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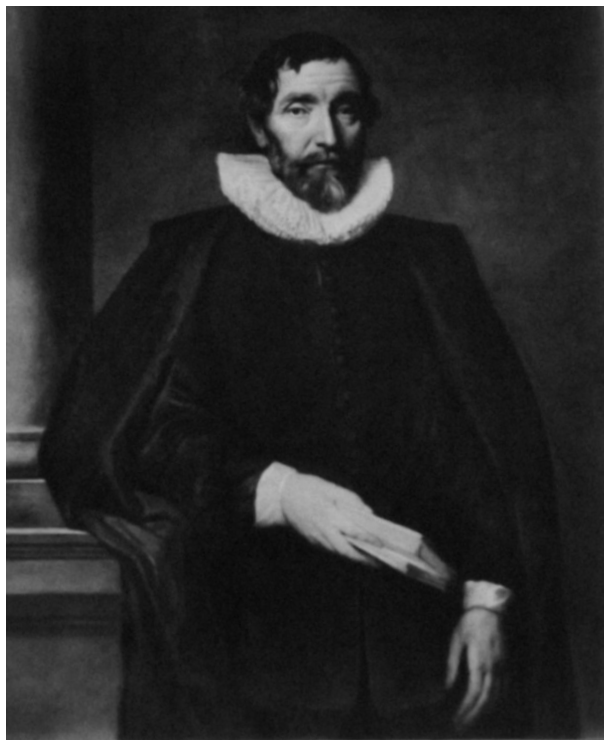

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John Knox and the Destruction of the Perth Friaries in May 1559

Douglas W. B. Somerset

The destruction of the religious house in Perth following John Knox's sermon on Thursday 11th May 1559 is one of the famous incidents of the Scottish Reformation. It marks the beginning of the armed struggle which culminated in the establishment of Protestantism and the prohibition of the mass in Scotland in August 1560.

There are several accounts of the incident, including two by Knox, and the purpose of this paper is to give close attention to these various accounts to see what actually happened on 11th-13th May 1559, as far as this is possible to ascertain. The reason for doing this is partly for its own sake and partly because several writers have emphasized apparent discrepancies between Knox's accounts, from which they have hastily concluded that Knox deliberately presented a misleading picture. The writers in question, however, have not explained in any detail their own understanding of events; and we show that when this is attempted, there is little doubt about the general outline of what happened, and that both Knox's accounts are in close agreement with this outline. The differences between them are by way of omission and these omissions are easily explained by the differing circumstances in which Knox was writing.

The structure of the paper is as follows. In the first section we give the background by describing the extent of reformation in the Scottish burghs in early May 1559, especially in Dundee, Ayr, and Perth. In the second section we discuss the "Beggars' Summons" of January 1558/9 and we note from this that the people of Perth were probably

intending an assault on the religious houses in Perth on 12th May independent of Knox's preaching. In the third section we look in detail at the events of 11th-13th May and try to harmonize the various extant accounts. In the fourth section we consider Knox's two versions in the light of our third section, and we discuss the reasons for his omissions and the extent to which they can be regarded as blameworthy. In the fifth section we respond to some criticisms of Knox's comments on the wealth of the Grey Friars in Perth; and in the sixth and final section we draw some conclusions.

1. The extent of reformation in the Scottish burghs by May 1559

Broadly speaking, we may distinguish four stages in the religious reformation of a Scottish burgh: (1) the introduction of private Protestant worship; (2) the introduction of public Protestant worship, especially in the parish church and with the approval of the magistrates; (3) the prohibition of Roman Catholic worship in the parish church, with the removal of images and altars and the discharging of the chaplains; (4) the suppression of any friaries that may have been in the vicinity.

From this point of view, there were presumably small groups of Protestants meeting privately in some of the Scottish burghs prior to 1558 (such as the "Privy Kirk" in Edinburgh from 1555) but there is no record of regular Protestant public worship in any burgh earlier than 1558, other than the brief period when Knox and the "Castilians" preached in St Andrews in 1547.[1] In the "Heads" of December 1557, the Lords of the Congregation proposed that Common Prayers should be read on the Sabbath in the parish kirk "in all parishes of this realm" and that preaching should be in private houses until such time as God would "move the Prince to grant public preaching by faithful and true ministers".[2] These proposals suggest that what was being desired was already being practised in a few country parishes under the influence of the Lords of the Congregation.

According to Knox, the introduction of Protestant public worship in some of the burghs came in the late summer of 1558, following the

[1] W. C. Dickinson (ed.), *John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland* (2 vols., London, 1949) Vol. 1, pp. 81, 84, 93, 138, 148; David Calderwood, *History of the Kirk of Scotland* (8 vols., Wodrow Society, Edinburgh, 1842-9), Vol. 1, pp. 303-4, 333.

[2] Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, pp. 137-8.

arrival of Paul Methven from England in April.[3] Pitscottie records that Methven preached in Dundee, Angus ("in sundry gentlemen's places"), and in Fife (Cupar, Lundie, Fawside, and "in sundry other places").[4] The authorities becoming alarmed, Methven and others, including George Luvell and David Fergusson of Dundee, were summoned before the Queen and the Privy Council in Edinburgh in July.[5] A large crowd of Protestants turned out to support them with the effect that the charge against Methven was deferred until November while Luvell and Fergusson were bailed.[6] It was when their supporters returned home that public religion was set up in various places: "the Mearns and Angus, and Kyle, and Fife or Lothian; but chiefly the faithful in Dundee exceeded all the rest in zeal and boldness, preferring the true religion to all things temporal."[7]

In Dundee, the public religion took the form of the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. "The town of Dundee," says Knox, "began to erect the face of a public church reformed, in the which the Word was openly preached, and Christ's sacraments truly administered."[8] Probably it was in August 1558 that Dundee reached this stage of reformation. Methven, presumably, continued to act as minister, and in October 1558 he was joined by John Willock for a while.[9]

In some respects, however, the burgh of Ayr appears to have been ahead of Dundee in adopting Protestant worship. The priest Sir Robert Leggat is recorded as "vicar and curate" of Ayr by Beltane (1st May) 1558.[10] He had been the vicar since before January 1547/8 and the curate

[3] Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. 148; Robert Lindesay of Pitscottie, *Historie and Cronicles of Scotland* (3 vols., Scottish Text Society, Edinburgh, 1899-1911), Vol. 2, p. 136.

[4] Pitscottie, Vol. 2, p. 137. For a communion that Methven conducted at Cupar, see D. Hay Fleming (ed.), *Register of the Ministers, Elders, and Deacons of the Christian Congregation of St. Andrews, 1559-1600* (2 vols., Scottish Historical Society, Edinburgh, 1889-90), Vol. 1, p. 286.

[5] Luvell and Fergusson were cited on 7th July to appear on 28th July, see Thomas M'Crie, *Life of John Knox* (Edinburgh, 1855), Note GG, pp. 359-60. Methven was cited to appear on 20th July, Pitscottie, Vol. 2, p. 137; George Buchanan, *The History of Scotland,* trans. J. Aikman (4 vols., Glasgow, 1827), Vol. 2, p. 397.

[6] Pitscottie, Vol. 2, p. 137; Buchanan, Vol. 2, p. 397; D. Laing (ed.), *Miscellany of the Wodrow Society* (Wodrow Society, Edinburgh, 1844), p. 54.

[7] *Wodrow Miscellany,* p. 54.

[8] Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. 148.

[9] Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. 148; *Wodrow Miscellany,* p. 55.

[10] John Smith, *Memorabilia of the City of Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1835), p. 12. The teinds (i.e. tithes) of a Scottish parish went to the "parson" who was generally non-resident and who

of nearby Prestwick since before autumn 1525. The previous curate of Ayr, since 1551, was Sir Richard Miller, who was still alive in 1564. In the light of subsequent events, the fact that Leggat replaced Miller as curate of Ayr in 1558 strongly suggests that he was doing so because he was prepared to conduct Protestant worship and Miller was not. If this is correct then Ayr was several months ahead of Dundee in introducing Protestant worship in the parish church.[11] This interpretation is reinforced by the fact that on 5th November 1558, Leggat renounced his clerical privilege and placed himself under the jurisdiction of the magistrates of Ayr.[12]

Leggat would have read the Common Prayers (i.e. from the Edwardian *Book of Common Prayer* of 1552) but it is unlikely that he could preach because after the Reformation he returned to Prestwick as reader in the parish. Thus Ayr would have been looking for a minister, and the Ayr burgh accounts for Michaelmas (29th September) 1557-Michaelmas 1558 refer to a payment "for the minister's chalmer male [chamber rent], £4".[13] From this it appears that the burgh had obtained a minister, probably in August or September 1558.[14]

It is not known that any other burghs adopted reformed worship at this time, though William Harlaw was preaching in Dumfries in October, John Willock in Edinburgh, and John Douglas in Leith.[15] From Pitscottie's description, Methven does not seem to have preached in either Montrose or Perth before August 1558. By Pasche (26th March) 1559, however, both Montrose and Perth had "received the Evangel" and had introduced Protestant public worship. Indeed this must have occurred a month or two previously because at that time the Queen

employed a "vicar" to do his work. By the time of the Reformation, the vicar was also generally non-resident and was employing a "curate" to do the work.

11 M. H. B. Sanderson, *Mary Stewart's People* (Edinburgh, 1987), pp. 152, 158, 161; M. H. B. Sanderson, *Ayrshire and the Reformation* (East Linton, 1997), pp. 90, 143; I. B. Cowan, *Regional Aspects of the Scottish Reformation* (Historical Association, London, 1978), p. 25; J. Kirk, *Patterns of Reform* (Edinburgh, 1989), p. 104.

12 *Ayrshire and the Reformation,* p. 90.

13 G. S. Pryde (ed.), *Ayr Burgh Accounts, 1534-1624* (Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1937), p. 128. The payment of £4 suggests that the minister had been there for four or five weeks, cf. a related payment of thirteen merks (about £8) for seven weeks' room rent at about the same time (p. 33).

14 Ryrie thinks that this minister was probably Robert Acheson, see A. Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation* (Manchester, 2006), pp. 120, 129.

15 Robert Keith, *History of the Affairs of Church and State in Scotland, from the beginning of the Reformation to the year 1568* (3 vols., Spottiswoode Society, Edinburgh, 1844-50), Vol. 1, pp. 495-6; Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. 153; Calderwood, Vol. 1, p. 343.

Regent was trying to persuade them to "communicate with the idol of the Mass" at Easter.[16] Instead of the mass at Easter, however, both burghs had Paul Methven preaching and administering the Lord's Supper.[17] From this, it is fairly certain that Montrose did not have a settled minister at that stage. Similarly the charge against William Harlaw and John Christieson in May 1559 – that they had been preaching in and around Perth – shows that Perth did not have a settled minister either.[18] Thus by May 1559 at least four burghs had adopted Protestant public worship but probably only two of them had regular preaching. Knox describes Perth in May 1559 as "young and rude in Christ" and he himself stayed on after 13th May to preach there for a few weeks.[19]

The evidence for the reforming of the churches and the discharging of the chaplains in these various burghs is somewhat elusive. In Dundee, the chaplain of Our Lady altar of St Clements resigned on 7th November 1558 in favour of a young man who was not yet in priests' orders. The intention was that the young man should become a priest, but at the same time the burgh council had in mind to turn St Clements chapel into a weigh-house. Thus the chaplains had not been dismissed at this stage, though the extent to which they were performing their duties is doubtful.[20] On 10th January 1558/9, the Dundee council introduced a variety of legislation which, while not overtly Protestant, indicates a settled state of affairs in the religious sphere: for instance the reference to "the time of service" in the parish church.[21] On 13th January 1558/9, however, the council assisted the choristers (i.e. the chaplains) to collect their rents.[22]

On 9th February 1558/9, the Queen Regent ordered proclamation to be made at St Andrews, Cupar, Dundee, Montrose, Aberdeen, and

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16 Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, pp. 159-160.

17 Robert Pitcairn, *Ancient Criminal Trials* (3 vols., Bannatyne Club, Edinburgh, 1833), Vol. 1, pp. *406-7.

18 Pitcairn, Vol. 1, p. *407.

19 Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. 163. In his letter to Mrs Locke of 23rd June 1559, Knox says that Perth had "received the order of Common Prayers", a further indication that there was no minister before May, see D. Laing (ed.), *Works of John Knox* (6 vols., Wodrow Society, Edinburgh, 1846-64), Vol. 6, p. 22.

20 A. Maxwell, *Old Dundee, Ecclesiastical, Burghal, and Social, Prior to the Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1891), pp. 160-1.

21 A. Maxwell, *The History of Old Dundee* (Edinburgh, 1884), pp. 76, 78, 81-2.

22 *Old Dundee Prior to the Reformation,* pp. 20, 157. See also pp. 35-6 for a Dundee chaplain having difficulty collecting his rent in September 1558.

also Linlithgow, Glasgow, Irvine, and Ayr, that no one was to disturb the services used in the kirks, to threaten priests, or to eat flesh during Lent.[23] This suggests that unrest had manifested itself and that disturbances of this nature were anticipated in at least some of these places, but also that none of them had yet dismissed the chaplains and reformed the church. Knox says, however, that "the kirk of Dundee was reformed" by the time of his arrival at the beginning of May, so the altars must have been removed and the chaplains dismissed by then.[24] Other places, he says, had only "public prayers" which confirms that they were not as advanced in reformation as Dundee.[25]

The situation in Ayr requires closer examination. On 11th May, the same day as the outbreak of violence in Perth, the Ayr council discharged the organist George Cochrane and took from him the key of the organ loft. About the same time, the council also discharged the chaplains. The dating of this is difficult because the entries in the burgh register between 11th and 22nd May 1559 are in disarray and include a number of leaves from previous and subsequent years. The entry which refers to the chaplains is bound under 22nd May, but it seems to be out of sequence and the context suggests that it should be earlier. The natural thing would have been for the council to have discharged the organist and dismissed the chaplains at the same time, and probably this is what they did.[26]

The situation in Perth is also somewhat complicated. On Friday 28th April, the "gear of Perth" (i.e. the priests' vestments and the altar goods) was "carried" to Clunie Castle, the main fortified residence of the Bishop of Dunkeld on an island in Loch Clunie.[27] In the absence of any

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[23] M'Crie, *Life of John Knox,* pp. 359-60.

[24] In the articles annexed to the Treaty of Edinburgh of June 1560 one of the items was an amnesty for all that had been done since Monday 6th March 1558/9. The significance of this date seems to be unknown (Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. 327) and one wonders if possibly it was the date of the reforming of the altars and dismissing of the chaplains in Dundee.

[25] Knox, *Works*, Vol. 6, p. 22 (letter of 23rd June 1559).

[26] MS Ayr Burgh Court Book 1549-1560, currently in the custody of Ayrshire Archives. There are difficulties over the pagination of this volume. Some printed extracts and discussion can be found in Smith, *Memorabilia of the City of Glasgow,* pp. 3, 10-14; Sanderson, *Mary Stewart's People,* pp. 161-2; Sanderson, *Ayrshire and the Reformation,* pp. 90-1; M. H. B. Sanderson, *Biographical List of Early Scottish Protestants, 1407-1560* (Scottish Record Society, Edinburgh, 2010), pp. 161-2; see also Cowan, *Regional Aspects of the Scottish Reformation,* p. 25; Kirk, *Patterns of Reform,* p. 104. I am grateful to Tom Barclay, Carnegie Library, Ayr, for help on this matter.

[27] R. K. Hannay (ed.), *Rentale Dunkeldense, 1505-1517* (Scottish Historical Society, Edinburgh, 1915), p. 356. The subsequent fate of this Perth "gear" is unknown.

other details, two possible explanations suggest themselves. The first would be that the gear was from the parish church of St John's and that it was being moved to keep it safe from the populace.[28] This explanation seems unlikely, however, because, in common with other towns, the gear of the parish church belonged to the burgh, and its removal to the residence of a staunchly Roman Catholic bishop could hardly have been with the approval of the Protestant-leaning council.[29] Furthermore in Edinburgh and Aberdeen the gear was distributed among the leading citizens for safe-keeping.[30] An act of virtual theft by the chaplains of St John's seems equally unlikely; and in any case, it is appears probable from Knox's account that items from the gear were still in use in the parish church on 11th May.

The more likely explanation, therefore, is that the gear was from the Grey and the Black Friaries (but probably not from the Charterhouse or the White Friars).[31] Knox mentions that both the Grey Friars and the Black Friars had guards on 11th May, and Pitscottie says that the prior of the Charterhouse had fortified his priory with Highlanders from Atholl, so it is evident that all three religious houses were expecting

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[28] This the view taken by Mary Verschuur, *Politics or Religion? The Perth Reformation, 1540-1570* (Edinburgh, 2006), p. 86.

[29] Verschuur, *Politics or Religion?,* p. 22. The Bishop of Dunkeld, Robert Crichton, remained an opponent of Protestantism after the Reformation, see J. Dowden, *The Bishops of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1912), p. 94.

[30] J. D. Marwick (ed.), *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Edinburgh, A.D. 1557-1571* (Edinburgh, 1875), pp. 40-44; J. Stuart (ed.), *Extracts from the Council Register of the Burgh of Aberdeen, 1398-1570* (Spalding Club, Aberdeen, 1844), pp. 323-4. In Old Aberdeen, the gear of St Machar's Cathedral was entrusted to the canons for safe-keeping, and then a few months later to the Earl of Huntly who was the nephew of the Bishop of Aberdeen, see Cosmo Innes (ed.), *Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis* (2 vols., Spalding Club, Edinburgh, 1845), Vol. 1, pp. lxxxviii-xc. In Inverness, the Black Friars gave their gear into the custody of the provost and baillies, see C. Innes (ed.), *Family of Rose of Kilravock* (Spalding Club, Edinburgh, 1848), pp. 76, 226-7. In St Andrews and Glasgow, the gear from the cathedral was probably delivered to the care of the local archbishop, but these cases are rather different from that of Perth, see D. McRoberts (ed.), *Essays on the Scottish Reformation, 1513-1625* (Glasgow, 1962), p. 431, n. 75; A. J. S. Brook, "An Account of the Maces of the Universities of St Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and Edinburgh, the College of Justice, the City of Edinburgh, &c.", *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland,* Vol. 26, (1891-2), pp. 440-514 (especially pp. 468-9); C. Innes (ed.), *Munimenta Alme Universitatis Glasguensis* (4 vols., Maitland Club, Glasgow, 1854), Vol. 3, p. 523.

[31] The Bishop of Dunkeld had a close connection with the White Friars (Carmelites) at Tullilum (see below) and indeed one of his main residences was there, see J. A. Stones (ed.), *Three Scottish Carmelite Friaries* (Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1989) p. 97. The Protestant leanings of the Carmelite prior, however, make it less likely that he would have entrusted their gear to the Bishop.

trouble.[32] Transporting their gear to safety would have been a natural thing to do, and it would also explain why Knox makes no mention of the gear among the other spoils that were taken from the friaries.[33] In either case, whether the gear belonged to the parish church or to the friaries, its removal by 28th April shows that the people of Perth were already in a state of ferment before Knox arrived.

It seems likely, therefore, that at the beginning of May the Charterhouse and the friaries were fearful of an assault while the parish church itself remained unreformed. The probable explanation for this anomalous situation is that the people were ahead of the magistrates, or at least were less cautious, in their desires for reformation. They were threatening the religious houses while the provost and baillies were hesitating over the reform of the parish church. This fits with Verschuur's general picture of the craftsmen of Perth being more Protestant than the merchants.[34] The provost, Lord Ruthven, was a "stout" Protestant, according to Knox, but he briefly defected to the Queen Regent's side after the destruction of the friaries and Charterhouse – an action which suggests a reluctance to be identified with that step of reformation.[35]

In summary, it appears that Dundee had discharged its chaplains and reformed the parish church by May, and possibly Montrose had as well (though we have no information on when this happened). Ayr was

[32] Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. 162; Pitscottie, Vol. 2, p. 145. It is possible that the installation of these guards was a consequence of the arrival of the Congregation in Perth, but certainly as far as the friaries were concerned, the "Beggars' Summons" (see Section 2) and the unrest among the people of Perth makes it likely that it was they rather than the Congregation who posed the initial threat. For the Charterhouse, there would have been a significant delay before the guards from Atholl could have reached Perth, though it is not impossible that they were installed on the Wednesday evening or the Thursday after the arrival of the Congregation.

[33] George Buchanan refers to "the idols and the holy apparel" of the friaries (Vol. 2, p. 404) but he is simply following Knox at this point who uses the term "the idolatry" (see Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. 162). Probably these were items of no great intrinsic value, and distinct from the gear. It is likely that the Charterhouse gear was part of the "gold and silver" that the prior removed when the building was sacked, Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. 163.

[34] M. Verschuur, "Perth Craftsmen's Book", *Records of Scottish Church History Society,* Vol. 23, (1988), pp. 157-174 (especially pp. 161-3); Verschuur, *Politics or Religion?,* p. 98. One of the four Perth baillies was strongly opposed to Protestantism (ibid., p. 66).

[35] Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. 172; Verschuur, *Politics or Religion?,* p. 102. The month following, Lord Ruthven was involved in iconoclasm in Edinburgh, so he had recovered from his initial scruples by then; see T. Thomson (ed.), *A Diurnal of Remarkable Occurrents that have Passed within the Country of Scotland* (Maitland Club, Edinburgh, 1833), pp. 53, 269.

on the brink of doing these things, but Perth had not yet reached this stage. One other burgh that deserves consideration is Cupar, Fife. Paul Methven had preached in Cupar in the summer of 1558, and one of the priests, Sir Thomas Jamieson, had preached against the mass in St Andrews later in the year and had narrowly avoided arrest. In February 1558/9, the proclamation against the disturbing of services and threatening of priests was ordered to be read in Cupar, as we have seen. The parish church was reformed on or before Whitsun, 14th May 1559, when the news from Perth reached the burgh. One of the priests, Sir Allan Haccerstoun, died or committed suicide as a result of this. It is fairly certain, therefore, that there was regular Protestant worship in Cupar by May 1559, but whether this was held in the parish church and with the approval of the magistrates is not known.[36]

2. Earlier iconoclasm and the "Beggars' Summons"

A detailed description of the damage to church property from the 1530s through to 1559 is given in the first part of McRoberts' article "Material Destruction caused by the Scottish Reformation".[37] As far as churches were concerned, there was a widespread purging of images during the second half of 1558, even as far north as the Diocese of Aberdeen.[38] Probably this mainly affected the country areas, and in many of these purged churches the Roman Catholic worship would have continued much as before. The Protestants were strong enough to destroy the images but not strong enough to introduce their own worship. Some of the friaries and monasteries had suffered during the English wars of the 1540s, but it seems that there is no record of a religiously motivated attack against them between 1550 and the summer of 1559.

The first indication of danger to the friaries was the "Beggars' Summons", dated by the "Historie" to the end of October 1558 and by Knox to 1st January 1558/9. In this, the friars were warned to vacate "the great hospitals" that they had persuaded people to build for them by

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[36] Pitscottie, Vol. 2, pp. 137-9, 147; Buchanan,Vol. 2, p. 405; R. Pitcairn (ed.), *Historical Memoirs of the Reign of Mary Queen of Scots . . . by Lord Herries* (Abbotsford Club, Edinburgh, 1836), p. 38.

[37] McRoberts, *Essays on the Scottish Reformation,* pp. 417-428; see also Ryrie, p. 124; J. Kirk, "Iconoclasm and Reform", *Records of the Scottish Church History Society,* Vol. 24, (1992), pp. 366-383.

[38] Pitscottie, Vol. 2, p. 137; Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. 125; *Miscellany of the Spalding Club* (5 vols., Aberdeen, 1841-52), Vol. 4, p. 59.

Whitsun (14th May) 1559, so that the poor might have the use of the buildings. Both Knox and the "Historie" say that the "Summons" was fixed to the gate of every friary in the country, Knox adding the words "few or none excepted".[39] There were roughly forty-four friaries in Scotland at the time, and the events of 1559 show that there were ill-wishers to the friaries in places as remote as Inverness and Banff, so probably every friary was indeed warned in this way.[40] Sanderson distinguishes these two issues of the "Summons", suggesting that the first one was abortive; but against this distinction it should be noted that it was the October "Summons" that the "Historie" regarded as "lawfully warning" the friars in advance of their evictions from May 1559 onwards.[41]

Presumably the "Summons" emanated from a part of the country where Protestantism was strong. The most likely place is Ayr, and probably there was always a serious intention there of implementing the evictions on the appointed date.[42] Certainly the suppressing of the two Ayr friaries (Black Friars and Observant Grey Friars) was an orderly event, with the friars being warned to vacate, reluctantly removing their goods, and handing over the keys; and it is probable that this happened on Flitting Friday, 12th May.[43] The date of eviction of the Black Friars of

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[39] *Wodrow Miscellany,* pp. 57-8; Knox, *Works,* Vol. 1, p. 320; Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, pp. xcviii, 139, 159; Vol. 2, pp. 255-6.

[40] I. B. Cowan, *Medieval Religious Houses Scotland* (2nd edn., London, 1976). As we have mentioned, the Black Friars of Inverness delivered their gear to the safe-keeping of the provost and baillies of Inverness on 24th June 1559 (*Rose of Kilravock,* pp. 76, 226-7). This must have been in response to local danger rather than in anticipation of the arrival of the Lords of the Congregation. The Banff Carmelite friary was set on fire on the night of 20th July 1559, see W. Cramond (ed.), *Annals of Banff* (2 vols., New Spalding Club, Aberdeen, 1891-3), Vol. 2, pp. 10-11.

[41] *Ayrshire and the Reformation,* p. 93; *Wodrow Miscellany,* p. 57.

[42] The Friday before Whitsun was one of the usual days for beginning and ending leases and was known as "Flitting Friday", see G. Donaldson, "'Flitting Friday", the Beggars' summons and Knox's sermon at Perth", *Scottish Historical Review,* Vol. 39, (1960), pp. 175-6.

[43] C. Rogers, *Three Scottish Reformers* (Grampian Club, London, 1876), p. 108. Sanderson (*Ayrshire and the Reformation,* p. 96) states that the eviction occurred on 12th May; we have not seen direct evidence for this, but it would certainly fit in with other events happening in Ayr at the time. Knox speaks of "that witsunday that they [the friars] delodged" (Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. xcviii), which seems to imply that at least some friars were evicted in an orderly fashion at Whitsun, and Ayr would be by far the most likely place for this to have happened. If the "Beggars' Summons" did emanate from Ayr then one would think that Hugh Wallace, laird of Carnell, and Robert Campbell of Kinzeancleugh, who enforced the evictions, were probably also involved in its production and circulation.

Montrose is not known but it appears to have been before October 1559, and almost certainly it was in May or June.[44] On 22nd February 1559/60, the Lords of the Congregation said that it had "pleased God of his great mercy to open their [the Montrose Black Friars] hypocrisy and most justly cause them be ejected" from their land, which they ordered to be restored to the poor and a hospital, which had previously been on the site, to be rebuilt.[45] In Dundee the buildings of the Dominicans and Conventual Franciscans were probably still largely ruinous from the English wars of the 1540s.[46] On other hand, Grierson, the provincial of the Dominicans, speaks of the Dominican friary having been destroyed in 1559, so perhaps some repairs had been undertaken and these were then undone in May or June 1559.[47]

In Perth, there were three friaries: the Observant Franciscans (Grey Friars), the Dominicans (Black Friars), and the Carmelites (White Friars) at Tullilum. There were eight Grey Friars in May 1559 and probably smaller communities in the other two friaries. In addition there was a Carthusian monastery (the Charterhouse) with a prior and ten monks in 1558.[48] The Carthusian monks were hermits, meeting only for worship and occasional silent meals. The Charterhouse was considered the finest monastic building in the country, and it contained the royal tomb of James I and his wife Joan Beaufort, in which Margaret Tudor – the sister of Henry VIII, wife of James IV, and mother-in-law of the Queen Regent – had been buried in 1541.

Probably there was little prospect in Perth of implementing the "Summons" when it was first issued, whether in October 1558 or January 1558/9. By April the situation had changed, as is indicated by the removal of the gear and the installing of guards at the Grey and Black

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[44] J. Durkan, "The Dominicans at the Reformation", *Innes Review,* Vol. 9, (1958), pp. 216-8; I. E. F. Flett, "The Conflict of the Reformation and Democracy in the Geneva of Scotland" (M. Phil. Thesis, University of St Andrews, 1981), p. 74; McRoberts, *Essays on the Scottish Reformation,* p. 445.

[45] *Fifth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts* (London, 1876), Appendix, p. 640.

[46] *Old Dundee Prior to the Reformation,* p. 164; Flett, p. 74.

[47] McRoberts, *Essays on the Scottish Reformation,* p. 445. On 20th July 1559 the Dundee magistrates fined a wright who had broken down the gate of the Black Friars' herb garden, ordering him to make restitution. The friar who brought the complaint had probably conformed to Protestantism, *Old Dundee Prior to the Reformation,* p. 165; Flett, p. 74.

[48] Cowan, *Medieval Religious Houses Scotland,* pp. 86-7.

Map of Perth in 1765.

1. The site of the Black Friars.
4. The site of the Grey Friars.
6. The site of the White Friars.
13. St John's Church.
39. The Charterhouse.

Friars and the Charterhouse.[49] As we saw above, the danger was almost certainly not from the magistrates but from the populace. It is not unlikely, therefore, that an assault was already planned for 12th May. It was into this divided and tense situation that Knox stepped on 10th May, and the probable effect of his preaching was to bring the assault forward by one day.

3. The events of 11th-13th May 1559

We now come to the events of 11th-13th May 1559. The principal sources of information are the two accounts by Knox (a lengthy one in his *History* and a much briefer one in a letter to Mrs Anna Locke of 23rd June 1559);[50] the "Historie of the Estate of Scotland, from July 1558 to April 1560";[51] Robert Lindesay of Pitscottie;[52] two accounts by Bishop John Lesley, one in English and one in Latin;[53] the *Historical Memoirs* of William Maxwell, 5th Lord Herries;[54] Mary of Guise's letter of 14th May 1559 to the provost and baillies of Edinburgh;[55] Sir James Croft's report of 19th May 1559 to the English Privy Council;[56] the memorandum of

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[49] The Charterhouse was not a friary, but perhaps the common people could not be relied upon to observe the distinction. The Carmelite friary, which was slightly out of Perth, is not recorded as having been guarded, and there is doubt as to whether it was attacked (see below).

[50] Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, pp. 161-3; Knox, *Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 21-7.

[51] *Wodrow Miscellany,* pp. 51-85 (especially p. 57). The "Historie" is anonymous, reasonably accurate, and written from a Protestant perspective.

[52] Pitscottie, Vol. 2, pp. 145-6. Pitscottie (*c.* 1532-*c.* 1586) was a colourful but unreliable Protestant chronicler from Fife.

[53] John Lesley, *The History of Scotland* (Bannatyne Club, Edinburgh, 1830) pp. 271-2; *De origine, moribus et rebus gestis Scotorum libri decem* (Rome, 1578; reprinted, Amsterdam, 1675), pp. 505-6. There is little difference between Lesley's two accounts and our references will all be to his English *History*. Lesley (1527-1596) was Roman Catholic Bishop of Ross from 1566. For the period under consideration, he was moderately well-informed but perhaps inclined to supplement his knowledge with guesswork.

[54] Herries, p. 38. Herries was a zealous Protestant in 1559 who subsequently reverted to Romanism. As a historian he is wildly unreliable. The manuscript was heavily edited by an anti-Protestant compiler after his death (Herries, pp. vi-ix), which presumably explains the extraordinary terms in which Herries condemns Protestant actions which he must have warmly supported at the time.

[55] *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Edinburgh, A.D. 1557-1571,* pp. 36-7.

[56] The letter is given in abridged form in Joseph Bain (ed.), *Calendar of the State Papers Relating to Scotland and Mary Queen of Scots, 1547-1603,* Vol. 1 (Edinburgh, 1898), no. 455, pp. 212-3; and in full in *Old Dundee Prior to the Reformation,* pp. 399-401. Sir James Croft (*c.* 1518-1590) was Governor of Berwick at the time. The letter contains interesting information but is demonstrably inaccurate in a number of respects.

Mary Queen of Scots to the Pope in 1559;[57] and Henry Adamson's poem *The Muses Threnodie.*[58] In addition, there are the standard histories of George Buchanan, David Calderwood, Archbishop John Spottiswoode, Alexander Petrie, and Bishop Robert Keith.[59] Of these, Buchanan largely follows Knox's *History*, though with some additional information; Calderwood entirely follows Knox; while Spottiswoode and Petrie are a compend of Knox and Buchanan. Keith, too, relies on Knox and Buchanan but he discusses the incident at considerable length. Lastly, there is the traditional "eyewitness" account, supposedly derived from a forebear of Principal Tullideph of St Andrews; this, however, cannot be regarded as historical, and we have made no use of it.[60]

Knox landed in Leith on Tuesday 2nd May, spent the 3rd in Edinburgh, travelled to Dundee on the 4th, arrived on the 5th, and presumably had a large hand in the letter of 6th May written to Mary of Guise.[61] He would then have preached in Dundee on the Sabbath and have come to Perth with the Congregation by Tuesday 9th May. The following day he and at least one other minister preached in Perth on the subject of idolatry. On the morning of 11th May he preached again, his sermon being "vehement against idolatry".[62]

Meanwhile the preachers Paul Methven, William Harlaw, John Christieson, and John Willock had been summoned to compear before the Queen Regent in Stirling on 10th May. John Erskine of Dun had gone ahead to Stirling, presumably on the 8th or 9th May, to negotiate

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[57] P. Hume Brown, *John Knox* (2 vols., London, 1895), Vol. 2, pp. 299-302; see also Andrew Lang, *John Knox and the Reformation* (London, 1905; 1967 edn.), pp. 99-100, 111. The memorandum speaks of "six Franciscan convents and as many Dominican" having been attacked, which dates it probably to July 1559.

[58] James Cant (ed.), *The Muses Threnodie* (Perth, 1774). Henry Adamson (*c.* 1581-1637) was a native of Perth. His poem, first published in 1638, incorporates a history of Perth. The information about the Reformation was supplied by his friend George Ruthven who was about ninety-two when the poem was published (and therefore about thirteen in 1559); see *The Muses Threnodie,* pp. vi-vii, 128; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry for Adamson. The relevant quotations from *The Muses Threnodie* are given in R. S. Fittis, *Ecclesiastical Annals of Perth* (Edinburgh, 1885), pp. 76, 222, 224, 244, 246.

[59] Buchanan, Vol. 2, pp. 404-5; Calderwood, Vol. 1, pp. 441-2; John Spottiswoode, *History of the Church of Scotland* (3 vols., Bannatyne Club, Edinburgh, 1847-51), Vol. 1, pp. 272; Alexander Petrie, *Compendious History of the Catholick Church* (2 parts, Hague, 1662), part 2, p. 196; Keith, Vol. 1, pp. 189-192.

[60] J. P. Lawson (ed.), *The Book of Perth* (Edinburgh, 1847), pp. 92-118; see also Keith, Vol. 1, pp. 190-1 for an abridgement.

[61] *Spalding Miscellany,* Vol. 4, pp. 88-92.

[62] Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. 162.

with the Queen Regent on behalf of the Congregation. He would have presented the letter of 6th May, and, according to Knox, had secured an assurance from the Queen Regent that the preachers need not appear and that some other order would be taken with them. The Queen Regent did not wish the whole Congregation to advance to Stirling. Her assurance had been transmitted to the preachers and to the Congregation waiting in Perth. Some in the Congregation were doubtful of her honesty, but the general decision was to trust her.

On the strength of the assurance, the preachers did not compear on 10th May, and in their absence they were put to the horn (i.e. outlawed). Erskine returned to Perth, almost certainly on the evening of 10th May, with news of the Queen Regent's deception.[63] The effect of this news on "the multitude", says Knox, was that they were "so inflamed, that neither could the exhortation of the preacher, nor the commandment of the magistrate, stay them from destroying the places of idolatry". In his letter to Mrs Locke he says that when "the brethren" heard of the Queen Regent's deceit, "they sought the next remedy. And first, after complaint and appellation from such a deceitful sentence, they put to their hands to reformation in St Johnstoun." The "Historie", likewise, speaks of "the brethren" hearing of the Queen Regent's "obstinacy" and purging "the principall kirk of St Johnston of idolatrie".[64]

Knox distinguishes here between "the brethren" who were motivated by the Gospel and "the multitude" who had other reasons for their unrest against Romanism. Both were united in their desire for outward reformation but they differed over how best to proceed. Knox's view, undoubtedly, was that the images in the parish church and the religious houses should now be destroyed but that this should be done by the authority of the magistrates. If the Queen Regent would not take the

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[63] Andrew Lang comments at length on the apparent discrepancy between Knox and the "Historie" about the Queen Regent's "deception" of the Congregation at this juncture, "Knox as Historian", *Scottish Historical Review,* Vol. 2, (1905), pp. 113-130 (see pp. 117-8); Lang, *John Knox and the Reformation,* pp. 275-9. In the end, Lang is reluctantly forced to concede that Knox, whether correctly or erroneously, certainly *thought* that the Queen Regent had deceived the preachers, (ibid., p. 279). Both Knox and the "Historie" state that the preachers were intending to appear before the Queen Regent. For some reason, however, they did not; and, even setting aside Knox's testimony, it is hard to see what that reason can have been other than some deceptive manoeuvre on the part of the Queen Regent.

[64] Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. 161; Knox, *Works*, Vol. 6, p. 23; *Wodrow Miscellany,* p. 57.

lead then it was the duty of the inferior magistrates of each burgh to do so, as had already happened in Dundee and as was in the process of happening in Ayr. The following day, 11th May, his sermon was, according to his own account, to this effect.[65] The sermon being over, the bulk of the people went for lunch, and most of "the brethren" among them, presumably discussing among themselves how best to persuade the magistrates of their duty.

It was at this point that the famous incident with the priest occurred. According to Knox, a priest declared his "malapert presumption" by opening a glorious tabernacle on the high altar of St John's in order to say mass.[66] An altercation with a boy of Protestant sympathies ensued; the boy threw a stone which broke an image and immediately the crowd of bystanders joined in, casting stones and destroying the remaining images.[67] Knox says that the violence in the church and the assault on the friaries was the work "not of the gentlemen, neither of them that were earnest professors, but of the rascal multitude".[68]

Both Pitscottie and Herries say that the violence *immediately* followed the conclusion of Knox's sermon. Pitscottie says that Knox preached a second sermon after lunch and that "after the sermon was done, gave command to cast down the idols of the kirk, that is to say the altars and the images and all other vain idols, which was done hastily".[69] Herries says that Knox "by a seditious sermon stirred up the people to fury and madness, who encouraged them to pull down the Churches. . . . Whereupon they run out in confusion, killed the priests, broke down altars, and destroyed all images and ornaments."[70] Neither writer was

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[65] The sermon was "vehement against idolatry", as we have mentioned, but "the exhortation of the preacher" sought to deter the people from "destroying the monuments of idolatry" without authority or for "their own particular profit", Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, pp. 161, 163.

[66] One has to admire the boldness of the priest in the face of a hostile crowd. Unfortunately his identity has not been preserved.

[67] McRoberts observes that the bystanders having stones to hand shows that they had probably come to the church intent on violence, *Essays on the Scottish Reformation,* p. 430. Buchanan says that those who remained behind after the preaching were "boiling with rage and indignation", Vol. 2, p. 404.

[68] Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. 162.

[69] Pitscottie, Vol. 2, p. 145.

[70] Herries, p. 38. It is certain that no priests were killed, or other writers would have mentioned them. Hay Fleming's comment on Herries' statement is that "it is rather remarkable that the church in which Knox preached that sermon is still standing, and still in use", D. Hay Fleming, *The Reformation in Scotland* (London, 1910), p. 415 n.

The interior of St John's church. The pulpit is thought to be on the site of the one used by Knox. The mass would have been performed at the far end under the window.

present, unlike Knox, and both of them are far from reliable.[71] It seems infinitely more likely, therefore, that Pitscottie and Herries were misinformed or confused about the sequence of events than that Knox invented the story of the priest and the boy and the Congregation going to lunch. Ryrie seeks a middle path between Knox's and Pitscottie's accounts by suggesting that the priest passed on his way to mass "after, or during [Knox's] sermon"; but this supposition would still make Knox an open liar.[72] We see no reason to depart from Knox's version of events at this stage.[73]

[71] According to Knox, Herries was imprisoned by the Queen Regent on 10th May 1559 for declaring his support for the Congregation, Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. 161.

[72] Ryrie, p. 157. Ryrie is trying to explain how the "brethren" were involved in the iconoclasm (see Section 4 below). We will suggest a different and more satisfactory explanation in a moment. Historical sources such as Knox, Pitscottie, Lesley, Herries, and others may be careless, mistaken, gullible, forgetful, unfair, prone to exaggeration, etc., but they are not to be set aside as direct liars without good reason, especially when they are men of the stature of Knox. Furthermore, Knox was intending to publish his account in Scotland within a few months of the events described. What sort of credibility would he have had in Perth, and in the Congregation, if he had published what many hundreds of people would have known to have been a complete fabrication? Knox was an honest and highly intelligent eyewitness to most of the events in Perth and his version should be preferred ahead of second-hand accounts, though it may be modified and supplemented by information from these accounts.

[73] Lesley's version of the events at Perth seems somewhat muddled. He blames the destruction of images in St John's on the "multitude of the people and the craftsmen",

One minor question that arises is the fate of the gear of the parish church. Probably the magistrates were aware of the mood among the people and had removed the more valuable objects to places of safely, though Knox's priest must have had some items for saying mass. The gear would not have been endangered by the entry of the Queen Regent on 30th May – indeed it was probably restored to use at that time – nor by the brief siege of the Congregation on 24th-25th June.[74] Probably it was subsequently rouped by the council, as happened in Dundee, Edinburgh, Stirling, and Aberdeen.[75]

The church having been reformed, the "rascal multitude" – considerably reinforced – hastened to the Grey Friars' and Black Friars' houses and assaulted them. The magistrates, by this time, must have come onto the scene, but their attempts to prohibit further destruction were in vain.[76] Instead they found themselves reluctantly compelled to supervise what they were unable to halt. Knox says that "the spoil was permitted to the poor . . . , that no honest man was enriched thereby the value of groat".[77] Knox himself must have had mixed feelings, as R. K. Marshall suggests. On the one hand he was glad to see the overthrow of the friaries but on the other hand he was distressed at the lawless and disorderly way in which it was being done.[78] It was probably on his advice, however, that the friaries were entirely destroyed. The original intention of the "Beggars' Summons" had been to convert them into hospitals but perhaps it was when this suggestion was mooted during the afternoon that Knox uttered his dictum: "Down with these crow nests, else the crows will big in them

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but he has the magistrates and the barons of the congregation present, and he puts the destruction of the Charterhouse before that of the friaries, see Lesley, pp. 271-2. Probably he was conflating the events of the next two days, with some re-ordering and confusion, into a single afternoon.

74 Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, pp. 179, 189.

75 *Old Dundee Prior to the Reformation,* pp. 171-2; *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Edinburgh, A.D. 1557-1571,* pp. 70, 74-9; R. Adam (ed.), *Edinburgh Records* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1899), Vol. 2, pp. 91-2; *Extracts from the Records of the Royal Burgh of Stirling, A.D. 1519-1666* (Glasgow, 1887), p. 78; *Extracts from the Council Register of the Burgh of Aberdeen, 1398-1570,* p. 329.

76 Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. 161.

77 Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. 163. Knox also says that "their [i.e. the people's] consciences so moved them that they suffered those hypocrites to take away what they could, of that which was in their places". Thus it appears that the spoil given to the poor consisted of that which remained after the friars had carried away what they could.

78 R. K. Marshall, *John Knox* (Edinburgh, 2000), p. 127.

again."[79] From the Protestant perspective this was certainly a wise decision. The razing of the friaries lasted to the second day.[80] The only items known to have survived are two books from the Grey Friars' library and some charters from the Black Friars.[81]

Fittis comments on the remarkable fact that no one was hurt in the destruction of the friaries.[82] Had there been fatalities or serious injurious then surely the other side would have heard of it and gloried in it. Far more people in those days must have known about the construction of buildings, both how to put them up and how to take them down safely. At the same time, these were substantial buildings by the standards of the day, and there were many people involved in the work, so the absence of injury shows that the dismantling was not done in the frenzy that is sometimes portrayed. Even the "rascal multitude" had its organisation and discipline. This fits in with the idea that some intelligent craftsmen were at its head.

The question now arose as to what to do about the Carthusian monastery. This was not directly threatened in the "Beggars' Summons", although the presence of the guards shows that the prior of the Charterhouse was anticipating trouble from that quarter. Pitscottie relates that a conference regarding the Charterhouse took place on the evening of the first day at the bridge over the Tay. John Knox was caused "to make his prayers and supplications to almighty God that he might give them ane true and godly counsel conform to the glory of God and his will".[83] Henry Adamson gives a glimpse of the discussion that ensued. Following George Ruthven, he represents the decision as mainly political or military, although the destruction itself was religious.

> Doctrine and prayers done, chief men advise,
> To take in hand first what great enterprise.
> Said one, this place [i.e. the Charterhouse] hard by our town doth stand

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[79] John Row, *History of the Kirk of Scotland* (Wodrow Society, Edinburgh, 1842), p. 12. Herries places these words of Knox's during his morning sermon and applies them to churches, but Spottiswoode narrows them down to monasteries and friaries; see Herries, p. 38; Spottiswoode, Vol. 1, p. 373; Hay Fleming, *Reformation in Scotland,* p. 414 n.

[80] See below, where this point is discussed.

[81] J. Durkan and A. Ross, *Early Scottish Libraries* (Glasgow, 1961) p. 166; R. Milne, *Rental Books of King James VI Hospital, Perth* (Perth, 1891), p. 469; R. Milne, *The Blackfriars of Perth: the Chartulary and Papers of Their House* (Edinburgh, 1893).

[82] Fittis, *Ecclesiastical Annals of Perth,* p. 81 n.

[83] Pitscottie, Vol. 2, pp. 145-6.

A mighty strength which early may command
And wreck our city, therefore let us go
In time, and to the ground it overthrow,
For sure our enemies will possess the same
And us from thence destroy with sword and flame,
Even at their pleasure. Then they all conclude
In arms to rise . . .

Then all men cried, Raze, raze the time is come
Avenge the guiltless blood [i.e. of the Perth martyrs of 1544] and give the doom.[84]

Whether military considerations preponderated to the extent that Ruthven said is a matter of doubt – Knox's letter to Mrs Locke would suggest that the work of reformation was at least as strong a motive – but in any case the decision was to proceed to the Charterhouse and to threaten the prior with the destruction of his buildings unless he would conform to Protestantism. In coming to such a decision, the leaders of the Congregation and the magistrates were virtually endorsing the action of the "rascal multitude" during the afternoon, however much they may have condemned their manner of proceeding.[85]

The man appointed to negotiate with the prior was the laird of Moncrief who was a close relative of his. Moncrief, however, was rebuffed by the prior, and the Congregation proceeded to assault the building. A comparison between the accounts of Pitscottie, Herries, and Adamson shows that the negotiation probably took place on the second day, Friday, and the assault on Friday afternoon or evening.[86] The building was spoiled and destroyed but the prior was "permitted to take away with him even so much gold and silver as he was well able to carry".[87] The

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[84] *The Muses Threnodie,* pp. 132-3.

[85] Presumably this is where Lesley's account of the destruction of the Charterhouse, with the apparent acquiescence of the barons and the Perth magistrates, fits in; see Lesley, p. 272. Among the leaders of the Congregation at this stage were John Erskine of Dun, John Wishart of Pitarrow, and the Master of Lindsay, see ibid., p. 271; Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. 173. To these might be added John Knox and Lord Ruthven.

[86] Pitscottie, Vol. 2, pp. 145-6; Herries, p. 38. One's sympathy for the Carthusian prior, Adam Forman, is somewhat diminished when one learns that in about 1554 he had abducted the previous prior and kept him imprisoned for over a year in order to secure the position for himself, see Verschuur, *Politics or Religion?,* p. 30.

[87] Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. 163.

The tombstone of James I and Joan Beaufort, now on the east wall of St John's church.

destruction appears to have been thorough: the royal tomb of James I and Joan Beaufort was dismantled, presumably because of certain idolatrous features; while outside even the trees were destroyed, perhaps partly for military reasons.[88] Other than the valuables carried away by the prior, the only items known to have survived were a gateway that was subsequently incorporated into the parish church, though later demolished;[89] the doublet in which James I had been murdered;[90] a number of charters;[91] at least three books from the library;[92] and the royal tombstone of James I and Joan Beaufort. This formed part of the floor of the choir of the parish church for three centuries until it was moved to the east wall where it remains at present.[93]

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88 Lesley, p. 272; Hume Brown, *John Knox,* Vol. 2, p. 302; see also McRoberts, *Essays on the Scottish Reformation,* p. 433, n. 81.

89 *The Muses Threnodie,* p. 37 n; Fittis, *Ecclesiastical Annals of Perth,* p. 248.

90 *The Muses Threnodie,* pp. 37-8; Fittis, *Ecclesiastical Annals of Perth,* p. 225.

91 See Milne, *Rental Books of King James VI Hospital,* p. 493.

92 Durkan and Ross, *Early Scottish Libraries,* p. 166. Whoever it was that rescued the books and charters, it was not the prior.

93 Fittis, *Ecclesiastical Annals of Perth,* p. 248. The royal tombstone seems to be largely forgotten in Perth and it was with considerable difficulty that the present writer located

St John's church in 1775. The porch from the Charterhouse is on the right hand side.

There are some minor discrepancies among the sources over the length of time that the destruction of the friaries and Charterhouse took and also the order and the extent of the destruction. The "Historie" says that the friaries were destroyed first and then the Charterhouse, and that "they made bare buildings" within twenty-four hours. Lesley says nothing about the time taken but says that the Charterhouse was destroyed first and then the friaries and that "scarcely was there left one stone standing upon another". Herries says that the Grey and Black friaries were "made level with the ground in two days", with the Charterhouse standing one day longer. Knox implies that the friaries were attacked before the Charterhouse and says that the three buildings were destroyed within two days. In his letter to Mrs Locke he says that they were "made equal with the ground" but in his *History* he says

it. It is concealed behind the wall of a room constructed out of perspex. The official guide-book to the parish church does not mention even the possibility that it might be a royal tombstone, Richard Fawcett, *St John's Kirk of Perth* (Perth, 2000), p. 23. It is about ten feet tall, made out of a single stone, with two full length outlines, one male and one female. The heads have what appear to be crowns surrounding them. For part of another tombstone which might be from the Charterhouse, see I. Fisher and F. A. Greenhill, "Two unrecorded carved stones at Tower of Lethendy, Perthshire", *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland,* Vol. 104, (1971-2), pp. 238-241.

that "the walls only did remain". Pitscottie places the attack on the Charterhouse on the evening of the first or second day, with its destruction being completed the next morning, and then that of the friaries. We have followed Knox and the "Historie" in placing the destruction of the friaries before that of the Charterhouse. Trying to balance these various statements, it would appear that the destruction of the two friaries was completed within twenty-four hours, i.e. by Friday afternoon, and the destruction of the Charterhouse by mid-day on Saturday.[94]

A more difficult question relates to the survival of the Carmelite friary at Tullilum just to the west of Perth. Neither Knox, nor the "Historie", nor Herries, nor Croft's letter to the English Privy Council, nor Mary's memorandum to the Pope mentions this friary – a strong indication, one would think, that it was relatively unharmed, given their accounts of the destruction of the other three religious houses.[95] Lesley, however, says that it was destroyed – a statement which seems at first sight to be confirmed by *The Muses Threnodie:*

> The Black Friars' Church and place, White Friars, and Grey
> Profan'd and cast to ground were in one day.[96]

Pitscottie, on the other hand, says that the reformers "passed to the grey friars and black friars and to the friars of Tillilum and cast them all done except the friars of Tillilum which the lord Ruthven saved be his moyen [influence] but abolished the friars thereof".[97] The probable explanation is that the friary church was "profaned" and rendered unusable but that the rest of the buildings were left intact, though possibly unroofed.[98] It is likely that this happened on the Thursday afternoon. The prior of the Carmelites, Alexander Young, became a reformed minister and his inclination towards Protestantism was probably a major factor in the lenient treatment of the buildings. The main things now surviving from the White friary are a number of charters.[99]

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[94] *Wodrow Miscellany,* p. 57; Lesley, p. 272; Herries, p. 38; Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. 163; Knox, *Works,* Vol. 6, p. 23; Pitscottie, Vol. 2, p. 146.

[95] Indeed Knox is quite definite that *three* religious houses in Perth were destroyed, Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. 163.

[96] Lesley, p. 272; *Muses Threnodie,* p. 131; Fittis, *Ecclesiastical Annals of Perth,* p. 245.

[97] Pitscottie, Vol. 2, p. 146.

[98] This view is consistent with the archaeological excavation of 1982, see *Three Scottish Carmelite Friaries,* pp. 98, 106, 110. Photographs of the excavation of 2007 can be seen at http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk under "Perth Carmelite Friary".

[99] Milne, *Rental Books of King James VI Hospital,* p. 452. Of the archaeological finds, the most interesting was the friary seal, *Three Scottish Carmelite Friaries,* p. 16.

The final step of the Perth reformation was that the saying of mass was prohibited on pain of death, presumably by the authority of the magistrates: the "priests [were] commanded, under pain of death, to desist from their blasphemous mass".[100] Instead, John Knox conducted services in the parish church for the next three Sabbaths.

4. The apparent discrepancy between Knox's two accounts

In his private letter to Mrs Locke of 23rd June, Knox attributes the work of reformation at Perth to "the brethren", whereas in his *History*, written a few months later and intended for publication, the work of reformation is attributed to "the rascal multitude". Since Andrew Lang's extended attack on Knox at the beginning of the twentieth century, it has become a commonplace for historians to draw attention to this apparent discrepancy between the two accounts, often hinting that an element of deception must lie behind it. As McRoberts puts it:

> In his history, Knox blames the "rascal multitude" for these doings, but in a letter written a week or two later to Mrs Anna Locke, he gives the credit for them to "the brethren". Andrew Lang, in his *John Knox and the Reformation,* pp. 111-114, discusses this discrepancy and suggests, as the reason, that book ii of the history was intended as a propaganda tract to prove that the movement was not a rebellion and Knox was well aware that Calvin, like Zwingli before him, objected to riotous destruction of churches and images and, for this reason, in the history, "the brethren" on this and other occasions are kept discreetly in the background.[101]

In the same way, Pamela Ritchie says, "Knox's accounts of the iconoclasm in Perth varied to suit his audience. A more realistic account can be found in his letters to Anna Locke . . . while a decidedly more favourable version of events is contained in his *Works*".[102] None of

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[100] Knox, *Works*, Vol. 6, p. 23.

[101] McRoberts, *Essays on the Scottish Reformation,* p. 429, n. 65. See also Lang, "Knox as Historian", pp. 118-9; Lang, *John Knox and the Reformation,* pp. 111-4, 276; Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, pp. xliii n., 162 n.; Ryrie, p. 157; Verschuur, *Politics or Religion?,* pp. 96-7; cf. W. Moir Bryce, *The Scottish Grey Friars* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1909), Vol. 1, pp. 145-6; J. P. Foggie, *Renaissance Religion in Urban Scotland: the Dominican Order, 1450-1560* (Leiden, 2003), pp. 50, 232.

[102] P. E. Ritchie, *Mary of Guise in Scotland, 1548-1560* (East Linton, 2002), p. 205. It seems to the present writer that Ritchie contradicts herself a few pages later (p. 211) when she says, "It is doubtful, though, whether John Knox and the Lords of the Congregation

Knox's biographers have addressed the issue of this apparent discrepancy in detail, though Ridley suggests, reasonably enough, that Knox was too busy to include the account of "the rascal multitude" in his letter to Mrs Locke; while Rosalind Marshall comments, as we have already observed, that Knox was glad to see the destruction of the friaries but did not approve, nor wish to be associated with, any breakdown in public order.[103]

Though hinting at an element of deception in his accounts, Knox's various critics have none of them stated in detail what they think actually happened.[104] They have largely contented themselves with observing the discrepancy and then assuming, without further enquiry, that Knox was at fault. In fairness to Knox, however, they should have shown that his accounts cannot reasonably be harmonized before they ventured to censure him: everyone knows that human life abounds in apparent discrepancies which admit of easy reconciliation.

In the previous section we have endeavoured to establish what we think happened at Perth. As usual, there is not a perfect agreement between the sources, but a general picture emerges. The element in our reconstruction of which we are least certain relates to the Perth "gear". We are relying for that on a single source and even a little more information might alter the probabilities and lead to a substantial modification of that part of the account. Leaving this aside, however, the following general points seem to be settled with reasonable certainty: (1) that the populace in Perth was in a state of unrest, independent of Knox, and was probably already contemplating an assault on the religious

actually planned to start their rebellion for the reformation of religion at Perth in May 1559. The riot and outbreak of violence were unexpected, and once this chain of events had begun, they could not turn back. Instead they had to impose some sort of control and give the impression that the riot was, in fact, all part of a grand plan." If the riot was unexpected, how was Knox's letter to Mrs Locke more "realistic" than the account of the riot that he gave in his *History*? And why did the Lords of the Congregation have to "give the impression" that the riot was "part of a grand plan"? And did they in fact give that impression?

103 J. Ridley, *John Knox* (Oxford, 1968), p. 319; Marshall, *John Knox,* pp. 127-8.

104 Lang says nothing constructive at all beyond that Knox's two accounts are "not always reconcilable", *John Knox and the Reformation,* p. 276. Ryrie at least makes the suggestion that the priest passed on his way to mass while Knox was still preaching (p. 157), though we have given our reasons above for dismissing this suggestion. Verschuur has a chapter entitled "May 1559 Revisited" which collects useful material but does not draw many conclusions, *Politics or Religion?,* pp. 92-109; see also Verschuur, "The Outbreak of the Scottish Reformation at Perth 11 May 1559: Knox's *History* Re-Examined", *Scotia,* (1987) pp. 41-53. The fullest reconstructions of events are those of Keith, Vol. 1, pp. 189-193, and Fittis, *Ecclesiastical Annals of Perth,* pp. 79-81, 190, 208, 244-8, 268-9.

houses on "Flitting Friday" 12th May; (2) that the leaders of the Congregation, though sympathizing with the destruction of the two friaries, did not approve of the disorderly manner in which it was done, and had no part in the main stages, except possibly that of restraint and of supervision in the distribution of the spoil; (3) that the Congregation was fully involved in the destruction of the Charterhouse which was done in an orderly manner and with the agreement of the magistrates.

Taking these points as established, we now compare Knox's two accounts with the version of events that we have given. As far as the letter to Mrs Locke is concerned, there is little to explain. The "brethren" did not initiate the iconoclasm in Perth but they approved it (though not the manner in which it was done), and they completed it, and therefore the work could be said to be theirs. In the single sentence of the letter which Knox devotes to the description, there was no room for the somewhat complicated involvement of the "rascal multitude". It is noteworthy, however, that even in this single sentence he does not say that the "brethren" destroyed the Grey and Black friaries; what he says is that "they put to their hands to reformation in St Johnstoun, where the places of idolatry of Grey and Black Friars, and of Charterhouse monks, were made equal with the ground". This is consistent with the "rascal multitude" destroying the first two houses and the Congregation, with the people, destroying the third.

Turning now to Knox's *History*, the main question is, why did he omit the things that he had found time to mention in his letter to Mrs Locke, namely the decision of the Congregation and the magistrates to commence the work of reformation – specifically to destroy the Charterhouse – and likewise their decision to prohibit the mass. Both these were of sufficient importance in June for him to include them in his very brief account to Mrs Locke; why did they not find a place in his longer *History* a few months later?

In seeking to answer this, we must bear two things in mind. The first, which has already been mentioned, is that the second book of his *History*, in which the Perth account occurs, was initially written as a "propaganda" exercise on behalf of the Congregation.[105] It was written later in 1559, at a critical stage of the conflict, and inevitably it was not going to mention anything that might have been disadvantageous to the

[105] Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, pp. lxxxviii-lxxxix. Presumably this is one reason why Knox refers to himself in the third person.

Congregation. There was nothing dishonest about this; it was simply the situation in which Knox was writing. The Congregation might perhaps have done several things which Knox, in other circumstances, would readily have admitted to be wrong, but this was not the occasion to advert to them. Knox subsequently revised the book, but it does not appear that he re-wrote it to any great extent.[106] The second point to bear in mind, arising out of the first, is that this second book of the *History* was hastily written amidst many other pressures.[107] In the circumstances, omissions may have occurred simply through oversight or forgetfulness.

We have seen Andrew Lang's suggestion that Knox was writing with Calvin in mind, and that Knox was trying to hide the Congregation's involvement at Perth because he knew that Calvin disapproved of the unauthorized destruction of idolatry.[108] It seems more likely, however, that if Knox had anyone especially in mind it would have been Queen Elizabeth, from whom he was hoping for military support.[109] As soon as the military support from England was obtained, the purpose of publishing that part of the *History* was dropped. In either case, it is difficult to see what Knox would have lost by openly saying that the Charterhouse had been destroyed by the decision of the Congregation and the Perth magistrates. This is exactly what he stated regarding the work of reformation in St Andrews a month later, and if he could say it about St Andrews, why not about Perth?[110] Why should Calvin or Elizabeth be offended by the one and not the other? The only difference that we can think of is that the Perth Charterhouse had a royal tomb where Elizabeth's aunt, Mary Tudor, was buried.[111] But if this was the reason for Knox's "discreet" silence, then would it not have been more prudent still to have avoided mentioning the Charterhouse altogether? The idea that Knox was trying to hide something seems, on examination, to be inconsistent with what he includes in the *History*.

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106 Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. xcviii.

107 Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. lxxxix; Lang, "Knox as Historian", p. 114; Maurice Lee, "John Knox and his History", in *The 'Inevitable' Union and Other Essays on Early Modern Scotland* (East Linton, 2003), p. 51.

108 Lang, *John Knox and the Reformation,* pp. 112-3.

109 Lee, "John Knox and his *History*", p. 51.

110 Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. 182. "As well the magistrates, the provost and the baillies, as the commonalty for the most part, within the town [St Andrews], did agree to remove all monuments of idolatry, which also they did with expedition."

111 The Queen Regent was particularly sore about the destruction of the royal tomb, Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, pp. 163-4.

A more likely explanation, therefore, is that the silence about the decision to destroy the Charterhouse is traceable to the haste with which Knox was writing. He had certain points about Perth which he wished to mention: (i) the assault of the "rascal multitude" on the parish church and on the friaries was an interesting story in itself, and it showed the widespread opposition to Romanism and also helped to explain some of the excesses which might otherwise be blamed on the Congregation (especially the destruction of Scone Abbey and Palace six weeks later);[112] (ii) the wealth of the Perth friaries was worth recording because it confirmed the hypocrisy of the friars and helped to justify the destruction of their houses; (iii) the care shown to the friars and the way in which the spoil was distributed proved that the attack was religiously motivated and was not simply a matter of loot and rebellion. Having made these three points, Knox moved rapidly on to the next incident, ignoring other matters which did not particularly advance his theme. Perhaps the omission of the decision over the Charterhouse was for no weightier or more subtle a reason than this.

In the same way, Knox's silence about the prohibition of mass on pain of death was, almost certainly, not because he was trying to conceal it, but because it was no longer worthy of mention. At the time when Knox was writing, the Congregation was prohibiting mass throughout the whole region that it was administering, so why make special reference to Perth?[113]

Turning from these omissions, therefore, as not being as significant as some would imagine, we notice that the facts that Knox does give in his *History* fit well with the information from other sources. He does not mention the previous unrest in Perth but he knew about the guards in the friaries; and in his preaching he was exhorting the people against taking matters into their own hands and was "beating their consciences with the word" to keep them from loot; so he was evidently aware of the mood of the people.[114] Similarly, while he does not directly mention the Congregation and the magistrates or their decision to destroy the Charterhouse, their presence and supervision is implicit in his references to "honest men", to the spoil being "*permitted* to the

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[112] Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. 191.

[113] Hume Brown, *John Knox,* Vol. 2, p. 302; Keith, Vol. 1, pp. 246-7.

[114] Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, pp. 161, 163; cf. Verschuur who thinks that Knox was not aware of the previous unrest, *Politics or Religion?,* p. 101; "The Outbreak of the Scottish Reformation at Perth 11 May 1559", p. 51.

poor", and to the Prior of the Charterhouse being "*permitted* to take away" the gold and silver. Furthermore, while the destruction of the Grey Friars and Black Friars is represented as the work of the "rascal multitude", that of the Charterhouse is not; and one is left to infer that it was destroyed in a different and more orderly way. Indeed one hardly needs Mrs Locke's letter to establish the involvement of the Congregation: one has only to ask what the "brethren" were doing during the two days that the buildings were being "made equal with the ground". Clearly they were not standing idle. Even Knox's language – "the Gray and Black thieves" – shows that the "brethren" endorsed that part of the destruction, and his silence regarding the sacking of the Charterhouse shows that they had a hand in that part of the work.

5. John Knox and the Grey Friars' wealth

One other respect in which Knox's account has been attacked is over his comments on the spoil taken from the Perth Grey Friars. He marvels at the wealth found there:

> In very deed the Grey Friars was a place so well provided, that unless honest men had seen the same, we would have feared to have reported what provision they had. Their sheets, blankets, beds, and coverlets were such as no Earl in Scotland hath the better: their napery was fine. They were but eight persons in the convent, and yet had viii puncheons of salt beef (consider the time of year, the eleventh day of May), wine, beer, and ale, beside store of victuals effeiring [proportionate] thereto. The like abundance was not in the Black Friars; and yet there was more than became men professing poverty.[115]

In questioning this account, one writer asks how "honest men" could have been present when the sacking of the friaries was supposedly the work of the "rascal multitude"; but we think that we have explained that above.[116] The main criticisms against Knox are that the spoil of the Grey Friars that he listed did not in fact amount to very much; that he was unaware that the reason why the Grey Friars had even this much was because they were not allowed income from annual rents; and that the Grey Friars had to keep provisions in reserve because of their duty of

[115] Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, pp. 162-3.
[116] Foggie, *The Dominican Order,* p. 50.

entertaining wealthy visitors.[117] It is also said that he was ignorant of "the inside of a Scots mendicant house" and that his views on the friars were based on Protestant stereotypes whose value he had not questioned.[118]

With regard to Knox's supposed "ignorance" of the inside of a friary, it is generally believed that he was born, and presumably brought up, at Giffordgate a few hundred yards from the Franciscan friary in Haddington. He may or may not have been inside the building at some stage, but the friars would have been a daily sight to him and he would have known the local gossip about them. There was also a large and wealthy Cistercian nunnery in Haddington, and possibly a Dominican friary as well. As a Roman priest and a notary round Haddington in the early 1540s, he may have had further contact with the friars and the nuns. Sometime after this he was converted through the instrumentality of the Black Friar Thomas Guillame.[119] In 1547 he spent several months in St Andrews Castle in close confinement with John Rough who had been a Black Friar for at least thirteen years. Knox's knowledge of Scottish friars before the Reformation may be something of an unknown quantity but it was certainly not based merely on Protestant stereotypes.[120]

With such a background, it seems probable that Knox did know about the Grey Friars' position on annual rents, and their duty of entertaining visitors.[121] He had a considerable acquaintance with practical affairs as can be seen both from his work as a notary and from the part that he played in composing the *First Book of Discipline.* The remarkable thing is that he was still surprised at the wealth of the Perth Grey Friars. They had far more food and far better bedding than he had

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[117] Moir Bryce, *The Scottish Grey Friars,* Vol. 1, pp. 133, 302; Verschuur, *Politics or Religion?,* pp. 30, 101; Keith, Vol. 1, p. 192.

[118] Foggie, *The Dominican Order,* pp. 50-1, 226-7; Verschuur, *Politics or Religion?,* p. 101.

[119] Guillame had been the Dominican prior in Inverness in 1525 and then subprior of St Andrews, Foggie, *The Dominican Order,* pp. 277-8.

[120] Foggie twice asserts that Knox's "surprise" at the disparity between Black Friars and the Grey Friars suggests that he was following stereotypes (*The Dominican Order,* pp. 51, 227); but a glance at the quotation from Knox above shows that he did *not* express surprise on this point. Incidentally, his recording of this disparity is evidence of the accuracy of his account, as is his omission of the mention of any money in the Grey Friars (Moir Bryce, *The Scottish Grey Friars,* Vol. 1, p. 134), though it is quite possible that the friars had money which they had taken away with them.

[121] In 1503, the Haddington Grey Friars had entertained the extensive retinue of Margaret Tudor on her way to Scotland for her marriage to James IV, see Moir Bryce, *The Scottish Grey Friars,* Vol. 1, pp. 74, 175.

imagined, even given his personal knowledge and whatever stereotypes may have been current. Furthermore, he is perfectly open about the matter: he not only expresses his surprise but he lists the items that had occasioned it and he expects his contemporary readers to share his wonder. Without professing expertise on sixteenth century living-standards, we think that Knox's judgment on what constituted "abundance" in Perth in May 1559 is as likely to be correct as that of not-entirely-impartial historians living several hundred years later.

The fact that the "rascal multitude" were also surprised at the wealth of the Grey Friars confirms Knox's assertion that spoil was not their main motive in attacking the friaries. McRoberts suggests various reasons why the Scottish friaries were singled out for attack by the Reformers, the main one being that "the friars, by their preaching, were in the forefront of the anti-Lutheran campaign".[122] This may indeed have been that case, but it is not to say that the friars were particularly formidable opponents of Protestantism. As far as Perth is concerned, a high proportion of them seem to have conformed to Protestantism after the Reformation.[123]

6. Conclusion

If our reconstruction of the events in Perth is correct, one conclusion that we can draw is that Protestantism, or at least anti-Romanism, was the dominant force among the populace of Perth in May 1559. We have seen that the people were apparently outrunning the magistrates in their desire for the reform of the religious buildings. They were probably intending an assault on the religious houses while the magistrates, though they had introduced Protestant worship, had not yet reformed the parish church. We have not seen much trace of the supposed "ambivalence" of Perth towards the reformation, of which some historians speak. The idea that "Perth provided a perfect example of an area where Protestants were growing in confidence, without being locally dominant" seems to be contradicted by the Protestant worship in the parish church, the guards in the religious houses, and the removal of the "gear" on 28th April, before Knox had even landed in Scotland.[124]

[122] McRoberts, *Essays on the Scottish Reformation,* pp. 418-9.

[123] Milne, *The Blackfriars of Perth,* p. xxxvi; G. Donaldson (ed.), *Accounts of the Collectors of Thirds of Benefices, 1561-1572* (Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1949) pp. 98, 153.

[124] J. E. A. Dawson, *Scotland Re-Formed, 1488-1587* (Edinburgh, 2007), p. 205. Ian Cowan goes even further in this direction: "What is certain is that, even in those burghs which

Instead, the impression is that Perth was on the brink of full reformation, whether the Congregation had come there or not.[125]

A second conclusion is that the "rascal multitude" in Perth was almost certainly led by the local people rather than by the retainers of the leaders of the Congregation.[126] The opposite view was put forcefully by McRoberts:

> "What was the rascal multitude?" The "rascal multitude" should not be regarded as a new phenomenon thrown up by the reformation – a spontaneous and popular rising of the citizens of a town clamouring for evangelical religion. In every instance where it appears, its nucleus at least is made up from one of the normal adjuncts of Scottish life – the armed and undisciplined retainers that any Scottish magnate might take with him to burn down a neighbour's castle or intimidate a court of justice. When the "rascal multitude" is first mentioned at Perth, in May 1559, it is quite simply the groups of retainers, brought by magnates from Angus and Dundee to overawe justice at the trial of the preachers, which was expected to take place. At Perth they were joined by genuine sympathisers and, no doubt, by riff-raff more interested in loot than in religion. This "rascal multitude" (which may not have been very multitudinous), left at a loose end because the expected trial did not take place and incited by Knox's preaching, proceeded to despoil the religious houses of the town.[127]

The question is not so much the composition of the "rascal multitude", which would be impossible to determine, as the identity of its leaders. Croft says that the Congregation consisted of "a train of five or six thousand persons" and while some of them had gone home, others

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supported the congregation, there must have been only small bands of Protestant sympathisers before the achievement of military and political success," *Regional Aspects of the Scottish Reformation,* p. 23.

[125] For further evidence of widespread Protestantism in Perth, see Verschuur, "Perth Craftsmen's Book", pp. 157-174; Verschuur, *Politics or Religion?,* pp. 80-6. Particularly striking is the quotation from the Craftsmen soon after the Reformation: "And since God stirred up our whole community of merchants and crafts by assistance of his Holy Spirit to be joined in one congregation of Christ, being members of his mystical body, received his holy Word and promise among us . . . " (ibid., p. 86).

[126] Our view coincides with that of Verschuur, "The Outbreak of the Scottish Reformation at Perth 11 May 1559", pp. 48, 50-1.

[127] McRoberts, *Essays on the Scottish Reformation,* p. 459, n. 188.

were still in Perth on 11th May.[128] With many hundreds of people involved and with several different buildings being attacked, it would have been impossible even for eyewitnesses to have been certain about the relative proportions of outsiders and local people. We have seen, however, that there was sufficient unrest among the populace of Perth to account for the violence without implicating members of the Congregation in the initial stages of the attack; and Knox's references to "the tenth man in the town" and to the division of the spoil imply that townspeople rather than outsiders were taking the lead. Lesley particularly mentions the "craftsmen" of Perth as being prominent in the work.[129] Some of the retainers of the lairds presumably joined the "rascal multitude"; indeed Croft says that "part of them [i.e. of the train], going to St John's town, have there expulsed friars and others out of two religious houses", but Croft would have lacked detailed information about what had happened.[130] The preponderance of evidence is that the townspeople led and the outsiders followed; by contrast, in the attack on the Aberdeen friaries eight months later it was the "strangers" who initiated the destruction and the "indwellers" who assisted.[131]

Furthermore, contrary to McRoberts, the "rascal multitude" in Perth was "multitudinous" enough to ignore the "commandment of the magistrate" and to accomplish the rapid destruction of substantial buildings.[132] Perth was not alone in having an anti-Roman Catholic "rascal multitude": in Cupar it was the local people (with or without the magistrates) who violently reformed the church; while in Edinburgh, according to Knox and the "Historie" at least, it was the "rascal people" who sacked the friaries before the Congregation ever reached the town.[133]

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[128] *Old Dundee Prior to the Reformation,* p. 400. Buchanan confirms that a considerable part of the train had returned home after the letter from the Queen Regent, Vol. 2, p. 403; see also Knox, *Works*, Vol. 6, p. 23.

[129] Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, pp. 162-3; Lesley, p. 271.

[130] *Old Dundee Prior to the Reformation,* p. 400. Buchanan, too, speaks of "soldiers" being involved in the destruction and these can only have been the retainers of the lairds, Vol. 2, p. 405.

[131] *Extracts from the Council Register of the Burgh of Aberdeen, 1398-1570,* p. 315.

[132] Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. 162.

[133] Herries, p. 38; Buchanan, Vol. 2, p. 405; Dickinson, *John Knox's History,* Vol. 1, p. 192; *Wodrow Miscellany,* p. 61. As is well known, the "Diurnal" gives a different account of the overthrow of the Edinburgh friaries, *Diurnal of Remarkable Occurrents,* pp. 53, 269. In the memorandum from Mary Queen of Scots to the Pope, the tumult in Scotland in summer 1559 was blamed on "the nobles, the towns, and most of the populace" (la noblesse, les villes, et la pluspart du populaire); see Hume Brown, *John Knox,* Vol. 2, p. 302.

Our main conclusion, however, concerns Knox as a historian, and we can state it very briefly. We have examined only a minute part of his *History* but we have seen that this small part appears to be reliable and to harmonize with evidence from other sources, and that its omissions can easily be explained without any discredit to Knox. Indeed, if our reconstruction is correct, Knox's account of the events in Perth, though slightly disordered, is strikingly accurate.