Scots, and frequently delivered messages to her from nobles within the Marian circle, serving as a connection between underground high society Catholics and their queen residing outside of Scotland. On October 22 of 1583, Scott delivered in her own letter messages from those such as Lord Seton, the Earl of Huntly, Lady Arran, and most importantly, words from her own son James VI, giving well wishes for her health and safety and requests for her to send back responses to letters that had gone ignored; an old-world manner of being scolded for leaving someone on “read.”<sup>107</sup>

The political dynamic of correspondence to the Catholic queen was incredibly important to the English government and members of the Scottish protestant establishment, evidenced by the frequent tracking and reporting of who was sending, transmitting, and receiving letters to and from Mary. Her actions and correspondence were tracked not only for her status as the abdicated mother of the King, but because she served as a symbol of optimism and conviction for the underground community of Catholics still vying for a counter-reformation movement in Scotland.<sup>108</sup> Therefore, Lady Ferniehurst Janet Scott was mentioned repeatedly throughout the

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<sup>106</sup> Ruth Grant, “Politicking Jacobean Women: Lady Ferniehirst, the Countess of Arran, and the Countess of Huntly, c.1580-1603,” in *Women in Scotland c. 1150-1700* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1999), 96-97. Meikle, “Victims, Viragos, and Vamps: Women of the Sixteenth Century Anglo-Scottish Frontier,” 182-183. I.Cowan, 114.

<sup>107</sup> Grant, 96-97. Meikle, “Victims, Viragos, and Vamps: Women of the Sixteenth Century Anglo-Scottish Frontier,” 182-183. *Calendar of State Papers Scotland: 1581-1583*, vol. 6, *British History Online*, 676.

<sup>108</sup> I.Cowan, 164, 166-168. Grant, 97.

*Calendar of State Papers: Scotland*, often coming up in reports of letter networks being tracked between noble Catholics and Mary.

Additionally, she was reportedly the earpiece to Mary's son James VI of Scotland and I of England during her exile, effectively advocating for Mary politically and familiarly. In March of 1584, Robert Bowes wrote to Walshingham, "They have written to the Lady of Farnyhurst signifying as well the great favours received at the King's hands by her means, for which they give her thanks."<sup>109</sup>

With these integrations into the circle of Mary, Queen of Scots and James VI comes the question of motives. Janet Scott clearly worked to keep these connections, putting herself on the radar during a time of high scrutiny towards Catholics and Marians. Motivation serves as an important catalyst for understanding context, which can be found in the favors—namely being the pardoning and safe return of her husband—which she often sought to achieve. These political actions cannot be taken as purely good Catholic devotion.

While all of these details were incredibly fascinating, they are not the primary reason she was included as reacting to protestant feminine ideals. This lies within her actions to house priests, specifically during periods when her husband would have been exiled. Through these actions, she not only directly housed and presumably received mass from the priests, but potentially relied on them for religious guidance in lieu of her husband; a direct opposition to the new protestant ideals of receiving religious guidance and instruction within the home from the husband or father.

On several occasions within the *Calendar of State Papers Scotland* from 1584 to 1593, the Ferniehurst estate (which we now know was being run by Lady Ferniehurst) was mentioned

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<sup>109</sup> *Calendar of State Papers Scotland: 1584-1585*, vol.7, *British History Online*, 33.

in correspondence relating to Catholic priests within Scotland. On January 28th, 1585, in letter 17 from Robert Bowes to Walsingham, the first mention states:<sup>110</sup>

“Understands that on Saturday last two gentlemen of England—one of whom names himself Tunstell or Tunstede—came to [Farnyhurst] through Liddesdale by a very wild and dangerous passage. Has heard that these, or one of them, should be of the temple. Trusts he will easily get understanding what they are, and also learn what their affairs are in these parts. Think some matter of no small effect shall be discovered to him thereby.”

Also sent on February 4th by Robert Bowes, one month later:<sup>111</sup>

“informed that the four or five Englishmen have arrived at Farnyhurst, and have met there with Fulgeham and Tunstede, of whom he has written to him before. The last two were—as he is told—sent to Scotland by the Queen of Scots to the King of Scots and to the Lady of Farnyhurst...”

Several things about Lady Ferniehurst and her actions can be learned from these letters. First, “should be of the temple...learn what their affairs are in these parts,” indicates that these two gentlemen were in fact priests and have given suspicion into their motives in Scotland. The housing of priests within the home was as grave an offense, if not more, than attending mass. Priests were heavily tracked and suspected of inciting counter-reformation and anti-kirk rhetoric to the laity.<sup>112</sup>

Second, her actions did not go unnoticed by interested parties, chiefly those looking for Catholic priests and watching their movements. Acting in such a manner was evidence of great devotion to the underground catholic community by housing English priests being sent to her from Mary. These acts in the face of persecution at the hands of the Protestant government, which has already been proven in this scholarship to be able and ready to persecute those

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid, *Calendar of State Papers Scotland: 1584-1585*, vol.7, *British History Online*, 18.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 24.

<sup>112</sup> Meikle, Maureen M., and Helen M. Payne, "From Lutheranism to Catholicism: The Faith of Anna of Denmark (1574–1619)," *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* (64, no. 1 2013), 49.

accused of popery, were a testament to Janet Scott's challenging of the up-and-coming ideals of women taking a backseat in religion and their access to it.<sup>113</sup>

#### 4.1.2 - Magdalen Ogilvie and the *Arma Christi*

A leftover ruin in Aberdeenshire, the Wine Tower at Fraserburgh Castle, holds potentially compelling evidence for female-led underground Catholic worship — and in this case, semi-literally. Magdalen Ogilvie married Alexander Fraser, founder of Fraserburgh Castle, in 1559. According to both Historic Environment Scotland and the Aberdeenshire Council, archeological findings date the building to between 1560 and 1600, which would be well within the couple's marriage. Ogilvie was a confirmed Roman Catholic, with family ties to Catholicism and at least one brother who was a priest. Therefore, it is theorized and supported that the Wine Tower, and specifically its hidden bottom floor, was built as a private and secret chapel. It has a separate concealed entrance and does not connect to the floors above.<sup>114</sup>

However, the most compelling piece of evidence for this theory is the *Arma Christi*, a specifically Catholic symbol for, "Christ's armorial coat of arms. It depicts the emblems of the crucifixion: angels on two sides with fingers pointing down to a heart surrounded by a crown of thorns and just above, pierced hands and feet, nails, a hammer and a scourge."<sup>115</sup> Its hidden

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<sup>113</sup> Grant, 96-97. Meikle, "Victims, Viragos, and Vamps: Women of the Sixteenth Century Anglo-Scottish Frontier," 182-183.

<sup>114</sup> Alexander Fraser, *The Frasers of Philorth. [With Plates, Including Portraits and Facsimiles, and Genealogical Tables.]* (Edinburgh: Printed for private circulation, 1879), 152. Ian Bryce and A Roberts, "Post-Reformation Catholic Houses of North-East Scotland" in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 123 (November 30, 1994), 367-368.

<sup>115</sup> Bryce and Roberts, 365-366. "Aberdeenshire Council Historic Environment Record - Aberdeenshire - NJ96NE0008 - Wine Tower, Fraserburgh," Aberdeenshire Council (Archaeology Service Historic Environment Record, 2011), <https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/smrpub/master/detail.aspx?refno=NJ96NE0008>. "Wine

nature, carved imagery, and dating create a solid case for it being a Reformation-era clandestine Catholic chapel, in which Magdalen Ogilvie would host priests for private worship.

#### **4.1.3 - Ladies in the Court of Anna of Denmark**

Little is known about Queen Anna of Denmark during her marriage to James VI of Scotland and III of England, except for her extravagant finances and religious “transgressions” behind the scenes. Michael Lynch describes her as making a minor impact on the Scottish court after a long legacy of spirited Stewart queens; her early age of marriage at 14 and relocation from Denmark were possible factors in this circumstance.<sup>116</sup>

A point of interest contemporaneously was with those surrounding Anna of Denmark, both in the court and as handmaids. In the late sixteenth century, it was heavily speculated that Anna had converted to Catholicism through women in her circle. This also led to a critical glaze placed on her and James VI’s actions towards and associations with rumored Catholics, which were thought of as moderate and conciliatory.<sup>117</sup>

The two women most often discussed in terms of their influence on Queen Anna were Henrietta Stewart, Countess of Huntly, and Helen/Eleanor/Helenor Hay, Countess of Linlithgow.

Henrietta Stewart, Countess of Huntly, was most often found in the court of Anna and James VI advocating for her husband George Gordon, the Earl of Huntly, a well-known Catholic

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Tower, TOWERSM90344,” Historic Environment Scotland, July 11, 2017, <http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/SM90344>.

<sup>116</sup> Michael Lynch, *Scotland: A New History* (London: Pimlico, 1998), 233.

<sup>117</sup> R. Scott Spurlock, “Post-Reformation Scottish Catholic Survival,” in *A Companion to the Reformation in Scotland, C. 1525-1638: Frameworks of Change and Development* ed. Ian Hazlett (Boston: Brill, 2021), 583-584.

with many political feuds that resulted in his banishment; similar circumstances to Lady Ferniehurst. However, what was notable was the close relationship already established through the advocating of their marriage by Anna and James VI, shown by a 5,000 merk donation to their wedding celebration from the couple. This shows that the countess and earl had a substantial foothold in the court and could have potentially considerable influence.<sup>118</sup>

Where Henrietta had an observed and controversial impact on Queen Anna was in the areas of religion; reportedly as one of the primary sources for her conversion to Catholicism and access to priests for hearing the mass. Although she was described from one source as “a virtuous wyff and prudent lady; who providentlie governed her husband’s affairs, and carefully solicited his business at home dureing his banishment from Scotland,” it was also scornfully noted by another source: “no good fruit in religion coming by her company to the Queen.”<sup>119</sup>

From the *Letters of Richard Verstegan*, it was specifically called out that Anna was inclined to the Catholic religion, “beeing thereunto partly persuaded by the Lady Huntley, of whome she hathe received a Catholique Catechisme in French, which she much esteemeth.” In addition to her providing Queen Anna with Catholic texts, Henrietta was acknowledged by Jesuit Robert Abercromby as having provided a priest to celebrate daily Mass to a young Queen Anna, as well as providing her with education.<sup>120</sup>

From the letters of Robert Bowes, an English diplomat who maintained contact with James VI and transmitted letters directly to Elizabeth I, wrote of his disdain for the Countess of

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<sup>118</sup> Grant, 100-102.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, 100-101.

<sup>120</sup> Meikle, "From Lutheranism to Catholicism: The Faith of Anna of Denmark (1574–1619)," 48-49. Grant, 101.



Huntly on several occasions. He often cited her influence on the religious life of Queen Anna and advocacy of her husband, with whom he actively quarreled. On May 20th of 1593, he wrote: "Many of the Council and myself have travailed diligently to persuade the King to remove the Countess of Huntly from Court." Additionally on June 10th, 1593, he reported being told by James VI that: "he marvelled to find me so earnest for the removing of the Countess of Huntly from Court." While he was certainly not the only vocal opponent to her influence in court, it is the most obvious and assertive record in the archives.<sup>121</sup>

These clear indicators of her influence and actions to provide Anna with priests to receive mass demonstrate her reaction to the protestant reforms in a way unseen in prior examples. Not only was she advocating for her own access to Catholicism, and therefore administering religion and guidance outside of the patriarchal ideal, but those of another young woman. The political motives behind these actions could be highly debated, as having a devout Catholic sitting at the head of state would no doubt be a win for the Catholic minority. However, there is no evidence or confirmation of this found yet in the archives but would serve for potentially compelling research in the future.

The second influential woman on Queen Anne was Helen Hay, Countess of Linlithgow. She was openly Catholic, despite her marriage to the Protestant Lord Alexander Livingston, Earl of Linlithgow in 1584. Interestingly, she was so vocal and well-known in her Catholicism that aggressive attempts to reform her by protestants and ministers even to her deathbed (where they finally succeeded) were reported. *The Confession and Conversion of the Right Honorable, Most*

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<sup>121</sup>"James VI, May 1593," in *Calendar of State Papers, Scotland: Volume 11, 1593-1595*, (Edinburgh: 1936), 85-95, *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/scotland/vol11/pp85-95>. "James VI, June 1593," in *Calendar of State Papers, Scotland: Volume 11, 1593-1595*, (Edinburgh: 1936), 95-114, *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/scotland/vol11/pp95-114>.

*Illustrious and Elect Lady, My Lady C of L*, was written by the minister who converted her, which also gained her signature. It was circulated widely as *The Confession* and meant so much that it was signified as a victory for the Protestant church.<sup>122</sup>

In her interactions with Queen Anna of Denmark, Helen and her husband Alexander Livingston, Earl of Linlithgow, were trusted with the care of Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret in the 1590s. With the birth of Prince Charles in 1593, the older children were to be placed in homes of close family and friends, as was the custom in royal households throughout history. Anna wanted her children sent to Denmark or France and not placed in the homes of Scottish Protestants (specifically the earl and countess of Mar who had raised James VI). It appears that the compromise was to place the two princesses in Catholic homes more favorable to Anna. Helen lived in Dunfermline, near the royal palace where Anna was set to give birth, allowing Anna to visit her daughters as she wished.<sup>123</sup>

What was significant about this choice were the implications in terms of the daughter's upbringing—and thus their religious education. As mentioned earlier, Helen was a publicly known Catholic, and her actions were blatant enough to be recorded in the *Acts and Proceedings of the General Assemblies of the Kirk of Scotland*. It was recorded in *Session 14* in February 1587 that:<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> "Hay, Helen (Eleanor, Helenor), Countess of Linlithgow," In *The New Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*, by Elizabeth Ewan, Rose Pipes, and Jane Rendall, (2nd ed. Edinburgh University Press, 2018).  
[https://go.openathens.net/redirector/uark.edu?url=https%3A%2F%2Fsearch.credoreference.com%2Fcontent%2Fentry%2Fedinburghsw%2Fhay\\_helen\\_eleanor\\_helenor\\_countess\\_of\\_linlithgow%2F0%3FinstitutionId%3D5281](https://go.openathens.net/redirector/uark.edu?url=https%3A%2F%2Fsearch.credoreference.com%2Fcontent%2Fentry%2Fedinburghsw%2Fhay_helen_eleanor_helenor_countess_of_linlithgow%2F0%3FinstitutionId%3D5281)

<sup>123</sup> Meikle, "From Lutheranism to Catholicism: The Faith of Anna of Denmark (1574–1619)," 50.

<sup>124</sup> Maitland Club, "Acts and Proceedings: 1588, February," in *Acts and Proceedings of the General Assemblies of the Kirk of Scotland, 1560-1618*, (Edinburgh: [s.n.], 1839), 703-728.

“Helen Hay, Mistres of Levingstoun, a malicious Papist; The Sabboth ther is everie quher abused and profained; the kirks ill plantit; scarcelie 3 hes Ministers. Superstitious ceremonies, pilgrimages to Chrysts well, fasting, [festives,] benfyres, girdles, carrells, and such lyke.”

The public knowledge of Helen’s activities almost certainly indicates that Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret would have had access to and perhaps instruction in Catholicism—if not right out attended Mass regularly while under the care of Helen. Similar to the access that Henrietta Stewart provided to the young Queen Anna of Denmark, Helen Hay possibly served this similar function for the young princesses; and therefore, acted as a religious conduit to these young women in addition to herself for accessing religion from males outside of their family.

#### **4.2 - End of the Cloisters**

“Secondly, God said to humans after they were created, “Be fruitful and multiply!” This utterance is a clap of thunder against the pope’s law and liberates all priests [Pfaffen], monks, and nuns to get married.” - Martin Luther, *Sermons on Genesis*, 1527<sup>125</sup>

Monastic life fell under attack across Europe during the period of protestant reform for being in vital disagreement with protestant values of marital obligation and anti-ceremonial devotion. Martin Luther attacked celibacy and life in the monastery as that which would only lead to fornication and social disorder. Calvinistic Scotland similarly attached to this ideal of marital bliss to stave off human indecency, and therefore saw the monastic establishment as an enemy to protestant reform.<sup>126</sup>

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*British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/church-scotland-records/acts-proceedings/1560-1618/pp703-72>.

<sup>125</sup> Karant-Nunn and Wiesner, 96.

<sup>126</sup> Stone, 135-136, 491-492.

However, in a remarkably different fashion from the drastic dissolution of the monasteries in England, Scotland never had a governmental closing of monasteries or official appropriation of their assets. While small local protestant raids on the monasteries in the same pseudo-iconoclastic way as parish churches and cathedrals did occur, it was nowhere near the same widespread and thoroughly bureaucratic ordeal as what happened in England.<sup>127</sup>

Nuns within the Scottish cloisters were tasked with a markedly different dilemma from those in England: to stay or not to stay. Part of Scottish nun's unique interaction with change comes from the end of this traditional role that women had long enjoyed. Entering the nunnery had been an avenue of choice for many women, either avoiding marriage entirely or the pitfalls of widowhood. Therefore, the last remaining choice these women would have with the end of monasticism comes from their ability to choose if they wished to live out their remaining days in the convent. Additionally, with the new trend away from chastity to martial piety, women's choice to remain unmarried and devoted to chaste devotion in the monasteries adds yet another layer of active choice displayed by these women.

As pointed out by Gordon Donaldson in his collection of lectures titled *The Scottish Reformation*, tracking the histories of nunneries and their activities in this period and before is made incredibly difficult by female illiteracy; and therefore, lack of female narratives. While all monks received an education which at least allowed them to sign their names, their female counterparts in the nunneries did not have this same ability. One exception were the nuns of St. Katherine of Siena of Edinburgh, which was only founded in 1517 following the battle of Flodden.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Jenny Wormald, *Court, Kirk, and Community: Scotland 1470-1625*, 149.

<sup>128</sup> Donaldson, 7-8. I.Cowan, 40.

What has been thoroughly researched were English female monastics, presumably from the availability of resources and interest. Some early examples of these texts include *Women Under Monasticism* published in 1896 by Lina Eckenstein and *Medieval English Nunneries* in 1922 by Eileen Power, showing a long history of scholarship within this field geographically. This interest has continued into thorough and well-documented case studies, ripe with the names of nuns, their social rank, and family history.<sup>129</sup>

In all probability, this can be attributed to Dissolution registers and charters, as well as testimony and data acquired by the government of Henry VIII in the years preceding the dissolution. These documents contain an invaluable wealth of information that was collected to not only catalog the assets of monasteries across England, but also to take note of and make a case against the monastic community to defend the dissolution. With this archival gold mine, historians have been able to provide scholarship on specifically women's experience within the cloisters of England that Scotland simply does not have.<sup>130</sup>

However, a resurgence of interest in this area has occurred in recent years with fantastic studies such as Kimm Curran's "Looking for Nuns: A Prosopographical study of Scottish Nuns in the later Middle Ages," which look for new methods of deducing female monastic histories in Scotland. With these new inquiries in mind, it is important to look at the traditionally overlooked subject with a fresh lens and see the actions and lives of these women more substantially.

The information that is known about medieval and late-medieval female monasticism in Scotland has been found through charters, archaeology, and contemporary mentions of their

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<sup>129</sup> Kimm Curran, "Looking for Nuns: A Prosopographical study of Scottish Nuns in the later Middle Ages," in *Scottish Church History* (June 2005, 35, 1), 35-36.

<sup>130</sup> Duffy, Eamon, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400–1580*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1992),

existence. So far, fifteen female houses are known to have existed; in: Lincluden, Berwick, Coldstream, Eccles, Elcho, Haddington, Manuel, North Berwick, St. Bothan's, St. Evoca, Iona, Perth, Edinburgh (Sciennes), Aberdour, and Dundee. Notably, three of these (Aberdour, Dundee, and Sciennes) were founded in 1486 or later. In addition, a long list of at least nineteen proposed nunneries has also been established by prominent medieval Scottish historians such as Mark Dilworth, Ian Cowan, and David Easson. They came from multiple orders including Benedictine, Cistercian, Augustinian, Dominican, and Franciscan.<sup>131</sup>

Scotland's approach to monastic living was to outlaw any further recruitment or admission into monastic life while allowing for the pre-established communities of monks and nuns to live out the rest of their days in the cloister; obviously, as expected practitioners of the protestant faith from then on.<sup>132</sup> This was not how it occurred in reality, with several monastics continuing the Catholic habit until their death from inside the cloisters.<sup>133</sup>

In a parliamentary act in 1571 titled "Concerning lands, rooms, and possession held off friars or nuns within this realm" the prohibition of accepting new monastic successors was declared, as well as laying out how a monastic house was to be passed down after the death of all successors: "no others placed nor to be placed in their rooms, so that within short space they

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<sup>131</sup> David Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses, Scotland; with an appendix on the houses in the Isle of Man*, 120-130. Note: In a newsbook from 1594 written by John Monipennie, the nunneries of Haddington, North-berwick, S. Bothanis, Ekillis, Cauldstreame, and the sisters of Seynis are specifically noted. Whether or not the addition of these unknown convents lends credibility to the proposed list of possible nunneries is an interesting question for further research.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid, 149.

<sup>133</sup> Mark Dilworth, *Scottish Monasteries in the Late Middle Ages* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 78.

shall all decay.”<sup>134</sup> However, this proposed peaceful dying out of monastic houses did not obscure them from violence.

From looking at the geographic locations of a large number of nunneries in Scotland, they tended to be located in the lowlands of Scotland near the English border. This area was under constant threat—especially in the century leading up to the reformation—from war and pillaging by the English. Proof of these targeted attacks does explain many aspects of the easy transition for nunneries to their post-reformation state. Therefore, the eradication of the culture of female monasticism near the border was underway before protestant reform illegalized it.

For example, in one specific case of a nunnery near Johnstone (presumably Elcho), outside of Glasgow, Sir Andrew Dudley writes in 1548: “On 29th December I sent Mr Wyndham to burn a nunnery within 2 miles of St Johnston; who brought away all the nuns and many gentlemen's daughters at school with them.”<sup>135</sup> It was also reported by the prioress and six other nuns in September of 1559, that they were further attacked by reformers which led to the complete abandonment of the nunnery.<sup>136</sup>

Additionally, according to John Lisle in the Letters and Papers of Henry VIII, January of 1543:<sup>137</sup>

“A certain nun and two of her sisters came lately to Berwick, and lodged in a widow's house "scant of good name." Four or five days afterwards, the widow came to Alnwick and sued that the said nun and her sisters might again inhabit their old cloister called

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<sup>134</sup> “Concerning lands, rooms and possessions held off friars or nuns within this realm,” *RPS*, 1571/8/7.

<sup>135</sup> *Calendar of State Papers Scotland: 1547-63*, vol. 1, *British History Online*, 119. I.Cowan, 35.

<sup>136</sup> Easson, 123.

<sup>137</sup> "Henry VIII: January 1543, 16-20," in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 18 Part 1, January-July 1543*, ed. James Gairdner and R H Brodie (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1901), 32-41. *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol18/no1/pp32-41>.

Cawldestreme which was burnt in my lord of Hertford's time. Asked how she durst lodge Scottish nuns without the Captain's leave, she answered that the nun was sent for to Edinburgh by Angoise, who promised to put her in her house again, and that she had two letters to Sir Ralph Evers to permit it.”

To bring this evidence of persistence by nuns into perspective, Ian B. Cowan and Gordon Donaldson, distinguished historians of Catholic Scotland, claim that Scottish nunneries were dying out due to less wealth and support prior to 1560 apart from St. Katherine of Siena of Edinburgh and its sixteenth-century founding.<sup>138</sup> This is typically the consensus of other historians in the field.

In rebuttal, what is often found within the archives is a sustained effort of nuns who wished to stay, with the eventual goal of dying out and the property being passed to the laity. This was the intention for all monasteries in Scotland and there is little proof that nuns in Scotland actively disobeyed this law by trying to maintain recruitment or look for a sustained future.<sup>139</sup> However, that by no means discredits the amount of agency conferred to and used by monastic women in their decision to stay or leave.

This leads us to the problem of constructing a theory on the death of female monasticism in Scotland. On one hand, this claim can be refuted as an assumption based on relatively no evidence, since sources are sparse for the wealth of Scottish nunneries. However, the evidence of violence, specifically for border nunneries, could present an arguable cause for lack of prosperity. This would have been a relatively recent and nationwide condition, in which nunneries might not have been judged as destitute contemporaneously in comparison to other border establishments subjected to English sacking.

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<sup>138</sup> I. Cowan, *The Scottish Reformation*, 40-41. Donaldson, 7-8.

<sup>139</sup> Easson, 120-130.



Nuns attempted to maintain monastic life after 1560, but in accordance with the laws in Scotland which allowed them to continue the remainder of their lives in their monastic houses. If these women actively chose to continue their habit, there could have been something more to hold on to than a failing system. Nunneries were being established as late as 1517, with well-known reputations of piety. As mentioned before, St. Katherine of Siene in Edinburgh enjoyed literacy on a level unseen by other nunneries.<sup>140</sup>

Some of the largest nunneries on the eve of reformation included Haddington with eighteen nuns in 1560, North Berwick with twenty nuns in 1544, and Sciennes with at least ten in 1555/6, with reported numbers peaking around thirty in the first half of the century. However, what is noticeable from looking at documents pertaining to the nunneries of Scotland is evidence of prioress and nuns who stayed post-1560. Coldstream had a prioress until May of 1588 and Iona until 1574. Additionally, in Aberdour, multiple nuns were still listed in 1584 to be living their “liferent of the sisteris land,” meaning that they had stayed with the nunnery and continued living a monastic life for a staggering twenty-four years after the protestant reforms.<sup>141</sup>

Direct violence toward the monasteries also occurred post-1560, which can create theories in multiple directions. David McRoberts theorized in his pivotal essay “Material Destruction Caused by the Scottish Reformation” that the religious houses targeted by protestant violence were those most pious and in line with ideal monastic life; at least those left after the attacks on the border by English troops in the mid-sixteenth century. These well-run and

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<sup>140</sup> Easson, 128.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 120-130.

theologically powerful houses, typically closer to city centers, would pose a greater threat against protestant ideas than rural abbeys.<sup>142</sup>

The reasoning for this theory comes from one mention by John Leslie in his *Historie of Scotland*, published in 1579, when discussing St. Katherine of Siena in Edinburgh, or *Sciennes/Scheines* as it was referred to often. He describes:<sup>143</sup>

“that pure and cleine clostir pertaining to the sisteris of Scheines besyd Edinburghe; bot this that quhen of all suspicione it was maist cleine, nochtwithstandeng was the first in the hail realm efter the Charirhous that be the aduersar was wraked and brocht to nocht.”

In this quote, he explains that despite their reputation as a pure and clean cloister, they were the first in the realm to be destroyed by protestants. If anything, their reputation within Scotland presumably made them a target to protestant reformers, for their ability to spread and represent Catholicism in a positive and unified light as unmarried and chaste women.

### **4.3 - Mixed Marriage and Inverting the Patriarchy**

This final section could not be possible without the recent and pioneering work of Dr. Ryan Burns, researcher of methods of conformity and resistance in reformed Scotland. His article “Gender, Resistance, and Conformity in Early Modern Scotland, 1560-1650” looked closely at mixed Protestant and Catholic marriages as a method of negotiation in the face of social control by the Kirk Sessions.

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<sup>142</sup> David McRoberts, “Material Destruction Caused by the Scottish Reformation,” in *Essays on the Scottish Reformation, 1513-1625*, 419.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, 419. John Leslie 1527-1596, James Dalrymple, E. G. Cody, and William Murison, *The Historie of Scotland* (Edinburgh and London: Printed for the Society by W. Blackwood and Sons, 1888), 23.

Importantly, the tendency that he found was within marriages of Protestant husbands and Catholic wives the couple would invert the patriarchal norm of male control of the estate and property to protect the wife from confiscation during excommunication. Additionally, often husbands would be willing to appear as failing in their duty to “control” and guide their wives toward Protestantism. Both of these commonalities that Dr. Burns found lend towards a deep reactionary negotiation occurring within the family and not just female actors alone.

With the new family and male focused religious atmosphere, the role of conforming the family into the protestant fold was placed on the husband and father by ministers and the Kirk. Therefore, the refusal of men to compel their wives goes directly against this new patriarchal norm. Often, husbands would claim no authority over their wives “in matters of conscience” and would even cite the age-old adage that there was no controlling their wives at all.<sup>144</sup>

One of the first cases surrounds John Leslie, Laird of Wardes (not to be confused with the Catholic Bishop John Leslie discussed previously) and his wife Elspeth Gordon. While Leslie conformed to Protestantism, when asked if he would bring his wife to conform his response was, “in things concerning hir saull and conscience, he had na power to command her,” as well as, “let the ministeris deal with her utherwayes according to the discipline of the kirk.”<sup>145</sup>

Traditionally, when a Catholic was excommunicated by the kirk, their property was forfeited and liable for confiscation; one of the more punishing aspects of excommunication aside from social ostracization. The property of a Catholic wife, however, was protected if her husband were Protestant, as it was believed that a protestant spouse was the best defense of converting their Catholic significant other. While this only worked in the early days of Scottish

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<sup>144</sup> Burns, “Gender, Resistance, and Conformity in Early Modern Scotland, 1560-1650,” 57-59.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid*, 57-59.

reform, with the Privy Council passing a statute making men responsible for their wives' religious decision in 1642, it was an incredibly unconventional negotiation that took place to ensure religious agency within the family.<sup>146</sup>

Obviously, crypto-catholicism was also at play with this tactic, as families could covertly practice Catholicism as long as the public facing husband appeared to be conforming with the Kirk. While an exact demographic of this situation can clearly not be determined, as it was done in secret, many of the cases of men converting while feigning irresponsibility for their wives (such as John Leslie and Elizabeth Gordon) stemmed from suspicion of the husband and family as Catholics by their community.<sup>147</sup>

In the case of George Gordon of Gicht and his wife Isabel Wood, Gordon would entertain the idea of converting and talk with ministers while never formally converting. Additionally, Wood completely refused to even meet with a minister. While Isabel's actions led to her excommunication, the sustained feigned interest and entertaining of the Kirk by Gordon allowed his wife and her assets protection. Additionally, in this specific instance, it was noted that Wood still enjoyed the markets and visitors at their home via her husband despite her excommunication. This couple was able to stretch their inversion as far as to having their child baptized into Catholicism simply by claiming that Wood had secured a priest and performed the

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid, 64-65.

<sup>147</sup> Burns, "Gender, Resistance, and Conformity in Early Modern Scotland, 1560-1650," 64, 70-71. Burns, "Enforcing Uniformity: Kirk Sessions and Catholics in Early Modern Scotland, 1560-1650," 113.

baptism without Gordon knowing; an almost sure example of crypto-catholicism and playing the system at its finest.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Burns, "Gender, Resistance, and Conformity in Early Modern Scotland, 1560-1650," 72-74. McMillan, 40.

## Conclusion

While extensive research on protestant women, their activism, and public lives have been done, the minority of Catholic women have not been given quite the same amount of attention. Additionally, the sources are not as present and easy to access. From these small snippets assembled within this research, a clear understanding of Catholic women's realities can simply not be created. It is the unfortunate reality that, despite these glimpses into the actions of some women from the period, it is incredibly difficult to track how the lives of women changed and adapted in response to protestant ideals.

What this scholarship has brought to the narratives of Catholic women and their reactions in the late Sixteenth century is discourse on the implications and intention behind them. Elite Catholic women were undoubtedly actively participating in clandestine religion just as they were in the court and their husbands' political affairs, demonstrated by the actions of Lady Ferniehurst, Magdalen Ogilvie, Henrietta Stewart, and Helen Hay. What was examined critically were the reasons for doing so and what possible ulterior motives could have been present; political favor and implanting Catholicism in the royal family being among the most common theories within this research. The state of the monastic system for women on the eve of the Scottish Reformation was, in my personal opinion, debatable and open to interpretation. The narrative of a failing and unwanted system was challenged by nuns actively staying in the cloister and establishing nunneries into the sixteenth century—which were well respected and targeted as a threat.

One of the secondary motives of this thesis involved shedding light on Catholic history in general, bringing the framing of the Scottish reformation away from the “heroic protestant” narrative. This was achieved by discussing the conditions in which Catholic persons lived post-1560, patterns of religiosity and devotion in women, and the important reactions that occurred in

the lives of Catholic women. This goal will obviously take more work in the field, from a variety of viewpoints, to wholly equalize the representation of Catholic life in post-reformation Scotland; it was hoped that this work could contribute towards the areas of gender, in the meantime.

Women's roles were at the center of this research, exploring the myriad of ways in which women participated in and negotiated with their ever-changing reality. When denied an avenue that had traditionally been one of relative agency for women, it is fascinating to see how women responded to these changes. Whether from inside their Estate, the monasteries, or their marriages the Protestant reforms of the sixteenth century were felt and reacted to by women across Scotland.

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