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John Knox, c. 1514-1572.

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The "Alteration of Religion" in Aberdeen in 1559: an ancient and persistent historical error

DOUGLAS W. B. SOMERSET

The reformation in Aberdeen is a well studied subject but almost all accounts present a "traditional" view which is substantially inaccurate.¹ This inaccuracy was pointed by James Kirk twenty-five years ago but his corrective has gone largely unheeded and the traditional view remains the prevalent one.²

The traditional view is that the reformation came to Aberdeen in the form of an armed mob from Angus and the Mearns on or after 29th December 1559; that it was something imposed upon a reluctant

¹ The main accounts of the Reformation in Aberdeen are William Kennedy, *Annals of Aberdeen* (2 vols., London, 1818), Vol. 1, pp. 110-114; [Joseph Robertson], *History of the Reformation in Aberdeen* (Aberdeen, 1887); C. H. Haws, "The Diocese of Aberdeen and the Reformation", *Innes Review*, Vol. 22 (1971), pp. 72-84; G. Donaldson, "Aberdeen University and the Reformation", *Northern Scotland*, Vol. 1 (1974), pp. 129-142; B. McLennan, "The Reformation in the burgh of Aberdeen", *Northern Scotland*, Vol. 2 (1976-7), pp. 119-144; A. White, "The Reformation in Aberdeen", in J. S. Smith (ed.), *New Light on Mediaeval Aberdeen* (Aberdeen, 1985), pp. 58-66; A. White, "Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen, 1543-1593" (PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1985); A. White, "The impact of the Reformation on a Burgh Community: the case of Aberdeen", in M. Lynch (ed.), *The Early Modern Town in Scotland* (London, 1987), pp. 81-101; D. Stevenson, *King's College, Aberdeen, 1560-1641: from Protestant Reformation to Covenanting Revolution* (Aberdeen University Press, 1990), pp. 7-14; Allan White, "The Menzies era: sixteenth century politics", in E. P. Dennison, D. Ditchburn, M. Lynch (eds), *Aberdeen before 1800: a New History* (East Linton, 2002), pp. 224-237; Catherine E. McMillan, "Aberdeen and the Reformation: Implementation and Interpretation of Reform" (MA Thesis, Portland State University, 2011).

² J. Kirk, *Patterns of Reform* (Edinburgh, 1989), pp. 107-8.

Aberdeen from without; and that it enjoyed little local support.³ The measure of support varies according to the version: in one, the invading mob is “instantly joined by a great number of the citizens”; in another, the Aberdonians “shed their blood in defence of their holy faith, and in attempting to rescue the sacred buildings of Aberdeen from the hands of the sacrilegious destroyer”.⁴ All versions agree, however, in identifying the start of the reformation with the arrival of the Angus and Mearns men. As one writer puts it:

Reformation came first to a reluctant Aberdeen through violence. When it became clear that Aberdeen was not going to support the revolt of the Lords of the Congregation against Catholicism voluntarily, an armed mob of reformers from Angus and Mearns occupied the burgh in the last days of December 1559, looting three priories. . . . Even when Protestantism gained official approval at the national level, no strong support for it appeared in the region.⁵

The document to which Kirk drew attention, which shows the error of the traditional view, is the reply of the Lords of the Congregation to questions from the English Privy Council on 24th December 1559. Among other things, the Lords mention that

³ The traditional view derives ultimately from the one-sided statements of early accounts such as Bishop John Lesley, *De origine, moribus et rebus gestis Scotorum libri decem* (Rome, 1578; reprinted, Amsterdam (?), 1675) and James Gordon of Rothiemay in 1661, *Abredoniae vtriusque descriptio* (Spalding Club, Edinburgh, 1842). William Kennedy combined these statements with information from the Burgh records and other sources and, not unreasonably, developed (in a somewhat garbled form) the account which has subsequently become standard, *Annals*, Vol. 1, pp. 112-3. This traditional view can then be traced through [J. Robertson], *Book of Bon-Accord* (Aberdeen, 1839), p. 225; Robertson, *Reformation in Aberdeen*, p. 41, J. M. Bulloch, *History of the University of Aberdeen, 1495-1895* (London, 1895), pp. 70-1; V. Mitchell, *Destruction of the Churches and Religious Houses of Aberdeen* (Aberdeen, 1899); W. Moir Bryce, *The Scottish Grey Friars* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1909), Vol. 2, pp. 322-5; A. Keith, *A Thousand Years of Aberdeen* (Aberdeen, 1972), pp. 145-6; Donaldson, “Aberdeen University and the Reformation”, pp. 135-6, McLennan, “The Reformation in the burgh of Aberdeen”, pp. 128-9, and the other writers mentioned above. The same view is expressed in passing in I. B. Cowan, *Scottish Reformation* (London, 1982), pp. 117-8; M. F. Graham, *The Uses of Reform* (Leiden, 1996), pp. 58-9; L. Macfarlane, “The Divine Office and the Mass”, in Jane Geddes (ed.), *King’s College Chapel, Aberdeen, 1500-2000* (Leeds, 2000), pp. 20-2; M. Todd, *Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (Yale, 2002), p. 196; J. P. Foggie, *Renaissance Religion in Urban Scotland: the Dominican Order 1450-1560* (Leiden, 2003), pp. 229, 233; A. Rylie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation* (Manchester, 2006), p. 186; J. E. A. Dawson, *Scotland Re-Formed, 1488-1587* (Edinburgh, 2007), p. 205; and various current websites.

⁴ Robertson, *Reformation in Aberdeen*, p. 41; Mitchell, p. 9.

⁵ Stevenson, *King’s College, Aberdeen, 1560-1641*, pp. 7-8.

the town of Aberdeen has, by their baillies, lately suited our preachers, and obtained them; so that now there is two of our ministers, Paul Methven and Adam Heriot, travailing with them in the Evangel. They have already reformed their kirks, destroyed their altars, promised the destruction and abolition of the dens of idolatry, and quickly to join themselves with us.⁶

Thus the reformation in Aberdeen was well under way before the men from Angus and the Mearns arrived; it was not imposed from without; and it evidently enjoyed considerable local support. These simple facts are surprisingly significant, both for an understanding of Protestantism in Aberdeen in the sixteenth century, and also for an understanding of the degree of support for the Reformation in other parts of Scotland. Indeed they show, we think, that much current historical research seriously underestimates the measure of popular support that the Reformation enjoyed in Scotland.

In this article we re-assess the strength of Protestantism in Aberdeen in the period 1559-60 in the light of the document just mentioned. The article is divided into eight sections. The first summarizes the progress of Protestantism in Aberdeen in the months immediately preceding the introduction of Protestant worship. The second is devoted to the change of worship itself – the so-called “alteration of religion” – which occurred, we think, in October and November 1559. The third section discusses the response of the burgh to the announcement on 29th December 1559 that the Angus and Mearns men were intending to visit the town to destroy the friaries. This response has been curiously misinterpreted by many writers on the subject. The next four sections discuss the visit of the Angus and Mearns men in January 1559/60 and the subsequent progress of the reformation in Aberdeen, through to September 1560. In the final section we draw some conclusions, the main one being that if Protestantism was the dominant popular religion in Aberdeen by the end of 1559 then it was probably so in many other parts of Scotland, unless we suppose that Aberdeen was uniquely Protestant. As we have mentioned, this conclusion is contrary to the trend of historical writings for the last fifty

⁶ J. Stevenson (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign, Elizabeth, 1559-60* (London, 1865), No. 485, p. 226.

years which has been to minimize the degree of popular support for Protestantism at the Reformation.⁷

I. Protestantism in Aberdeen: January 1558/9-September 1559

The history of Protestantism in Aberdeen in the years before the Reformation is an interesting subject, but not one that we have space to examine here. The evidence for pre-Reformation Protestantism was considerably underplayed in a recent study by Allan White who concluded his survey of the historical data with the statement: "It is impossible to construct on them a coherent picture of a gradually expanding Protestant community within the burgh which comes to power in 1560."⁸ We think, on the contrary, that this is exactly what one can construct: to us the evidence suggests that there were a few Protestants in Aberdeen in the 1520s and early 1530s; that by the 1540s this handful had become a group drawing from various social classes; that the strength of this group quietly increased during the 1550s; and that by January 1558/9 they were seen as posing a significant threat to Romanism. By October 1559 they had become the dominant party.

Leaving this issue aside, however, we can pick up the story in January 1558/9 with the remarkable document emanating from the Dean and Chapter of Aberdeen. This document followed a decade for which the historical record is virtually silent regarding Protestantism in Aberdeen. The Bishop of Aberdeen, William Gordon, was seeking advice from the Dean and Chapter for the "stancheing of hereseis pullelant [springing up] within the Diocie of Aberdene", and they

⁷ For a useful discussion of this and other trends in the historiography of the Scottish Reformation, see W. I. P. Hazlett, *The Reformation in Britain and Ireland* (London, 2003), pp. 113-133 (especially p. 129).

⁸ White, "Reformation in Aberdeen", pp. 59-60; cf. Stevenson, *King's College, Aberdeen, 1560-1641*, p. 7: "Some scattered evidence for Protestant heresy can be traced in the decades before 1560, but occasional general statements suggesting that heresy was thriving in the area seem to reflect Catholic panic rather than reality." Father Allan White, a Dominican friar, has published a number of closely related pieces on the Reformation and its aftermath in Aberdeen, all derived from his unpublished 1985 Edinburgh PhD thesis (which can be ordered through the British Library EThOS service). The thesis itself is the most detailed account of the events surrounding the Reformation in Aberdeen and is a mine of useful information. Its great defect, however, is an excessive desire to claim Aberdeen and the North East for Romanism wherever possible, with the result that evidence of Protestantism is minimized, while evidence of Romanism is frequently exaggerated. We will try to avoid falling into the opposite error in this paper.

responded to his request on 5th January 1558/9. Among their several interesting suggestions was one that steps should be taken to apprehend and punish all involved in "the byrnyng of the kirk of Echt, or casting doun of ymagis in ony kirks within the diocie of Abirdeine". The culprits were believed to come from New Aberdeen, Banchory, and several villages round Echt. This iconoclasm indicates that there was active and widely distributed Protestantism in the Diocese.

Another of their suggestions was that the Bishop should "nocht to be our [over] familiar with thame that ar suspect contrarius to the kirk, and of the new law; and that his lordschip evaid the sammyn: that quhen his lordschip plesis to vesity the feyldis to repois him self, he cheis sic cumpany as efferis [is appropriate] till his lordschipis awn estate". Evidently there were several prominent people in mind, in and around Aberdeen, and the Chapter was anxious about the influence that they might be having on the Bishop. Unfortunately we have no idea who these suspected "crypto-Protestants" were.

A third piece of advice was that persons known to be heretics ("infamatas personas de heresie") should be summoned and examined. It was noted that the summons would need to be sent "to thair duelling placis . . . becauss thai cum nocht to thar parochie kirks".⁹ This strongly suggests that private Protestant meetings were being held in several places in the Diocese, presumably New Aberdeen being one of them.¹⁰

The existence of significant Protestantism in Aberdeen is confirmed by the Queen Regent's order on 9th February 1558/9 for proclamation to be made at St. Andrews, Cupar, Dundee, Montrose, Aberdeen, and 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.¹¹ Such a proclamation suggests that unrest had

⁹ R. Keith, *History of the Affairs of Church and State in Scotland* (3 vols., Spottiswoode Society, Edinburgh, 1844-50), Vol. 1, p. cxx-cxxiii; *Miscellany of the Spalding Club* (5 vols., Spalding Club, Aberdeen, 1841-52), Vol. 4, pp. 57-59.

¹⁰ For separate Protestant meetings in this period, see Kirk, *Patterns of Reform*, pp. 1-15; and A. Ryrie, "Congregations, Conventicles, and the nature of Early Scottish Protestantism", *Past and Present*, No. 191 (2006), pp. 45-76. Kirk suggests that by 1559 "innumerable clusters of privy kirks had taken root in countryside and towns alike" (p. 13). Ryrie is critical of this suggestion (p. 48), mainly because the meetings had insufficient structure to be described as "privy kirks" (e.g. the lack of office-bearers, Church discipline, sacraments, etc.). Ryrie appears to be unfamiliar with evangelical Protestant worship: at one point he makes the extraordinary assertion (or possibly joke?) that "for early modern Protestants, the core religious activity was getting together with other Protestants, and reading and talking about being Protestants" (p. 53).

¹¹ Thomas M'Crie, *Life of John Knox* (Edinburgh, 1855), pp. 359-60.

already manifested itself and that disturbances were anticipated in these various places.

Thus it appears from these two pieces of evidence that at the beginning of 1559 there was an active body of Protestants in Aberdeen, that they had some important local figures in their ranks, and that they had widespread (though minority) support. It is probable that some of their number affixed the “Beggars’ Summons” to the doors of the four Aberdeen friaries on 1st January 1558/9, though without any serious intention of implementing its threat.¹²

The collision between Protestantism and Romanism in Scotland came to a head during the course of 1559. John Knox returned to Scotland on Tuesday 2nd May 1559, the Perth friaries were sacked on Thursday 11th May by the “rascal multitude”, and the St. Andrews friaries probably on Wednesday 14th June.¹³ News of this reached Aberdeen and on Friday 16th June the Aberdeen Council register records the concern of the chaplains of St. Nicholas for the contents of their church such as the “chalices, silver work, copes, and ornaments”.¹⁴

¹² For a discussion of the Beggars’ Summons, see D. W. B. Somerset, “John Knox and the destruction of the Perth friaries”, *Scottish Reformation Society Historical Journal*, Vol. 3 (2013), pp. 9-10.

¹³ The best straightforward, factual account of the events of 1559-60 remains D. Hay Fleming, *Hand-Books for Higher Classes: the Scottish Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1903 and thirteen subsequent editions up to 2011).

¹⁴ J. Stuart (ed.), *Extracts from the Council Register of the Burgh of Aberdeen, 1398-1570* (Spalding Club, Aberdeen, 1844) (hereafter *ABR 1398-1570*), pp. 323-4. As is well known, New Year’s Day in Scotland was 25th March rather than 1st January until 1600. Thus what we would call 1st January 1559 was 1st January 1558 to those alive at the time. To avoid confusion, the day in question is often referred to as 1st January 1558/9, a convention which we adopt (and wish everyone else would too). John Stuart was an able antiquary and was working from the originals which, of course, were in the right order, but somehow he got muddled on this point (see e.g. p. xxxi), and in the volume in question he routinely misplaces the extracts from the 1st January to 24th March *before* those from 25th March to 31st December. This has not been done entirely uniformly (e.g. the entries for 14th January 1545 and 12th January 1562, pp. 214, 339) but one would need to check every single instance. More surprisingly still, Stuart continued this error into the second volume, J. Stuart (ed.), *Extracts from the Council Register of the Burgh of Aberdeen, 1570-1625* (Spalding Club, Aberdeen, 1848) (hereafter *ABR 1570-1625*), and when he comes to recording the decision of the Privy Council to change New Year’s Day, taken on 17th December 1599, but not intimated in Aberdeen until 2nd January 1600, he goes to pieces completely (compare p. lvii and pp. 206-7). Stuart’s error was pointed out long ago by J. Cooper, *Cartularium Ecclesiae Sancti Nicolai Aberdonensis* (2 vols., New Spalding Club, Aberdeen, 1888-92), Vol. 2, p. xl, and by D. Hay Fleming, *The Reformation in Scotland* (London, 1910), p. 383n (see also White, “Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen”, pp. 4-5), but more than one historian has fallen into the trap, putting the events of January 1559/60 before those of June 1559; see A. R. Macewan, *History of the*

These were duly moved to places of safety.¹⁵ Similar arrangements were made in other parts of the country.¹⁶ The chaplains' concern is a further indication of Protestant unrest in Aberdeen, and this is confirmed by the Council's appointing, on the same day, four officers to assist the chaplains in collecting their annual rents.¹⁷

The reformation movement continued to spread, with the Congregation entering Edinburgh on Friday 30th June; and the following Friday, 7th July, the Bishop and Chapter of Aberdeen handed over much of the silver work of St. Machar's cathedral to the safe-keeping of the canons.¹⁸ The danger to church property was widespread and even in remote Banff the buildings of the Carmelites (White Friars) were set on fire on the night of 20th July. On 15th August, the Prior leased out the entire property to prevent further damage.¹⁹

In mid-July, the Queen Regent's forces re-entered Leith, and on Monday 24th July a truce was agreed between the Congregation and the Queen Regent. One man instrumental in securing this truce was the Earl of Huntly, a figure of great importance as far as Aberdeen was concerned. George Gordon (1513-1562), 4th Earl of Huntly, was,

Church in Scotland (2nd ed., 2 vols., London, 1915-18), Vol. 2, pp. 108-9; W. Croft Dickinson, *John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1949), Vol. 1, pp. 160, 327; Vol. 2, p. 256; Graham, *Uses of Reform*, p. 59, n. 148.

¹⁵ The Burgh's "evidents" (i.e. records and charters), and also the St. Nicholas Chartulary (subsequently published in Cooper, *Cartularium*), were moved to safety at the same time, *ABR 1398-1570*, p. 323.

¹⁶ On 24th June the Dominicans of Inverness committed their "gear" to the custody of the Provost and baillies of Inverness, see C. Innes (ed.), *Family of Rose of Kilravock* (Spalding Club, Edinburgh, 1848), pp. 226-7. Their building survived the Reformation.

¹⁷ *ABR 1398-1570*, p. 324. Further entries relating to the chaplains' rent occur on 14th July and 18th August, pp. 324-5.

¹⁸ C. Innes (ed.), *Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis* (2 vols., Spalding Club, Edinburgh, 1845), Vol. 1, p. lxxxviii. James Gordon comments that "it will hardly be believed what the weight of the plate amounted to" (*Abredoniae vtriusque descriptio*, p. 22).

¹⁹ W. Cramond (ed.), *Annals of Banff* (2 vols., New Spalding Club, Aberdeen, 1891-3), Vol. 2, pp. 10-11; I. B. Cowan and D. E. Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses Scotland* (2nd edn., London, 1976), pp. 135-6. The Carmelite building may have been unoccupied because the damage to the "kirk and place" was not discovered until the following morning. The Banff Carmelites were in a reduced state at the time, although the name of one other friar, John Davidson, appears on the charter of 15th August. The Prior, John Fulford, had been appointed sometime between 1545 and 1549 and held that position up to the Reformation. By July 1558 he was also Prior of the Aberdeen Carmelites; see P. J. Anderson, *Aberdeen Friars, Red, Black, White, Grey* (Aberdeen, 1909), pp. 96, 99. The "William Smith" mentioned by Donaldson and Haws as Prior of the Banff Carmelites was in fact the previous Prior; see D. McRoberts (ed.), *Essays on the Scottish Reformation, 1513-1625* (Glasgow, 1962), p. 140; C. H. Haws, "Scottish Religious Orders at the Reformation", *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, Vol. 16 (1969), p. 221.

according to Knox, the most powerful man in Scotland: “there was not such a one these three hundred years in this realm produced.”²⁰ His uncle William was the Bishop of Aberdeen and his brother Alexander was the Bishop of Galloway. Alexander joined the Congregation in September 1559 but William remained in the Church of Rome and this was where Huntly’s sympathies lay. Nevertheless his course during the Reformation period was remarkably indecisive, even bringing him for a short while into the Protestant camp.

Initially on the Queen Regent’s side, Huntly had sought to deter the Congregation from recapturing Perth in the second half of June, and was displeased when his proposal was not accepted. He acted for the Queen Regent in the negotiations at Preston (near Edinburgh) in mid-July, and was deeply involved in the truce at Leith shortly afterwards. He told the Congregation that he would join them if the Queen Regent broke any part of the truce. On 29th July, he was present at a meeting in Edinburgh to decide what the religion of the town should be, and thereafter he retired north where he remained until the following March.²¹ On 19th October he was at Huntly Castle, according to a guarded reply which he gave to a letter from the Queen Regent.²²

The terms of the Leith truce most relevant to Aberdeen were that a Parliament should be held on 10th January following; that the Congregation should desist from “casting down” of kirks and religious places until 10th January; and that the Queen would not “molest or trouble the preachers of the Congregation, nor their ministry (to them that pleases to use the same)”.²³ The reformation had not reached Aberdeen by this time. On Saturday 2nd September, Knox wrote to Mrs.

²⁰ D. Laing (ed.), *Works of John Knox* (6 vols., Wodrow Society, Edinburgh, 1846-64), Vol. 2, p. 358; Dickinson, *John Knox’s History*, Vol. 2, p. 62.

²¹ Laing, *Works of Knox*, Vol. 1, pp. 358, 369, 379, 389-91; Dickinson, *John Knox’s History*, Vol. 1, pp. 188-9, 197, 204, 212-3. Huntly’s supposed appearance in Edinburgh in October is discussed below. On 3rd March 1559/60, he had come south as far as Perth, Joseph Bain (ed.), *Calendar of the State Papers Relating to Scotland and Mary Queen of Scots, 1547-1603* (Edinburgh, 1898), Vol. 1, No. 682.

²² A. I. Cameron (ed.), *Scottish Correspondence of Mary of Lorraine* (Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1927), p. 430. This letter from Huntly was signed also by the Earl Marischal and Lord Forbes. William Keith, 3rd Earl Marischal was Huntly’s brother-in-law and was friendly with him. Though of Protestant sympathies – he had supported the preaching of John Knox in 1556 – he, too, was inactive for most of the Reformation crisis, not joining the Congregation until 7th June 1560; see Bain (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Mary Queen of Scots*, Vol. 1, Nos. 713, 812; F. D. Bardgett, *Scotland Reformed: the Reformation in Angus and the Mearns* (Edinburgh, 1989), p. 79.

²³ Laing, *Works of Knox*, Vol. 1, pp. 376-81.

Anna Lock: "Christ Jesus is preached even in Edinburgh, and his blessed sacraments rightlie ministred in all congregatiouns where the ministrie is established; and they be these:– Edinburgh, Sanct Andrews, Dundie, Sanct Johnstoun [i.e. Perth], Brechin, Montrose, Stirlie, Aire."²⁴

Beyond the information just given, we have no direct knowledge of the progress of Protestantism in Aberdeen in the summer of 1559. Presumably, however, the Protestants in Aberdeen were watching what was happening further south but they were not strong enough to attempt anything themselves, either by way of introducing Protestant worship in the parish church, or by way of sacking the friaries. Some of their number seem to have gone south to assist the Congregation.²⁵

II. The "Alteration of Religion" in October and November 1559

The determining factor regarding religion in Aberdeen was the position of the Council, and especially the position of the Provost and the baillies. The Provost for the year 1558-9 was, as usual, Thomas Menzies of Pitfoddels and the four baillies were David Mar, Thomas Nicolson, Mr. George Middleton, and Patrick Menzies. Of these, David Mar and Thomas Nicolson favoured the Congregation, George Middleton was opposed, and Patrick Menzies seems to have been neutral.²⁶ Thomas

²⁴ Laing, *Works of Knox*, Vol. 6, p. 78.

²⁵ One of these was probably John Brabaner (see Section VII below). Another, apparently, was Thomas Branche. Branche had become a burghess in April 1542. On 1st December 1544, he and Thomas Cusing were found guilty of "hanging the image of St. Francis" – presumably an image outside the Grey Friars – for which they were imprisoned. In 1554-5 he was a member of the burgh Council. In about December 1559 he adhered to the "Band" which was signed by the Protestant congregation in St. Andrews (see later in this section), and he was elected a deacon in Aberdeen at the first election of elders and deacons in November 1562. He was a deacon again in 1568 and in September 1573. In May 1562, he acquired a "lodge" which stood at the northwest corner of St. Nicholas' churchyard and which subsequently became the burgh music school. He died on 31st May 1574 and his monument, on a pillar in the West Kirk of St. Nicholas, described him as "a true pattern of honesty". See *Miscellany of the New Spalding Club* (2 vols., New Spalding Club, Aberdeen, 1890-1908), Vol. 1, p. 58; *ABR 1398-1570*, pp. 211-2, 344; White, "Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen", p. 81; D. Hay Fleming (ed.), *Register of the Minister, Elders, and Deacons of the Christian Congregation of St. Andrews, 1559-1600* (2 vols., Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1889-90), Vol. 1, p. 9; John Stuart (ed.), *Selections from the Records of the Kirk Session, Presbytery, and Synod of Aberdeen* (Spalding Club, Aberdeen, 1846), p. 3; National Records of Scotland (NRS) CH2/448/1/19, 25; Cooper, *Cartularium*, Vol. 2, p. 384; R. Monteith, *An Theater of Mortality* (Edinburgh, 1713), p. 97.

²⁶ Patrick Menzies did not support Thomas Menzies in opposing the destruction of the friaries in 1559/60. In May 1573 his ship was impounded in Leith on account of "certain suspicious persons and letters" being brought in from France but the Privy Council

Menzies was probably inclining towards the Congregation but was not yet ready to commit himself. Others on the Council were against the Congregation, and in the early autumn the prevailing opinion among the leading men was still against reformation. Probably there were many discussions and arguments among them but no consensus yet in favour of supporting the Congregation and adopting Protestant worship.²⁷

What altered the balance in Aberdeen was the Council election at the beginning of October. The Provost, once again, was Thomas Menzies and the four new baillies were David Mar, Thomas Nicolson, John Lowson, and Mr. Patrick Rutherford. All four of them were Protestant sympathizers, as events showed; and presumably this was known to those who elected them. If so, then these elections can be regarded – and probably were regarded at the time – as the political triumph of Protestantism in Aberdeen and as a warrant for reforming the burgh’s public worship.²⁸

The Provost, Thomas Menzies of Pitfoddels was born, probably in the 1490s, and admitted burgess in 1514 or 1515. He was married (for the first time) in 1520 to Marion Reid and first became Provost of Aberdeen in 1525. He was Provost uninterruptedly from 1547 until his death in 1576. He embraced Protestantism in 1543 during Arran’s “godly fit” and occupied a number of important positions such as Comptroller (for five months in 1543) and a Lord of the Articles (1543, 1544, 1560, and 1567).

seemed to hold the captain responsible rather than Menzies, J. Hill Burton (ed.), *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1878), Vol. 2 (A.D. 1569-1578), pp. 230-1. McLennan implies that Patrick Menzies had Roman Catholic sympathies but this is not borne out by the references that he gives, see “The Reformation in the burgh of Aberdeen”, p. 138. Menzies was a member of Parliament in 1566, see A. M. Munro, *Notes on the Members of Parliament for the Burgh of Aberdeen, 1357-1886* (Aberdeen, 1889), p. 20; Margaret D. Young (ed.), *The Parliaments of Scotland* (2 vols. with continuous pagination, Edinburgh, 1992), Vol. 2, p. 492.

²⁷ It should not be assumed that favouring the Congregation equated exactly with Protestantism and opposing the Congregation with Romanism. Certainly zealous Protestants generally favoured the Congregation and zealous Romanists opposed it, but there was a middle group of people, influenced by other factors, to which several of the leading Aberdonians belonged; for discussion see Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation*, pp. 168-9. Furthermore, it was a time when many people’s religious views were undergoing rapid change – Ninian Winzet complained of his fellow priests that “at Pasche and certain Sundays after, they taught with great appearing zeal, and ministered the sacraments to us in the Catholic manner: and by Whitsunday they changed their standard in our plain contrary”, *Certane Tractatis* (Maitland Club, Edinburgh, 1835) p. 54.

²⁸ Allan White comments on the unusual outcome of the election but does not recognise the Protestant victory that it seems to have represented, White, “Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen”, p. 155.

From 1526 onwards, he was several times a member of Parliament.²⁹ He was still regarded as having Protestant leanings in 1549, but in August 1550 he went to France as part of the retinue of Mary of Guise, and this seems to have dampened his Protestant zeal.³⁰ Menzies' conduct is central to an understanding of the reformation in Aberdeen and yet it is not easy to fathom. He was acting with the Congregation in October 1559, as we shall see in a moment, but by the end of December he had adopted a contrary position.



Monument of Thomas Menzies of Pitfoddels and Marion Reid in the Collison Aisle, St. Nicholas.

It is often assumed that by 1559 Menzies was a convinced Roman Catholic but the assumption does not seem to admit of proof and it raises as many difficulties as it solves.³¹ Menzies had inclined to Protestantism for at least six years during 1543-9 and his private views during the 1550s are unknown. He was with the Congregation in October 1559 and he attended the Reformation Parliament of August 1560 which ratified the Scots Confession of Faith (with only three

²⁹ *New Spalding Miscellany*, Vol. 1 p. 45; Young (ed.), *The Parliaments of Scotland*, Vol. 2, p. 490; Munro, *Notes on the Members of Parliament for the Burgh of Aberdeen, 1357-1886*, pp. 18-20.

³⁰ Historical Manuscripts Commission, series 9, *Salisbury (Cecil) Manuscripts* (24 vols., various imprints, 1883-1976) Vol. 1, p. 59; W. Turnbull (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign, Edward VI, 1547-1553* (London, 1861), p. 52. Gordon Donald describes the purpose of the 1550 expedition as "brainwashing", *All the Queen's Men* (New York, 1983), p. 160, but this description is challenged by Pamela Ritchie, *Mary of Guise in Scotland, 1548-1560* (East Linton, 2002), pp. 69-72. It seems to have had an effect on Menzies, at least.

³¹ For example, White, "Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen", p. 226; "the selection of the Catholic Thomas Menzies of Aberdeen [as a Lord of the Articles in 1560] was possibly a token gesture", M. Loughlin, "The Career of Maitland of Lethington, c. 1526-1573" (PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1991), p. 76; "the Catholic provost Thomas Menzies", Graham, *The Uses of Reform*, pp. 61, 115; "Thomas Menzies, the Catholic provost of Aberdeen", Foggie, *Dominican Order*, p. 229. Elsewhere White is more cautious: "Menzies . . . who is traditionally held to have had Catholic sympathies after 1560", "Reformation in Aberdeen", p. 60.

counter-votes, Menzies not among them), abolishing the mass and papal jurisdiction in Scotland. On 16th August he signed the letter to Queen Elizabeth suggesting that she should be married to the Earl of Arran. On 30th September 1560 he took the Protestant Provost's oath in Aberdeen.³² In May 1561 he was employed by the General Assembly to present a supplication to the Privy Council "for the suppressing of idolatry", i.e. Romanism.³³ In November 1562, he became an elder in the reformed kirk in Aberdeen. In July 1567, he signed, as Provost, a letter from the Burgh of Aberdeen to the General Assembly affirming that the Assembly was to "understand, and most assuredly believe us professors of the Evangel of the Kirk, within the Burgh of Aberdeen, to be of ane mind, and, be the grace of God, to continue to the maintenance of the furthsetting of the Glory of God, teaching the true Evangell and sustentation of the ministers". In May-June 1569, he was regarded as trustworthy by the Privy Council when it visited Aberdeen and the north; and in particular when King's College was purged, the Roman Catholic officers of the College who were being removed were instructed to deliver "the same College, with all the plenishings, movables, jewels, goods, and gear" to Menzies, who would keep them until "persons of sound doctrine" could be placed in the College.³⁴ In a man of ordinary integrity, these actions would be considered a sufficient proof of Protestant convictions.

The evidence of Menzies' sympathy for Romanism is that he opposed the destruction of the Aberdeen friaries by the Mearns men (as

³² Laing, *Works of Knox*, Vol. 2, p. 121; Dickinson, *John Knox's History*, Vol. 1, pp. 338-9; Bain (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Mary Queen of Scots*, Vol. 1, No. 885, p. 465; *ABR 1398-1570*, p. 328.

³³ In May 1561, the second General Assembly of the Kirk resolved to supplicate the Privy Council on various matters, the first of which was the "suppressing of idolatry throughout the whole realm, and punishing the users thereof, maintainers of the same, haunTERS and frequenters thereunto". In Knox's account it is not only the "suppressing of idolatry" but also "all monuments thereof". The following day, 28th May, "the kirk convened", considered the articles which had been drawn up, and appointed some of the "brethren" to present them to the Privy Council. One of these "brethren" was Thomas Menzies. The Privy Council acceded to the request and the result was the "casting down" of Crossraguel, Kilwinning, and Failford abbeys in the south east and the purging of unspecified buildings in the north under the direction of Lord James Stewart. See Laing, *Works of Knox*, Vol. 2, pp. 161, 164, 167-8; Dickinson, *John Knox's History*, Vol. 1, pp. 361-2, 364; A. Peterkin (ed.), *The Booke of the Universall Kirk of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1839), pp. 5-6. For a discussion of the whole episode, see Hay Fleming, *Reformation in Scotland*, pp. 410-15.

³⁴ *Records of the Kirk Session, Presbytery, and Synod of Aberdeen*, p. 3; Peterkin (ed.), *The Booke of the Universall Kirk of Scotland*, pp. 63-4; J. Hill Burton (ed.), *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1877), Vol. 1 (A.D. 1545-1569), pp. 665, 667, 675.

we shall see below), and after their destruction he employed John Fulford, the former Prior of the Carmelites, as his servant. In March 1571/2, books and letters from the continent, presumably of a Roman Catholic nature, addressed to "Mr John Fulford, Provost of Aberdeen", were confiscated in Harwich. Menzies must, at the very least, have known that Fulford was importing such materials.³⁵ Furthermore, Menzies' eldest son Gilbert was strongly inclined to Roman Catholicism,³⁶ while "Mr Thomas Menzies, baillie" (possibly his grandson) was "an open, avowed professor of papistry".³⁷ The family of Menzies of Pitfoddels adhered to the Church of Rome until its extinction in 1843. These points show that Menzies' Protestantism was at best weak and inconsistent but they do not establish that he was a convinced Roman Catholic.³⁸ In any case, whatever his private religious views were – and possibly he was not too clear on this himself – he was certainly prepared to conform outwardly to Protestantism after the Reformation.

³⁵ *Spalding Miscellany*, Vol. 2, p. 43; William K. Boyd (ed.), *Calendar of the State Papers relating to Scotland and Mary Queen of Scots, 1547-1603* (Edinburgh, 1905), Vol. 4 (A.D. 1571-1574), No. 168, p. 151: "And further I send your lordship certain books and letters directed to Mr. John Fulford, Provost of Aberdeen. Harwitche. Signed: John Darcy." White claims that Fulford (whom he calls Failford) "presumably acted as the Provost's chaplain" ("Reformation in Aberdeen", p. 59; "Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen", p. 178), while McLennan "can readily picture John Fulsard [Fulford] officiating at the celebration of mass behind closed doors, with the help of the ornaments of St. Nicholas Kirk which Patrick Menzies had bought" ("Reformation in the Burgh of Aberdeen", p. 137). Equally, Fulford might have been no more than an old friend whose religious views Menzies was prepared to tolerate.

³⁶ In March 1573/4, Gilbert Menzies was warded in Edinburgh for failing to attend church. He was eventually freed "on condition that he should behave himself as an obedient member of the Kirk of God, that he should frequent the sermons and be participant in the sacraments . . . and should be subject to the discipline of the ministry and session of the Kirk", *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, Vol. 2 (A.D. 1569-1578) pp. 332, 343-4. On 17th August 1574, however, he was in trouble with the Aberdeen Kirk Session for failing to keep his promise, *Records of the Kirk Session, Presbytery, and Synod of Aberdeen*, p. 18.

³⁷ *Spalding Miscellany*, Vol. 5, p. 376; *Records of the Kirk Session, Presbytery and Synod of Aberdeen*, pp. 59-60, 61, 65, 69. We would tentatively identify "Mr Thomas Menzies, baillie" with "Thomas Menzies of Durn and Cults" but we are far from certain on this point; see A. M. Munro, *Memorials of the Aldermen, Provosts, and Lord Provosts of Aberdeen, 1272-1895* (Aberdeen, 1897), p. 116.

³⁸ As one indication of Menzies' Romanism, Allan White mentions that he protested against the unleading of St. Machar's cathedral in February 1567/8, "Queen Mary's Northern Province", *Innes Review*, Vol. 38 (1987), pp. 53-70 (see p. 67); Aberdeen Council Archives, MS Council Register, Vol. xxvi, p. 492; MS Aberdeen Register of Sasines, Vol. xii, 5th February 1567/8. Menzies certainly appears in "conservative" company in signing this protest, but one would think that many Protestant Aberdonians were also unhappy with the unleading of St. Machar's. An exhorter, Mr. John Erskine, had been appointed to Old Aberdeen, apparently by 1567, so the cathedral was being used for Protestant worship by this stage, *Register of Ministers, Exhorters and Readers* (Maitland Club,

On the whole, we are inclined to regard him as a man intellectually inclined to Protestantism, though tolerant of the practice of Romanism, and one whose main motivation was to retain power.³⁹

Of the four new baillies, the most prominent was David Mar and the impression given by the Council register is that he was the leader in the Aberdeen reformation. He was admitted a burgesse on 12th January 1537/8, and his eldest son John was admitted in September 1549, so he was presumably born before 1510.⁴⁰ He lived to be an old man because he was certainly still alive in 1591 and was apparently still alive in 1598.⁴¹ He was appointed taxter (tax collector) in 1547, was a baillie continuously between 1549 and the Reformation, and was still a baillie in 1587. He was one of the Deans of Guild in 1551, 1552, 1559, and 1560, and was also the Burgh Treasurer in 1559 and in April 1561.⁴² In addition he

Edinburgh, 1830), p. 65. Furthermore, as White says elsewhere, "Menzies' objections to the project may have stemmed in large measure from outrage at the prospect of a large part of the ecclesiastical wealth of Aberdeen going south with no hope of any of the profit coming to the burgh", "Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen", p. 234.

³⁹ Menzies' integrity is more than a little doubtful. If he was really a convinced Roman Catholic taking Protestant oaths, he was clearly highly deceitful and no great credit to his religion; but even his common honesty is uncertain. In September 1551, Mr. Duncan Forbes, one of the burgesses of Aberdeen, called into question the verity of Menzies' customs accounts, and in February 1551/2 Menzies agreed to pay the Comptroller the "neglectit" sum of £300. At the same time, "for stancheing of murmure and quyetie . . . amangis the inhabitantis" of Aberdeen, he agreed that he would pay any sums which the auditors of the town council found that he was owing to the Common Good fund, R. K. Hannay (ed.), *Acts of Lords of Council in Public Affairs, 1501-1554* (Edinburgh, 1932), pp. 611, 614-5. A similar issue arose in 1574 when it was recorded that on account of the troubles in the country he had made no payments of the Aberdeen customs to the Exchequer between 1565 and 1573. It is not known that he ever did pay, see J. Stuart, *et al.* (eds.), *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland* (23 vols., Edinburgh, 1878-1908), Vol. 20, pp. lxi-lxii, 467-8. In Sections IV and V below, we will see an instance where Menzies was probably less than honest about his reasons for missing a meeting of the Head Court.

⁴⁰ *New Spalding Miscellany*, Vol. 1, pp. 54, 61. On several occasions, the Register of Burgesses records that the person admitted was a "youth". This is the case, for example, with Gilbert Menzies of Cowlie who was born on 10th June 1522 and admitted a burgesse at the age of fifteen on 1st October 1537; *ibid.*, pp. 54, 66; Munro, *Aldermen*, p. 89. In the absence of such a note, one assumes that the person had attained the age of majority which was twenty-one, D. Patrick (ed.), *Statutes of the Scottish Church, 1225-1559* (Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1907), p. 184 and note.

⁴¹ *Spalding Miscellany*, Vol. 3 p. 157; P. J. Anderson (ed.), *Fasti Academiae Mariscallanae Aberdonensis* (3 vols., New Spalding Club, Aberdeen, 1889-1898), Vol. 1, pp. 99-100.

⁴² *ABR 1398-1570*, pp. 251, 318, 331; White, "Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen", p. 155; L. B. Taylor, *Aberdeen Council Letters* (6 vols., Oxford, 1924-61), Vol. 1, p. 11; [A. Walker], *Deans of Guild of Aberdeen, 1436-1875* (Aberdeen, 1875), pp. 22, 24. We hope that Mr. Walker's list of Deans of Guild is more accurate than his general history. He places the Scottish Reformation in 1540 (p. 19) and has the Covenanters plundering Aberdeen in 1566 (p. 27).

was a member of Parliament for Aberdeen in 1555, 1557, 1560, and 1567-8.⁴³ He was thus highly experienced politically, and in influence was second only to Thomas Menzies in the burgh. He became an elder at the first election of office-bearers in November 1562, and was an elder again in 1568, 1573, and 1576.⁴⁴ The earliest evidence of his Protestant sympathies is that in October 1544 he refused to furnish the bread for the mass at St. Nicholas when it was his turn to do so.⁴⁵

The second baillie was Thomas Nicolson, the son of Alexander Nicolson. His genealogy is readily accessible because he was a forebear of Baron Carnock, the Chief of Clan Nicolson.⁴⁶ His father's brother David and two of his sons, Robert and James, were all Sheriff Clerks for Aberdeenshire.⁴⁷ Robert was turned out of his position by the Earl of Huntly about 1558, which may be an indication of Protestant leanings because his brother James was prominent among Edinburgh Protestants after 1560.⁴⁸ Thomas himself was admitted a burges on 3rd October 1547 but was still under twenty-five in 1549 and must therefore have been born about 1526. He was married to Agnes, a daughter of Thomas Menzies of Pitfoddels. In March 1554/5 he was acting as a sheriff. He was a taxtar in 1556, a Dean of Guild in 1557, and a baillie in 1557, 1558, 1559, and 1562. He was deeply involved in shipping and in 1558 he took part in the seizing of two English ships in the Icelandic port of Westmoney. In 1562 he was in charge of the town's artillery. He was drowned, along with seventeen other Aberdonians, when his ship *The Thomas* sank off the coast of Holland on 20th January

⁴³ Young (ed.), *The Parliaments of Scotland*, Vol. 2, p. 471; Munro, *Notes on the Members of Parliament for the Burgh of Aberdeen, 1357-1886*, pp. 18-20.

⁴⁴ *Records of the Kirk Session, Presbytery, and Synod of Aberdeen*, pp. 3; NRS CH2/448/1/19, 25, 105.

⁴⁵ MS Aberdeen Council Register, Vol. xviii, p. 277; White, "Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen", p. 167.

⁴⁶ Charles Mosley (ed.), *Burke's Peerage, Baronetage, and Knightage* (3 vols., 107th edn., Wilmington, Delaware, 2003), Vol. 1, p. 701, col. 1.

⁴⁷ D. Littlejohn (ed.), *Records of the Sheriff Court of Aberdeen* (3 vols., New Spalding Club, Aberdeen, 1904-7), Vol. 1, pp. 465-8.

⁴⁸ M. Lynch, *Edinburgh and the Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1981). James' son Thomas received the lands of the Aberdeen Trinitarian Friars in 1576, and was Clerk to the General Assembly from 1596 to 1618; see Anderson, *Aberdeen Friars, Red, Black, White, Grey*, p. 104; D. Shaw (ed.), *Acts and Proceedings of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland, 1560 to 1618* (3 vols., Scottish Record Society, Edinburgh, 2004), Vol. 3, p. 260. White confuses him with Thomas the baillie on one occasion, "Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen", p. 142.

1568/9.⁴⁹ His son George was an important figure in Aberdeen and became Provost in 1622.

The third baillie, John Lowson, became a burges on 6th October 1539. He was married to Isobel Menzies, lady of Durn, who died 6th October 1575 and who was apparently a granddaughter of Thomas Menzies of Pitfoddels. Lowson was a Dean of Guild in 1558, 1567, and 1568 and was one of the men entrusted with the kirk silver work on 13th January 1559/60 (see below). He became a baillie for the first time in 1559, was Burgh Treasurer in April 1560, and a baillie once again in March 1561. In April 1561 he is mentioned as the joint owner of a ship with Patrick Menzies and Andrew Buk (see Section III). He became an elder at the first election of elders in November 1562, and died in 1585.⁵⁰

The fourth baillie, Master Patrick Rutherford, was the son of Alexander Rutherford of Rubislaw who died in December 1559. The father could not write but Patrick had a degree, presumably from King's College. His wife's name was Marjorie and she too was a daughter of Thomas Menzies of Pitfoddels. He was admitted a burges on 24th March 1541/2 and was a baillie in 1549, 1559, and 1574. He was a Dean of Guild in 1551, 1552, 1558, and was entrusted with the burgh's charters and records on 16th June 1559 and with the kirk silver work on 13th January 1559/60. He was the Burgh Treasurer in March 1572/3 and acted as a sheriff-depute in 1574. He was elected an elder in November 1562 and again in 1568, 1573, 1575, and 1577. He died in December 1579. His son Alexander was many times Provost of Aberdeen after 1591.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Another Thomas Nicolson (known as "Thomas Nicolson, elder" as opposed to "Thomas Nicolson, baillie") was admitted a burges on 31st May 1540 and died on 16th August 1572. The "baillie" was greatly more prominent than the "elder" in the town's affairs. See White, "Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen", pp. 82, 155; *New Spalding Miscellany*, Vol. 1, pp. 56, 60, 75; *ABR 1398-1570*, pp. 272-3, 280, 301, 310, 342, 344, 351; Munro, *Aldermen*, pp. 89, 131; *Deans of Guild*, p. 23; J. Stevenson (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign, Elizabeth, 1561-1562* (London, 1866), p. 177; T. C. Wade, *Acta Curiae Admirallatus Scotiae, 1557-1561/2* (Stair Society, Edinburgh, 1937); *Spalding Miscellany*, Vol. 2, pp. 35, 39. The legal wrangling over the loss of *The Thomas* was still continuing in 1591, *Aberdeen Council Letters*, Vol. 1, pp. 4, 107.

⁵⁰ *New Spalding Miscellany*, Vol. 1, p. 56; *Spalding Miscellany*, Vol. 2, p. 42; Vol. 3, p. 156; *Deans of Guild*, pp. 23, 27-8; *ABR 1398-1570*, pp. 319-21, 327, 331; *Records of the Kirk Session, Presbytery, and Synod of Aberdeen*, p. 3. White identifies Lowson's wife Isobel (Elizabeth) as a daughter of Thomas Menzies of Pitfoddels, but we think it more likely that she was a daughter of his son, Thomas Menzies of Durn, see "Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen", p. 244, n. 64; Munro, *Aldermen*, p. 110.

⁵¹ *Illustrations of the Topography and Antiquities of the Shires of Aberdeen and Banff* (4 vols., Spalding Club, Aberdeen, 1847-1869), Vol. 3, p. 220; A. White, "The Regent Morton's Visitation: the Reformation in Aberdeen, 1574", in A. A. Macdonald, M. Lynch, I. B.

The four new baillies favoured Protestantism and, according to the truce of Leith, they were free to invite preachers from the Congregation to minister in Aberdeen. The lords of the Congregation had dispersed in September while the harvest was being gathered and they re-convened in Stirling about Sabbath 15th October.⁵² By this time Thomas Menzies had joined the Congregation. The main decision taken by the Congregation at this time was to depose the Queen Regent, and Menzies' name appears among the signatories to the letter of 23rd October informing her of this step.⁵³

Menzies' exact motivation at this stage is unclear, but we would suggest two factors in his thinking. One was that he loved politics, and a convention like this exercised a powerful attraction to him. The other was that he was probably expecting the Earl of Huntly to join the Congregation. Huntly had given the impression that he was going to attend, and indeed a somewhat inaccurate report to England, dated 10th November, implies indirectly that he was in Edinburgh when the Queen Regent was deposed. Furthermore, his name appears on a list for the new governing Council which the Congregation then elected. His signature, however, was not on the letter of 23rd October to the Queen Regent, and he was still awaited in Edinburgh on 25th October and again on 3rd November. It was rumoured that he arrived in Edinburgh on 7th November, but by this time the Congregation had fled from Edinburgh. On 22nd November, Arran was trying to arrange a meeting with him in Brechin or Montrose, or in Aberdeen if Huntly could not be persuaded to come so far south.⁵⁴ Thus it is clear that Huntly remained in the north throughout this period.

Whatever his motivation, Menzies was certainly acting with the Congregation for a short while, and the conjunction between himself and the baillies was sufficient to introduce Protestant public worship in

Cowan (eds.), *The Renaissance in Scotland* (Leiden, 1994), pp. 246-263 (see p. 261); *New Spalding Miscellany*, Vol. 1, p. 58; White, "Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen", p. 155; *Deans of Guild*, pp. 22-3; *ABR 1398-1570*, pp. 319-21, 323; J. Stuart (ed.), *Extracts from the Council Register of the Burgh of Aberdeen, 1570-1625* (Spalding Club, Aberdeen, 1848) (hereafter *ABR 1570-1625*), p. 10; *Records of the Sheriff Court of Aberdeen*, Vol. 1, p. 452; *Records of the Kirk Session, Presbytery, and Synod of Aberdeen*, pp. 3, 19; NRS CH2/448/1/19, 25, 83, 127; *Spalding Miscellany*, Vol. 2, p. 46; Vol. 3, p. 157; Munro, *Aldermen*, p. 114.

⁵² Dickinson, *John Knox's History*, Vol. 1, p. 232.

⁵³ Laing, *Works of Knox*, Vol. 1, p. 451n.

⁵⁴ Bain (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Mary Queen of Scots*, Vol. 1, Nos. 551, 566; Laing, *Works of Knox*, Vol. 1, p. 451n.; Stevenson (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign, Elizabeth, 1559-60*, Nos. 139, 176, 211, 352.

Aberdeen. Probably it was the next Sabbath, 29th October, that it began in St. Nicholas. In Ayr in the spring of 1559, the baillies and the Dean of Guild simply “discharged the chaplains of the said kirk their service and fees”.⁵⁵ Though the surviving Aberdeen Baillie Court records are silent, probably the same thing happened in Aberdeen. There were two Deans of Guild that year but they were David Mar and Thomas Menzies. The Aberdeen Council register records that on the following day, Monday 30th, two of the chaplains of St. Nicholas, in the name of the rest, “gave and consented to the baillies and council present for the time ane bill of supplication, desiring entre [right of entrance] to be patent [opened] to them to the said kirk and choir, offering themselves to do the service of God and observe their foundations according to their vocation and duty, and desired their answer in most humble manner, and thereupon took act of court”. The purpose of this, if a similar incident in Ayr is any guide, was to have a legal record of their willingness to carry out their duties, with a view to enforcing a continued right to their chaplaincy fees.⁵⁶

One question that arises is the form that Protestant worship would have taken. The usual policy of the Scottish reformers at this stage, in the absence of a minister, was to use the 1552 Prayer Book of Edward VI. Kirkcaldy of Grange wrote to Sir Henry Percy on 1st July 1559: “The manner of their proceedings in reformation is this. They pull down all manner of friaries and some abbeys which willingly receive not their reformation. As to parish churches, they clean them of images and all other monuments of idolatry and command that no masses be said in them: in place thereof the book set forth by godly King Edward is read in the same churches.”⁵⁷ One wonders where these copies of the 1552

⁵⁵ M. H. B. Sanderson, *Ayrshire and the Reformation* (East Linton, 1997), pp. 90-1; G. Donaldson, *Scottish Reformation* (Cambridge, 1960), pp. 50-1.

⁵⁶ *ABR 1398-1570*, p. 325. This entry has puzzled those who thought that the Aberdeen reformation did not occur until the following January. White’s interpretation is that the chaplains were seeking the restoration of the altar plate which they had entrusted to the Council in June (“The Menzies era”, p. 228). James Kirk, on the other hand, thinks that “their services may have lapsed” (*Patterns of Reform*, p. 107), which is the view that we have taken.

⁵⁷ Laing, *Works of Knox*, Vol. 6, p. 34. Similarly, on 9th July, Cecil wrote: “They offer no violence, but dissolve religious houses, directing the lands thereof to the crown and to ministry in the Church. The parish churches they deliver of altars and images and have received the service of the Church of England according to King Edward’s book”, M’Crie, *Life of John Knox*, Note DD, pp. 354-7. See also G. Donaldson, *The Making of the Scottish Prayer Book of 1637* (Edinburgh, 1954), pp. 6-7; McRoberts, *Essays on the Scottish Reformation, 1513-1625*, p. 433.

Prayer Book came from, given that it had been suppressed in England for the last six years, but Donaldson suggests that MS copies might have been used. On 24th June, the Elizabethan Prayer Book was authorized in England, so by the end of October copies of this might have been obtainable in Scotland.⁵⁸ In addition, there must have been a certain number of copies of the 1558 Genevan *Form of Prayers* in Scotland. In the absence of a preacher, one of these books would have been used, and perhaps the Church of England Homilies as well.

As to who might have read the service, we can only speculate. The reply of the Congregation to the English Privy Council on 24th December says that the Aberdeen baillies "lately suited our preachers, and obtained them", so probably there were several Sabbaths of Protestant worship before there was a minister in Aberdeen. There were potentially as many as thirty-four chaplains at St. Nicholas, but whether all these chaplainries were filled, and were filled by different people, and were filled by people resident in Aberdeen, is not known.⁵⁹ Two of the St. Nicholas' chaplains are known to have become readers in the reformed Church: Alexander Robertson at Maryculter and Alexander Ramsay at Aberdour, both from 1563 to 1574.⁶⁰ It is possible, therefore, that one of them might have read the service. Another candidate might have been one of the friars. Of these, the White Friar John Paton became reader in Dunnottar after the Reformation and the Grey Friar Alexander Harvey can probably be identified with the post-Reformation reader in Fintray of the same name.⁶¹ Perhaps one of these was ready to oblige. A third possibility might have been a local layman such as David Mar or Patrick Rutherford, or even Thomas Menzies himself. Presumably there were private Protestant assemblies in Aberdeen prior to October,

⁵⁸ Knox had not seen a copy of the Elizabethan Prayer Book by 15th October 1559; Laing, *Works of Knox*, Vol. 6, p. 83.

⁵⁹ Cowan, *Religious Houses*, p. 214.

⁶⁰ White, "Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen", p. 177; C. H. Haws, *Scottish Parish Clergy at the Reformation, 1540-1574* (Edinburgh, 1972), pp. 4-5, 175. Another chaplain, William Walcar, was assistant sacristar at St. Nicholas from October 1565 to his death in March 1583/4, *ABR 1398-1570*, p. 361; *ABR 1570-1625*, p. 50-1; *Spalding Miscellany*, Vol. 2, p. 55, while John Collison was subchanter at St. Machar's by 1565, dying in 1584; see D. E. R. Watt and A. L. Murray, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae Medii Aevi Ad Annum 1638* (Edinburgh, 2003), p. 23; White, "Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen", p. 173.

⁶¹ Haws, "Scottish Religious Orders at the Reformation", pp. 220-1. Bardgett (*Scotland Reformed: the Reformation in Angus and the Mearns*, p. 95) gives another possible identification for John Paton of Dunnottar; see Hay Fleming, *Reformation in Scotland*, p. 563.

and perhaps whoever had conducted these took over the service in St. Nicholas.⁶²

Having introduced Protestant worship, the Council then set about reforming the church. The evidence for this comes from an interesting document dating from August 1591. It is a “Summons” by the Privy Council, at the instance of several of the burgesses and craftsmen of Aberdeen, against all the leading families in Aberdeen; the charge being nothing less than having usurped power in Aberdeen for the last forty years. The document relates the alleged civic misdemeanours of these families in detail, carefully providing the month and the year of the offences, and also the month and year of death of many of the principal figures. It must have entailed considerable research.⁶³ As far as religion is concerned, the complaint is that when “the time of the alteration of religion” came, “which was in the month of November, the year of God one thousand five hundred fifty nine years, or in the said year”, the church rents, property, and other “moveable furniture” had, by these leading people, been “sold, dispoed, delapidated, and otherwise used and away put be them at their pleasure”:

Item, the patronages and fundationes of alterages, houssis, and annuel rentis, pertaining to the kirk of our said burgh, sauld and

⁶² In 1558 the Protestant Lords and Barons had agreed the following two heads: “First, It is thought expedient, devised, and ordained, that in all parishes of this realm the Common Prayers be read weekly on Sunday, and other festival days, publicly in the parish kirks, with the Lessons of the New and Old Testament, conform to the order of the Book of Common Prayers: And if the curates of the parishes be qualified, to cause them to read the same; and if they be not, or if they refuse, that the most qualified in the parish use and read the same. Secondly, It is thought necessary, that doctrine, preaching, and interpretation of Scriptures be had and used privately in quiet houses, without great conventions of the people thereto, while afterward that God move the Prince to grant public preaching by faithful and true ministers,” Dickinson, *John Knox’s History*, Vol. 1, pp. 137-8; Laing, *Works of Knox*, Vol. 1, pp. 275-6.

⁶³ “Summons against the Magistrates of Aberdeen”, *Spalding Miscellany*, Vol. 3, pp. 155-71. For the background to the “Summons”, see Kennedy, *Annals*, Vol. 1, pp. 150-65; Ebenezer Bain, *Merchant and Craft Guilds* (Aberdeen, 1877), pp. 66-7; White, “Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen”, pp. 304-342; Dennison, Ditchburn, Lynch (eds.), *Aberdeen before 1800: a New History*, pp. 234-7. In a protest to the Convention of Royal Burghs in June 1590, the group responsible for the “Summons” had complained that the town’s charters and records were being “obscured” by the Menzies family and should be stored in a locked chest which was accessible, J. D. Marwick (ed.), *Records of the Convention of the Royal Burghs of Scotland, 1295-1597* (Edinburgh, 1866), pp. 314, 321-2. The Council ordered this to be done on 15th February 1590/1, *ABR 1570-1625*, p. 70, and possibly it was from the now publicly accessible records that the information in the “Summons” was drawn. According to White, however, the Menzies family retained many of the records until 1592, “Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen”, p. 310.

utherwayes disponit be thame, with the moveable furnitur of the kirk, and uthers underspecefeit, extant the tyme of alteration of the religioun, quhilk was in the monethy of Novembir, the year of God ane thowsand five hundredth fiftie nyne yeiris, or in the said year, and have sauld, disponit, delapidat, and utherwayes usit and away put be them at their pleasure, extending to the particular spaces and valour underwrittin, that is to say, within their said paroche kirk, perteing to the saidis complinaris and communitie of our said burght, aucht chandlers of fyne siluer, etc.⁶⁴

Whatever the truth of the allegations may have been, the implication for us is that whereas Protestant services in St. Nicholas appear to have started in October, it was in November that the first steps were taken towards reforming the building. Probably this was at the beginning of the month because on Monday 13th November, the Bishop and Chapter of Aberdeen handed over further valuables from St. Machar's, this time to the custody of the Earl of Huntly – an action suggesting that they had seen fresh cause for alarm. On 22nd November, the Aberdeen Council instructed Gilbert Collison, master of the Kirk Work, to make certain repairs to the roof and windows of St. Nicholas to tide it through "this winter season", a step which seems to indicate a degree of acquiescence in the reforms.⁶⁵

Following the deposition of the Queen Regent in October, the situation of the Congregation in Edinburgh had deteriorated rapidly, and on 6th November they were obliged to flee the town. One consequence of their flight was that John Knox went to St. Andrews, where a Protestant congregation had been established a few months earlier. The first dated record in the Kirk session register of this congregation is 27th October, and it makes reference to the "minister and elders". The

⁶⁴ There then follows a long list of items such as "ane great stein latroun, of massie brass, within the quire, in forme of the pelican with her birds, quhairin the evangel was red, extending to the weyght of tuintie stein of fyne brass", see "Summons against the Magistrates of Aberdeen", *Spalding Miscellany*, Vol. 3, pp. 159-60. For a summary of the document, see Bain, *Merchant and Craft Guilds*, pp. 66-7. Other charges with specific dates in the document include the destruction of "ane great chaine of irne and ship maistis" used for blocking the harbour, worth 400 merks, which had been destroyed in December 1549, and the appropriation of the town's handbell by Patrick Leslie in November 1549 (see *ABR 1398-1570*, pp. 263-4). To what extent the dates in the "Summons" are accurate is difficult to say. We shall see in Section III an instance where the "Summons" is wrong, possibly by one year, over the date of Andrew Buk's death. This might, however, have been a transcription error.

⁶⁵ Innes, *Registrum Episcopatus Aberdonensis*, Vol. 1, pp. lxxxviii-xc; *ABR 1398-1570*, p. 325.

minister was Adam Heriot, a former Augustinian canon in St. Andrews.⁶⁶ Members of the congregation were required to approve a “band”, which had originally been taken in Edinburgh on 13th July.⁶⁷ In Dundee, a congregation had been established in 1558 with Paul Methven as minister, but early in 1559 William Christison, who subsequently became minister of Dundee, had returned from Denmark.⁶⁸ Thus with Knox in St. Andrews and Christison, probably, in Dundee, Heriot and Methven were free to be sent elsewhere, and it is possible that they were in Aberdeen as early as mid-November, though the beginning of December is more likely.

The most explicit document describing the reformation in Aberdeen is the one that we mentioned at the beginning of the paper – the reply sent by the Congregation on Sabbath 24th December to questions from the English Privy Council. Maitland of Lethington, who was down in London, gave his answers to the questions on 10th December, and then sent them up to Scotland for revision. Knox gives the context as follows: “From England returned Robert Melville, who passed in company to London with the Secretary [Maitland], a little before Christmas, and brought unto us certain Articles to be answered, as by the contract that afterwards was made [at Berwick in February], shall appear. Whereupon the Nobility convened at Stirling and returned answer with diligence.”⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Adam Heriot (c. 1514-1574) was born in Lothian and was related to George Buchanan (1506-1582), the humanist, whose mother was a Heriot. He matriculated at St. Leonard’s College, St. Andrews, in 1543 and became an Augustinian canon at St. Andrews. In 1558 he became a Protestant and he was briefly minister in St. Andrews before being settled in Aberdeen where he remained until his death.

⁶⁷ *Register of the Minister, Elders, and Deacons of St. Andrews, 1559-1600*, Vol. 1, pp. 3-10. The entry before the “band” is dated 22nd November 1559 and that following is dated 3rd February 1559/60. Thus the “band” was taken in this interval. Among the signatories to the “band” were the Aberdonians John Brabaner and Thomas Branche. Branche was resident in Aberdeen on 26th January 1558/9 when he and four others refused to act as taxtars for a tax appointed by Mary of Guise (one of the other objectors was Gilbert Collison, who seems to have had Roman Catholic sympathies, so probably there was nothing distinctly Protestant in their refusal). Branche had returned to Aberdeen by 5th February 1559/60, MS Aberdeen Council Register, Vol. xxiii, pp. 274, 276. Presumably he had gone to St. Andrews to support the Congregation at a critical time. For John Brabaner, see Section VII below.

⁶⁸ Hay Fleming, *Scottish Reformation*, p. 32; J. H. Baxter, *Dundee and the Reformation* (Abertay Historical Society, 1960), p. 25. Paul Methven (d. 1606) was minister in Dundee before the Reformation and in Jedburgh after 1560. In 1563 he was deposed for adultery. He subsequently moved to England.

⁶⁹ Stevenson (ed.), *Calendar of Stote Papers, Foreign, Elizabeth, 1559-60*, No. 392; Dickinson, *John Knox’s History*, Vol. 1, pp. 275-6. Knox’s reference to the contract at Berwick probably deterred a number of writers from inquiring whether this reply of the Congregation had survived. In point of fact, the reply differs substantially from the contract at Berwick.

The reply of the Congregation is lengthy but the part that concerns us describes the towns which had declared support for the Congregation. It lists Linlithgow, Jedburgh, Glasgow, Dumfries, Lanark, Ayr, Irvine, Dumbarton, Stirling, Kirkcaldy, Kinghorn, Dysart, Pittenweem, Anstruther, Crail, St. Andrews, Cupar, Dunfermline, Perth, Dundee, Brechin, and Montrose; and then says that, in addition, "the town of Aberdeen has, by their baillies, lately suited our preachers, and obtained them; so that now there is two of our ministers, Paul Methven and Adam Heriot, travailing with them in the Evangel. They have already reformed their kirks, destroyed their altars, promised the destruction and abolition of the dens of idolatry, and quickly to join themselves with us."⁷⁰ The main points to note are that the baillies had taken the first steps; that Paul Methven and Adam Heriot were already in Aberdeen and had been there for some time; that the burgh was close to joining the Congregation; that the kirks (i.e., presumably St. Nicholas and the burgh chapels) had already been reformed; and that the baillies were seeking to overthrow the friaries but had not yet accomplished this. Doubtless Methven and Heriot were exhorting them to this work.⁷¹ Thus the reformation was under way in Aberdeen but was not as advanced as in the other towns that they listed. It is probably also significant that the reply refers to the baillies but not to the Provost of Aberdeen. As we shall see, the Provost was no longer acting in concert with the baillies and he does not appear to have favoured the Congregation's preachers.

The situation of the Congregation in December 1559 was anomalous. On the one hand they had been driven out of Edinburgh with taunts, and the French troops in Leith were increasingly powerful and were evidently too well-trained for any Scottish army to match them.

⁷⁰ Stevenson (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign, Elizabeth, 1559-60*, p. 226. The reply was drawn up on 24th December and sent from Kinghorn on 28th December. The document comes at a point when there is a dearth of information from the Protestant side. Knox devotes only a paragraph to the end of December (Dickinson, *John Knox's History*, Vol. 1, pp. 275-6) while the entries in the *Diurnal* move from October to 24th December to 11th January, T. Thomson (ed.), *A Diurnal of Remarkable Occurrents that have Passed within the Country of Scotland* (Maitland Club, Edinburgh, 1833), pp. 55, 272. Remarkably few writers seem to have been aware of the reply since it was first published in 1865. Other than James Kirk, the only authors that we have noticed who have shown knowledge of it are Hay Fleming, *Scottish Reformation*, pp. 76-7, and Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation*, p. 189 (who refers to it but rather brushes it aside).

⁷¹ Robert Lindsay of Pitcottie records that Methven sought the reformation of churches wherever he went: he caused the "imagis thair of [Lundie and Cupar] to be cassin doune and abolisched the popis reliegieoun sa far as he passit or preichit for the tyme", *Historie and Cronicles of Scotland* (3 vols., Scottish Text Society, Edinburgh, 1899-1911), Vol. 2, p. 137.

By the end of December the French had sent a force out of Leith which had re-captured Stirling and was intending to advance towards St. Andrews. The position of the Congregation looked dire unless help were to come from England. In fact, help from England was already on its way but the Congregation did not know this.

On the other hand, in the east of the country the Council of the Congregation was more or less governing Fife, Stirlingshire, much of Perthshire, Angus, and the Mearns, and was starting to receive support from Aberdeen. On 10th December, Maitland of Lethington was able to assure the English Privy Council that all the ports between Aberdeen and Stirling were friendly to the Congregation. On Thursday 14th December, the Council, meeting in Dundee, issued a proclamation prohibiting the sitting of the consistory court of "Antichrist" in Brechin. On 20th December, Arran and Hamilton, the leaders of the Council, reported to Cecil that "the Council at St. Andrews has been and taken order with the Fife barons, etc. at Cupar, and Angus, Mearns, and Strathearn also. Our letters through the country are duly obeyed, and we have put union between gentlemen at variance."⁷²

It was presumably at this meeting of the Council and the Mearns barons, apparently sometime between 14th and 20th December, that the decision was taken to send a reforming party to Aberdeen. Probably the Aberdeen baillies had concluded that it would be difficult to suppress the friaries unaided and had therefore sought help.⁷³ The date of Friday 29th December had been fixed for the attempt, but obviously no mention of this would be made in the reply of 24th December to the English Privy Council lest it should fall into the wrong hands.

To the visit of this reforming party to Aberdeen, we now turn. We have seen that by the time they visited Aberdeen, the burgh had already been partly reformed for about two months. Nevertheless, the

⁷² Stevenson (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign, Elizabeth, 1559-60*, No. 392; Alexander Petrie, *Compendious History of the Catholick Church* (2 parts, Hague, 1662), Part 2, pp. 215-6; Keith, *History of the Affairs of Church and State in Scotland*, Vol. 1, pp. 247-8; Bain (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Mary Queen of Scots*, Vol. 1, No. 597.

⁷³ One issue, possibly, was that while the burgesses of Aberdeen were under the jurisdiction of the magistrates, and would therefore be comparatively immune to prosecution, the non-burgesses were under the jurisdiction of Huntly and his Sheriff-Depute and might therefore be vulnerable if they ventured anything against the friaries; see P. J. Anderson (ed.), *Charters and Other Writs Illustrating the History of the Royal Burgh of Aberdeen* (Aberdeen, 1890), pp. 41-3; *Records of the Sheriff Court of Aberdeen*, Vol. 1, p. 421. The men of the Mearns would be secure in this respect. The main difficulty, however, was the opposition of Thomas Menzies.

destruction of the friaries in January gives considerable further insight into the state of religion in the town.

III. The men of the Mearns: 29th December 1559

At this stage of the paper, we become particularly dependent on the Aberdeen Council register; and, since it is describing disputes within the Council, the question of its impartiality confronts us. The Clerk at the time was John Kennedy (d. 1589), a central figure in the administration of the burgh, who held numerous public positions. He was a prominent lawyer, the acting Town Clerk from the 1550s through to his death, a chaplain of St. Nicholas, the Clerk of the Diocese, and the Master of St. Thomas' Hospital for the poor. He made the transition from Romanism to Protestantism but when, and to what extent, is hard to determine. He remained on friendly terms with resolute Roman Catholics such as Principal Alexander Anderson of King's College and Bishop William Gordon, but was equally friendly with Protestant ministers such as Adam Heriot and Peter Blackburn. He was summoned before the Privy Council in 1569, possibly as a suspected Roman Catholic sympathizer, and his prayers in the margin of the Burgh register, even as late as the 1580s, are said to be "Catholic in tone".⁷⁴ Any bias in the Council register, therefore, would tend to be against the party which supported the Congregation; but we have not noticed anything suspicious and we take the record at face value.

The first direct information that we have about the raid is the announcement made by Provost Thomas Menzies to the Aberdeen Council on Friday 29th December that "certain neighbours of the Mearns men and Angus men" were intending to visit Aberdeen that day "to destroy and cast down the kirks and religious places thereof, under colour and pretence of godly reformation":

The said day, the whole town being warned etc, it was openly expounded and declared to them by Thomas Menzies, their provost, how he is surely advertised that certain neighbours of the Mearns men and Angus men, convened in congregation, are to be in this town this present day to destroy and cast down the kirks and religious places thereof, under colour and pretence of godly reformation; and because this town has no direction of the

⁷⁴ *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, Vol. 1 (A.D. 1545-1569), p. 619; White, "Religion, Politics and society in Aberdeen", p. 2.

authority of Scotland to assist and concur with them in that purpose, but the same is express contrary [to] the will and mind of the authority, and therefore is manifest treason, the said provost inquired the baillies and whole [. . .] what would be their part therein, and if they would concur with him and his assistars for resisting thereof, so that afterward this town ought incur no indignation of the authority, nor be reputed culpable and participant of the said crime, and protested solemnly if they would not concur with him and his adherents to the effect foresaid, that the accusation and participation of the said crime come on them who will not assist to him. Upon the which advertisement, requisition, and protestation the said Thomas Menzies, provost, took act of court and instrument, in presence of the whole town; and, in the meantime, these persons following, Gilbert Menzies elder, Gilbert Menzies younger, Master Thomas Menzies, Gilbert Collison, Master George Middleton, Walter Cullen elder, Alexander Chalmer, Andrew Leslie, and Andrew Buk adhered to the said protestation, and protested each for themselves, in similar manner, and took acts and instruments respective thereupon.⁷⁵

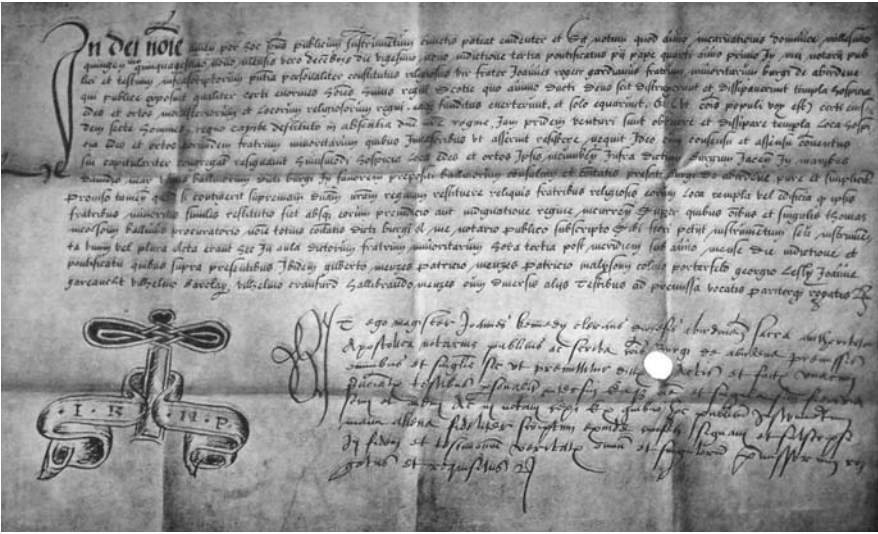
There is no other entry in the register for this day. By “the authority”, Menzies presumably meant the Queen Regent. The fact that he had been active in the “manifest treason” of deposing her from the regency a couple of months earlier is something on which he had now turned his back.

In the event, the men from Angus and the Mearns did not arrive that day, probably on account of bad weather. It is known that deep snow fell further south at the end of December, and the severe weather continued into January.⁷⁶ The visit thus had to be postponed, but one consequence of Menzies’ warning was that the same day, at three o’clock in the afternoon, the Grey Friars resigned all their buildings into the possession of the burgh. Curiously, or perhaps shrewdly, they particularly named David Mar as the person to whom the care of these buildings was entrusted. The instrument of resignation recounts that

certain infamous men of this kingdom of Scotland, prompted by God knows what design, [had] destroyed and scattered the

⁷⁵ *ABR 1398-1570*, pp. 325-6.

⁷⁶ Petrie, *Compendious History of the Catholick Church*, Part 2, p. 216.

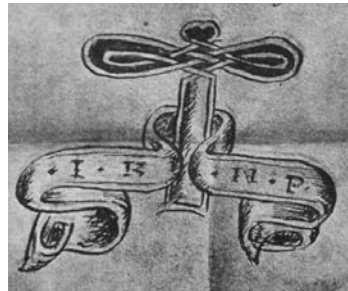


The instrument of resignation by the Grey Friars on 29th December 1559 in the handwriting of the notary and burgh clerk, John Kennedy.

churches, hospitals, buildings and yards of the monasteries and holy places of the kingdom . . . and how (as common report has it) certain men of the same persuasion . . . were about to overturn and scatter the churches, places, hospitals, buildings and yards of the same Minorite Friars, which intruders . . . it was impossible to resist (resistere nequit).⁷⁷

Detail of John Kennedy's notarial device.

The alacrity with which the Grey Friars surrendered their buildings to the burgh, even in the absence of the reforming party, shows that they had not heard about the threat before, which, in turn, shows that Menzies had not heard about it either; for otherwise he would presumably have given the friaries better warning. It is apparent, then, that Menzies



⁷⁷ *Aberdeen Charters*, pp. 332-4, Latin original with a translation. A silver chain (see overleaf), thought possibly to have been hidden for safety at this time in the Grey friary, was rediscovered under the flooring of the Marischal College Library in 1735, see J. A. Smith, "Notice of a silver chain or girdle, the property of Thomas Simson, of Blainslie, Esq., Berwickshire; another, in the University of Aberdeen; and of other ancient Scottish silver chains", *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, Vol. 10 (1872-4), pp. 321-347.



*Silver chain found in Marischal College
in 1735, possibly hidden at the time
of the Reformation.*

[University of Aberdeen]

had entirely ceased to act with the leaders of the Congregation by this stage. Probably he was alarmed at the various setbacks that the Congregation had received, and at the failure of Huntly to join them; and one detects also, in his comments below (Section V), a distaste for the preaching of Methven and Heriot. Their sort of reformation was too extreme for him.⁷⁸

It is noteworthy that Thomas Menzies expressly asked the baillies and the town to help him in resisting the Angus and Mearns men. This is a point that will come up when we discuss the baillies' counter-protest of 8th January, below. The most significant thing, however, about Menzies' "advertisement, requisition, and protestation", is that it was a *protest*. He and his "assistars"

were in the minority; they had not found sufficient support for their proposal of resisting the Angus and Mearns men; and they had to content themselves with recording their opposition to what now appeared inevitable. The majority of the burgesses present were not prepared to resist the reforming party, and nor did they even wish to record their opposition to them.⁷⁹ In other words, they supported the

⁷⁸ Bishop Ridley relates the dislike that some notionally Protestant English courtiers had for certain evangelical preachers a few years earlier under Edward VI: "As for Latimer, Lever, Bradford, and Knox, their tongues were so sharp, they ripped so deep in their galled backs, to have purged them, no doubt of that filthy matter, that was festered in their hearts, of insatiable covetousness, of filthy carnality and voluptuousness, of intolerable ambition and pride, of ungodly loathsomeness to hear poor men's causes, and to hear God's word, that these men, of all other, these magistrates then could never abide", H. Christmas (ed.), *Works of Nicholas Ridley* (Parker Society, Cambridge, 1843), p. 59.

⁷⁹ The Council was divided down the middle: Thomas Menzies and seven councillors on the one side and the four baillies and four councillors on the other side, White, "Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen", p. 156. That the decision went against Menzies shows that a considerable number of other people must have been present, all but two of whom supported the destruction of the friaries.

reforming party and favoured the forthcoming destruction of the friaries. This obvious point has not been given the weight that it deserves by most writers on the reformation in Aberdeen.⁸⁰

The fact that the majority of the burgesses present were of this mind confirms how misleading it is to regard Aberdeen as "largely Catholic" at this stage of the Reformation.⁸¹ Had Aberdeen been largely Roman Catholic, and had Menzies and his "assistars" been zealous Roman Catholics, then even without the support of the rest of the Council they could have armed a formidable band of Aberdonian co-religionists with dirks and cudgels and fortified the friaries, determining to resist the reformers "to the effusion of blood". This was what Principal Anderson and Leslie of Balquhain did successfully, and relatively easily, in Old Aberdeen and there is no reason why the same could not have been done in New Aberdeen.⁸² The raid had initially been kept secret to have the advantage of surprise, but even with six days' warning, no effort was made to defend the friaries. Instead, Menzies and his friends declared the sacking of the friaries "impossible to resist" and departed into the countryside, abandoning them to their fate.⁸³ Probably they

⁸⁰ Lynch notes that Menzies was in the minority on this occasion but attributes the circumstance to "friction" and "internal disagreements" within the Aberdeen burgh establishment. He denies that the occasion marked "the emergence of an avowedly Protestant party in a burgh which remained overwhelmingly Catholic in its sympathies", M. Lynch, "From privy kirk to burgh church: an alternative view of the process of Protestanisation", in N. Macdougall (ed.), *Church, Politics and Society: Scotland, 1408-1929* (Edinburgh, 1983), pp. 83-96 (see p. 88).

⁸¹ Michael Lynch speaks of the "undilutedly catholic town council" of Aberdeen, *Edinburgh and the Reformation*, p. 28, and "the largely Catholic burgh of Aberdeen" (just after the Treaty of Berwick in February 1560), *Scotland, A New History* (London, 1991), p. 197. Catherine McMillan says that "previous studies have confirmed that Aberdeen as a community was staunchly Catholic before the Reformation", "Aberdeen and the Reformation: Implementation and Interpretation of Reform", p. 10.

⁸² When Alexander Forbes of Brux attacked the town in July 1530, the citizens "took arms and repelled the invaders, driving them to the Greyfriars place, where they were besieged for twenty-four hours. A servant of the laird of Brux and some of the citizens were killed, and a good many on both sides were wounded," *ABR 1398-1570*, p. xxxvii; Munro, *Aldermen*, pp. 92-3. In September 1543, the inhabitants of Edinburgh defended the Black friary when Arran's captains and soldiers were intending to sack it: "the hole towne, both men and women, being assembled together with the rynging of the comen bell, defended the freers, and expulsed the saide capitaynes out of the towne," Joseph Bain (ed.), *The Hamilton Papers* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1890-2), Vol. 2, p. 15; W. Moir Bryce, "The Black Friars of Edinburgh", *Book of the Old Edinburgh Club*, Vol. 3 (1910), pp. 13-104 (especially pp. 57-8).

⁸³ Father Power's judgment on Menzies' conduct is worth quoting. It may not be accurate in all points but it has the merit of expressing a consistently Roman Catholic point of view: "Thomas Menzies, Provost of Aberdeen, the mealy-mouthed Anglo-Scottish

could see that the other members of the Council were so far from wishing to defend the friaries that they were determined to destroy them. The conduct of Menzies and his friends corroborates the evidence already seen that Roman Catholicism did not have anything like the dominance in New Aberdeen that is frequently claimed.

Indeed it seems to be jumping to conclusions even to assume that Menzies and his supporters were motivated by Roman Catholic sympathies in their opposition to the Mearns men.⁸⁴ Some of them may have favoured Romanism and wanted the friaries to continue, but there were other reasons for disliking or fearing the assault by the Congregation. New Aberdeen, for instance, was their sphere of influence and they had a natural jealousy of any intrusion by their neighbours, especially one of such a violent nature. Some may have been anxious about the consequences for the future if the Queen Regent were to defeat the Congregation; others may have thought that the valuable friary buildings should be preserved, and may have had financial interests connected with the friaries; others perhaps were happy for the friaries to be taken down, but wanted this done in an orderly fashion and by settled authority, or wanted a delay so that they could get a better share of the loot; and others again may have been concerned about the reaction of the Earl of Huntly. It should be remembered that most or all of them had already acquiesced in the introduction of reformed worship in Aberdeen and there is no indication that any of them were trying to reverse this.

One of Menzies' "assistars" who seems not to have had religious objections to the spoiling of monasteries was Andrew Buk, whose wife Matilda was a daughter of Thomas Menzies. In June 1560, Buk and Patrick Dunbar, the sheriff of Moray, together with Dunbar's son, broke

trafficker with England's friends and Scotland's foes, the consummate hypocrite who denounced the threatened invasion of his town by the Reformers he was hand and glove with, then, on the 29th December 1559, gave the rebels safe conduct and sure guidance, in full view of his own estates, over the Blue Hill, across the Auld Brig o' Dee, already denuded of its Madonna chapel, down the Hardgate and Windmill Brae, across Bow Brig, up Back Wynd Stairs (once part of the present Back Wynd), until they reached their objective of S. Nicholas and began the work, which Menzies and Huntly could have stopped at a word, of tearing down the costly leaden roof for sale in the Flemish markets," Matthew. A. Power (S.J.), *The Protomartyr of Scotland, Father Francis of Aberdeen: a glimpse of the Scottish Reformation, 1559* (Aberdeen, [1914]), pp. 36-7.

⁸⁴ Bruce McLennan lists Thomas Menzies and his "assistars" as among the "Catholic recusants in the Synod of Aberdeen, 1560-1650" simply on the basis that they opposed the destruction of the friaries by the Mearns men, "Presbyterianism Challenged: A Study of Catholicism and Episcopacy in the North East of Scotland, 1560-1650" (PhD thesis, 2 vols., University of Aberdeen, 1977), Vol. 2, Appendix II, pp. 31ff.

into the church and domestic buildings of the Cistercian Abbey at Kinloss and carried off "bellis, hersis, pillararis, standing chanlaris, lettronis and other brazen work" as well as several lasts of salmon. The following November they returned to take away grain and other goods which had been stored in the granaries since the previous harvest.⁸⁵ If Buk did have Roman Catholic sympathies then these attacks might possibly have been "religiously aggravated" in that the Abbot, Walter Reid, was with the Congregation in Leith on 10th May 1560 to ratify the Treaty of Berwick and was well on the way to conforming to Protestantism. Most of the Kinloss monks seem to have conformed with him. There were at least thirteen monks in October 1559, and there was still a "community" of nine in April 1565.⁸⁶

Andrew Buk was of a martial spirit and he certainly could have put up a vigorous defence of the friaries if he had wanted to. He was a ship owner and captain and had at least twice been captured by the English. In December 1546 he had been imprisoned in Hull but "by his crafty subtily" he had broken the prison and escaped. His ship was held a second time in July 1557. He was frequently placed in charge of the burgh's artillery. He conformed to Protestantism and in September 1573 and again in October 1578 he was a member of the St. Nicholas Kirk Session. He died possibly in November 1578.⁸⁷

In summary, therefore, rather than thinking of the Aberdeen Council as being divided into Roman Catholic and Protestant parties, it is more realistic to think of it as being composed mainly of notional

⁸⁵ M. H. B. Sanderson, *Scottish Rural Society in the Sixteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1982), p. 73.

⁸⁶ Laing, *Works of Knox*, Vol. 2, p. 53; J. Stuart, *Records of the Monastery of Kinloss* (Edinburgh, 1872), pp. 151-4. Walter Reid married after the Reformation (*ibid.*, p. lvi). The reformation at Kinloss seemed to have mirrored that at the fellow-Cistercian Abbey of Coupar Angus where the abbot and monks abandoned their habits and the mass, reformed the Abbey themselves, and set up a "non-religious legal corporation", Bardgett, *Scotland Reformed: the Reformation in Angus and the Mearns*, p. 73; J. E. A. Dawson, *The Politics of Religion in the Age of Mary, Queen of Scots* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 90-1; McRoberts, *Essays on the Scottish Reformation, 1513-1625*, pp. 432-3; M. Dilworth, "Scottish Cistercian monasteries and the Reformation", *Innes Review*, Vol. 48 (1997), pp. 144-164.

⁸⁷ *ABR 1398-1570*, pp. 254, 257, 269, 283, 305, 344; NRS CH2/448/1/25, 139; "The Summons against the Magistrates of Aberdeen" gives the date of Buk's death as November 1577, *Spalding Miscellany*, Vol. 3, p. 156. He was alive, however, on 22nd September 1578 (*Aberdeen Charters*, p. 336), and was a member of the Kirk Session in October (Walter Cullen mentions him as being inaugurated on 12th October 1578, *Spalding Miscellany*, Vol. 2, p. 51). Possibly the "Summons" was wrong by a year, perhaps through a copying error. For more on Andrew Buk, see White, "Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen", pp. 29, 266.

Protestants (some zealous, some nominal, and some presumably with strong Roman Catholic leanings⁸⁸) faced with the practicalities of the nature and extent of the reformation. In particular, there were the important questions of how the property, the money, and the power were to be divided. In this respect, Aberdeen in January 1559/60 presented a microcosm of the whole of Scotland over the next few years.

IV. The assault and its aftermath: 4th-8th January 1559/60

On Thursday 4th January, the men of the Mearns arrived and, with the help of certain Aberdonians, destroyed the Dominican and Carmelite friaries. They also tried to reform King's College and St. Machar's cathedral but in these attempts they were unsuccessful. We have described the events of 4th January in detail elsewhere.⁸⁹ While the buildings of the Black Friars and White Friars were being dismantled, David Mar summoned the burgesses to a meeting of the Baillie Court and

inquired [of] the town if they thought it expedient to preserve the said timber, slates, and stones, and the same to be intromitted and applied to the common works of the town, for the common weil and utility thereof, together with the crofts, lands, and emoluments that belong [to] the said friars, and the profits thereof to be applied to the common weil of the town, and specially for the forth-setting of God's glory, and his true word and preachers thereof, and that the town may be more able to concur and assist for the defence of the liberty of the realm, expelling of strangers, and suppressing of idolatry, and concluded what they thought expedient to be done hereuntil. Which all in one voice, that were present, except Gilbert Collison, consented and assented that the said David Mar, baillie and treasurer of the town, should intromit with the said slates, timber, and stones, in name and behalf of the town, and suchlike to intromit, eir [plough], labour, and occupy the crofts that belonged [to] the said friars, or set the same to labourers in tack and assedation in the town's name, and the whole profits of the same to be applied in the town's uses, for the common weil

⁸⁸ Spottiswoode says that there were "divers addicted to the Roman profession" in Aberdeen, though he was perhaps thinking especially of Old Aberdeen, *History of the Church of Scotland*, Vol. 2, pp. 197-8.

⁸⁹ D. W. B. Somerset, "The reforming of the Aberdeen friaries on 4th January 1559/60", *Scottish Reformation Society Historical Journal*, Vol. 4 (2014), pp. 63-95.

thereof, forth setting of God's glory, and maintaining of his word and defence of the liberty of the realm; and that no particular person nor persons be suffered to intromit with the same, nor no part thereof, furtherforth; and ordains public proclamations to be made openly at the mercat cross hereupon as effeirs [in due form], and obliges them to relieve the said David Mar of all danger and damage that may follow hereupon.⁹⁰

With the reforming operations well under way, the question had arisen – which could not formally have been settled before – of what was to happen to the materials and lands of the friaries. Mar's proposal, which met at first with almost unanimous support, but which was soon to encounter determined opposition, was that the money should go to the town, to the gospel, and to the support of the Congregation ("defence of the liberty of the realm"). This strikes one as the natural Protestant solution to the problem, and it is interesting that it commanded near universal agreement at that stage.⁹¹

Following the visit of the Mearns men, the next information that we have of the progress of the reformation in Aberdeen is the Head Court meeting of Monday 8th January. The Head Court confirmed the decision of the Baillie Court four days earlier and appointed four men to oversee the dismantling of the friary buildings.

The sayd day, David Mar, balze and thesaurar of this gud toun, eleckyt for this instant yeir, exponit to the haill toune opynlie in judgement, quhow thai obefor thocht expedient, and devysit that

⁹⁰ *ABR 1398-1570*, pp. 314-5. The MS entry in the Aberdeen Council register is in more elegant handwriting than usual (presumably just Kennedy writing in a neater hand) and at the end it says, in Latin: "extracted from the book of the acts of the Baillie Court of the Burgh of Aberdeen by me, the same scribe underwritten." The rest of the page is blank. It seems, therefore, that a separate Baillie Court register was kept but that the clerk did not always use it; indeed numerous Baillie Court entries are found in the main register. On this occasion he used the Baillie Court register at the meeting of 4th January and the next time he used the main register (8th January) he left a space for this important extract, which, however, was shorter than he was expecting. MS Aberdeen Council Register, Vol. xxiii, pp. 253-4.

⁹¹ White ("The impact of the Reformation on a Burgh Community", p. 87) observes the similarity between Mar's speech and parts of the Protestant band which had been signed at Edinburgh and St. Andrews: "... for maynteyning of the trew religioun of Christe, and downe putting of all superstitioun and idolatrie . . . setting fordward the glorie of God . . . and maynteyn and sett up the trew religioun of Christe, his Word and sacraments, and alswa assist and defend the trew ministeris therof," *Register of the Minister, Elders, and Deacons of St. Andrews, 1559-1600*, Vol. 1, p. 7.

the sklayttis, tymmir, and stanis of the blak freirs and quhit freirs that ar in place onspoulzet, suld be intromettit wiht be him, and applyit to the commound warkis of the toune, upoun the quhilks he culd nocht continewally await, quharthrow thair wald inlayk mekill thairof, without diligent attendance war takin thairto, and requyrit the toune to cheis four personis to awayt on the doun taking and keyping of the samen on the townis expensiss, quhilt thai all thocht expedient to be done; and alsua ordanit the said thesaurer to intromett with the croftis and howsiss belangand to the saids freirs, and apply the mailis and profyttis thairof in the use of the toun, for the commound weyll thairof.⁹²

Against this decision a number of people dissented on the ground that the dismantling of the friaries was illegal.

The said day, Gilbert Menzes, youngar, procurator for Thomas Menzes of Petfodellis, prouest of this gud toune, his father, and for himself, Gilbert Menzes eldar, Maister Thomas Menzes, Gilbert Collinsone, Alexr. Chawmer, and Symon Burnat, dissentit to the doun taking of the said religious places, and applying of ony part in the townis effeyrs, becaus the same is contrar the mynd of the autorite and manifest tressoune; and protestit for tham selffis and their adherentis, that quhat dangeir and damage cumis their throw on this burght and inhabitants thairof, that thai be saythles and mair no preiudice, bot that the committaris of the cryme ansuer for the deid.⁹³

To this dissent the baillies made a counter-protest.

The said day, the ballies protestit in jugement that the protestatioune aboune wrytin be of na effect nor valor, becaus the saids personis maid no resistance at the beginning, nor requyrit the ballies to concur with thaim for resisting, and protestit gif ony accusatioune cumis for the distroing of ony kirk or place in tym cuming, that all thai quhom thai ma proff to haf intromettit wiht ony part tharof be accusabill for the same, and ansuer thairfor as

⁹² *ABR 1398-1570*, p. 316. The entry for this day in the MS Aberdeen Council Register has a curious feature. Attendance at Head Courts was notionally compulsory, and the record usually began with a list of those who were absent in order that they might be fined. On this occasion a blank space is left for the list (Vol. xxiii, p. 255). Presumably the clerk was not sure what to do about the absence of the Provost.

⁹³ *ABR 1398-1570*, p. 316.

participant thairof, nochtwithstanding ony protestatioun maid be thaim in the contrar, be ressoun the provest is principall of the toun, and maid no resistens, not yit did requyr thaim to concur with hym thairto as thai allegit.⁹⁴

The counter-protest raises a couple of points of interest. The first is the implied allegation by the baillies that some of the dissenters had themselves "intromitted" – perhaps through their servants – with spoil from the friaries. This, if true, would indicate that their dissent was insincere and was largely a matter of appearance to protect them from future trouble. We suggested above that this might have been a motive for some members of Thomas Menzies' party.

The second point is the disagreement between the baillies and the dissenters over whether the Provost had required them to resist the men of the Mearns. The dissenters do not state this formally in their dissent, but from the baillies' reply they had evidently been arguing that the Provost's protest of 29th December did amount to a command to resist. The baillies, on the other hand, were maintaining that the Provost, given that he knew that the reforming party was on its way, should have been present, either in person or through a procurator, to resist the reforming party, if that indeed was what he wanted. His deliberate absence amounted to an acquiescence in what had happened; and if he was absent himself, then it was hardly reasonable to expect others to run the hazard of withstanding the reforming party. How could they "concur with him" if he was not present? As the baillies had almost certainly invited the reforming party, one would think that there was an element of "Scottish humour" in their reply.

At the same meeting, it was decided that the silver work from St. Nicholas and the chapels, presently in the keeping of four men, should be restored to the town at the forthcoming Guild Court meeting on Friday 12th, in order "to be applyit in the uses of the toun, for the commound weill thairof". From this decision, and indeed from all decisions, Gilbert Menzies, younger, and his followers again dissented on the ground that the absence of the Provost rendered the meeting "null and of nane avail". To this the baillies responded that their protestation was "null and of na valor" because it was the appointed day of the Head Court and the Provost ought to have been present,

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 316-7.

and furthermore had been present in the town earlier in the day and had departed.⁹⁵

Two further significant decisions were taken. The first was to dismiss the singers of the choir at St. Nicholas and to pay them their due up to Martinmas:

The said day the haill toune being present in the heid court dischargit the singars thair fealis [fees] of the quier of the proche kirk fra this day furth for certain considerations mowing thaim and ordainit the thesaurar to asuer [pay] tham of thair fees of the m'tmis [Martinmas] termes last by past because thai had servyt quhile the said terme.⁹⁶

This payment is further evidence that reformed worship had been introduced the previous October or November. For many purposes, the financial and legal year in Scotland was divided into two “terms”, ending at Martinmas (11th November) and Whitsun (15th May) respectively. Presumably the singers usually received their annual fees at Whitsun, but their services having lapsed by Martinmas, they were now to be paid and formally dismissed.⁹⁷ From this decision there was no dissent, which shows that Protestant worship was not the point at issue between the two parties.

The second decision was to support the preachers at the town’s expense.

The said day the haill toune ordains that the tounis precheours to haiff thair honest living and sustentatione on the expenss of the toune of the redraft of ye tounis commound gud or quhatsouther casualties [i.e. fines or other incidental payments] belangand to the toune.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ MS Aberdeen Council Register, Vol. xxiii, p. 257.

⁹⁶ MS Aberdeen Council Register, Vol. xxiii, p. 258. In Ayr, the chaplains and the choristers were one and the same, see Sanderson, *Ayr and the Reformation*, p. 91; but in Aberdeen, while all chaplains were choristers, not all choristers were chaplains, *ABR 1398-1570*, pp. 254, 291, 301, 306, 314.

⁹⁷ The burgh treasurer’s discharge for 1559-60 has an entry headed “To the cheplanis of the Sanct Nicolace kirk”. Payments are then listed to five chaplains and to four other persons, one of whom, Richard Reid, had been appointed a singer in the choir on 8th October 1558. The other three non-chaplains were presumably singers as well, and the payment to the first of them, Alexander Anderson, specifies “for Martimes”, a qualification which appears to cover the payments to all four of them, *Spalding Miscellany*, Vol. 5, p. 112; *ABR 1398-1570*, p. 314.

⁹⁸ MS Aberdeen Council Register, Vol. xxiii, p. 258.

Presumably the preachers had been privately supported up to this time. This decision, too, was unopposed, though it was to be vigorously opposed by Thomas Menzies a few days later.

V. The aftermath: 12th January 1559/60

The Guild Court duly met on Friday 12th January to receive the silver work belonging to St. Nicholas and the chapels.⁹⁹ The men in whose care this was, however – Gilbert Menzies elder (the Provost's brother), Gilbert Collison, Mr. George Middleton, and Gilbert Malison – stated that they had received it from the Council rather than from the Guild Court and that it was to the Council that they would return it. A Council meeting for this purpose was appointed for the next day.¹⁰⁰

On the same day, 12th January, there was also a Council meeting, at which Thomas Menzies at last appeared. In his speech, he sought to undo several of the decisions of the previous meeting of 8th January.

The said day, Thomas Menzes, prowest, exponit opinlie in jugement, in presens of the hail toune, quhow in their last heid court, haldin the viij day of Januar instant, he being absent of the toune excersing his lesum bessenes, quhilk necessite of tym requyrit him to do, the baillies and maist part of the toune hes maid certane public ordinances contrar the commound weill of this burght, and repugnand to the will of the autorite, specialy anent the dvune taking of the religiows places, and applying of the sklayttis, tymmir, and stanis thairof in the commound usis of the toune, and siclik to bestow and employ the townis commound guid on the sustentatioun of certane preachers; quhilkis ordinances, as he allegit, ar direct contrar the commound weill of this guid toune, and contraries to the will of the autorite: first, in respect that the beginning of the said distructioun and dissipatioun of the saidis places wes done by certane particular personis, sum extranears

⁹⁹ On 10th January, one of the Grey Friars, Alexander Gray, died at the house of his brother and was buried in his habit in St. Nicholas kirk before the altar of St. Katherine, see Moir Bryce, *Scottish Grey Friars*, Vol. 2, p. 286. Judging by his name (Dominus Johannes Gray, i.e. Sir John Gray), his brother was probably a chaplain of St. Nicholas. One wonders whether a mass was said in St. Nicholas on this occasion. The circumstances must have tested the Protestant resolve of the baillies. With the possible exception of such occasions, it would appear that public masses were effectively abolished in New Aberdeen by the end of December 1559.

¹⁰⁰ *ABR 1398-1570*, p. 317.

and sum dwelling within the toune, quharof the hail communitie wes nocht participant, bot for the maist part war innocent and fre of the said cryme; and gyff the baillies and toune wald continew and compleit the distructioun begun by wthers, and employ the residew of the saidis places in the towniss usis, the hail toun vald be reput art and part, and participant of the said crym, and stand wnder the accusatioun of the authorite thairfor, to the gryt hurt, damage, and detriment of this burght, and the puir innocent burgessis thairof; secundlie, the sayds preachers war tollerat be permissioun of the authorite, qhar and quhow thai plesit, quhill the tent day of Januar instant, be ane contract and appunctment maid betuix the quenis grace and the principalis of the congregatioun, eftir the said tent day is disoluit and expyrit, and that the toune aucht nocht to mak expensiss on the sustentatioun of precheours, bot the bischop aucht to mak the same, and find us sufficient precheors quha resauis his duety thairfor, and sua to employ the townis commound gude in sic waiss is contrar the commound weill of the toune, and aucht nocht to be allowit to the auditors of the townis compts; thairfor the said Thomas Menzes, prowest, for himself and his adherentis, dissentit to all distructioun and dissipatioun of the saids kirks and places, and applying of the same or ony part thairof in the uses of the toune, and siclik of employing or bestowing of the townis commound gud or ony part thairof on the saids precheors; and he, as prowest, inhibit Daudid Mar, thesaurar, to deliuer ony money or mak expensiss on the said precheors of the emoluments of the toune; and protestit solemptly that he and his adherentis be noch reput art, part, nor participant of the saidis crymes, nor incur danger, damage, nor skayth thairfor in tym cuming; upoun the quhilks he tuk act and instrument, in presens of the hail toune.¹⁰¹

There are several significant points in this speech. One is that Menzies and his party were no longer disputing the validity of the Head Court of 8th January. Presumably the deliberate absence of several of them, including Menzies, from that meeting was not a subject on which they felt comfortable. The purpose of their absence seems to have been to postpone their intervention until after 10th January, the day on which

¹⁰¹ *ABR 1398-1570*, pp. 318-9.

truce at Leith the previous July notionally expired. As the two parties in the truce were now at open war, one would have thought that its expiry was of little significance, but Menzies was arguing that it was on the strength of this truce that the preachers, whom he clearly did not like, had been admitted to Aberdeen, and that its expiry now rendered their ministry illegal. The obvious conclusion, of course, would have been to dismiss them, but Menzies shrinks from drawing this conclusion, probably knowing that it would not be popular. Instead he adverts to financial considerations – that the burgh was already paying money to the Bishop, who held the parsonage of Aberdeen, and that it was his duty, out of that money, to see that Aberdeen was supplied with a spiritual ministry. Again Menzies shrinks from pressing this argument to its logical limit, simply concluding that the preachers should not be paid by the burgh.

With regard to the friaries, Menzies appeals to “authority”, i.e. to the Queen Regent, and to the future well-being of the town. If the town were to complete the destruction of the friaries and to devote the money obtained from them to the common good then it would make itself a party to what in the Queen Regent’s eyes was the crime of destroying these friaries. He does not at this stage suggest any alternative future for the friaries.

With Menzies’ dissent, a number of people associated themselves:

The same day, Gilbert Menzes youngar, Gilbert Menzes elder, Gilbert Collysoune, Maister George Myddiltoune, Maister Thomas Menzes, Alexr. Chalvmer, Androw Lesly, Andrew Buk, Patre Lesly, Androw Huntar, Daudid Collisoune, Maister James Burnat, Maister Robert Chawmer, and Maister Androw Mathow, and Walter Cullan elder, allegit thaimselfs, for the maist part, was absent fra the last heid court doying thair lesum bissenes, and knew nocht of the publict ordinances anent the doun taking of ony kirks or places, and thairfor adherit to the protestatioun maid be the prowest and affermyt the same, protestand in lyk maneyr for thaimselfs particularly; on the quhilks thais and ilka of thaim tuk act and instrument, in presens of the hail toune.¹⁰²

¹⁰² *ABR 1398-1570*, p. 319. At the same time, Gilbert Menzies younger, George Middleton, and Alexander Chalmer recorded that they were holding certain crofts pertaining to the Black Friars and White Friars and protested that no ordinance should be made by the Council hurtful or prejudicial to their rights.

It seems that Menzies was successful, for the time being, in both his aims. A decision on the future of the friaries was deferred, the subject being taken up again on 23rd January, while the preachers do not appear to have received any payment from the burgh until after the national establishment of the Reformation in August.

How long Methven and Heriot remained in Aberdeen is uncertain. We are not aware of any further references of any sort to Methven until his appointment as minister of Jedburgh in July 1560. It is possible therefore, but rather unlikely, that he remained in Aberdeen for much of this time. The movements of Adam Heriot are also difficult to determine, but it is likely that he remained in Aberdeen at least until the end of April, and probably into May. John Knox was in St. Andrews from December 1559 until April 1560 and was acting as minister of the congregation during that time.¹⁰³ He returned to Edinburgh about 23rd April but there was a minister in St. Andrews on 25th April, and again on 2nd May, 4th May, 9th May, 20th June and 16th July.¹⁰⁴ At some stage during this period, Christopher Goodman was acting for Adam Heriot as minister of St. Andrews.¹⁰⁵ Goodman was officially minister of Ayr from the beginning of November 1559 until his appointment to St. Andrews on 19th July 1560.¹⁰⁶ The Ayr Burgh accounts for this period show that he was absent from Ayr on one or more occasions but unfortunately they do not give any dates. The entry which most probably refers to his stay in St. Andrews was when he was “in the north”, and this might well have been the end of April and the beginning of May.¹⁰⁷ We would tentatively suggest, therefore, that Goodman took over from Knox in St. Andrews when the latter returned to Edinburgh, and that

¹⁰³ Laing, *Works of Knox*, Vol. 6, pp. 102-110; *Register of the Minister, Elders, and Deacons of St. Andrews, 1559-1600*, Vol. 1, pp. 18, 22, 25-9 (especially pp. 26-7).

¹⁰⁴ J. D. Marwick (ed.), *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Edinburgh, A.D. 1557-1571* (Edinburgh, 1875), pp. 63-4; *Register of the Minister, Elders, and Deacons of St. Andrews, 1559-1600*, Vol. 1, pp. 32-3, 39, 41-3.

¹⁰⁵ *Register of the Minister, Elders, and Deacons of St. Andrews, 1559-1600*, Vol. 1, p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ Goodman arrived in Scotland in September, was preaching in Edinburgh in mid-to-late October, and was settled in Ayr before 20th November 1559; Laing, *Works of Knox*, Vol. 6, p. 78; Bain (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Mary Queen of Scots*, Vol. 1, Nos. 550, 554; Kirk, *Patterns of Reform*, pp. 105-6; Sanderson, *Ayrshire and the Reformation*, pp. 97-8.

¹⁰⁷ G. S. Pryde (ed.), *Ayr Burgh Accounts, 1534-1624* (Edinburgh, 1937), p. 30. Goodman was on the Isle of Man for ten days in August 1560, and was still regarded as minister of Ayr at this time, so his settlement in St. Andrews cannot have been before September (*ibid.*, pp. 31, 33; Bain (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Mary Queen of Scots*, Vol. 1, No. 891, p. 471). It is possible, therefore, that Heriot remained in St. Andrews until September before finally moving to Aberdeen.

Heriot moved back from Aberdeen to St. Andrews, perhaps in May, after Goodman's departure. Heriot was temporarily replaced in Aberdeen by John Brabaner (see Section VII).

VI. The aftermath: 13th-23rd January 1559/60

The following day, Saturday 13th January, the Council met again to receive the silver work of St. Nicholas and the chapels. There is no record of any discussion and it seems unlikely, given the previous day's meeting, that the pro-Congregation party advanced their



*Skene House, built by Alexander Knowis, senior,
in 1545.*

proposal of selling the silver work for the common good. The decision was simply to appoint new custodians to look after it for the time being.¹⁰⁸ The four new men were Patrick Rutherford, Alexander Knowis, John Lowson, and Gilbert Malison (one of the previous custodians). From the Protestant point of view, it is interesting that none of the men belonged to the Menzies party. Two of them (Rutherford and Lowson) were baillies who had supported the sacking of the friaries, one (Malison) had been present at the meetings of 8th and 12th of January but had not dissented, and the fourth (Knowis) had presumably been present the previous day but had not supported Menzies.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ *ABR 1398-1570*, pp. 319-20.

¹⁰⁹ White on several occasions identifies Knowis (Knowles) as the father of Janet Knowles, the mistress of Bishop William Gordon ("The impact of the Reformation on a Burgh Community", p. 96; "Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen", pp. 178, 204, 295-6), and on another occasion as her brother ("The Reformation in Aberdeen", p. 64). Her father was deceased by 1551, *Illustrations of the Topography and Antiquities of the Shires of*

This suggests that the decision to retain the silver work was now unanimous, and that no great significance attached to the choice of the custodians.

On 15th January, the new custodians took receipt of the silver work. The Council register gives a detailed inventory which had been drawn up the previous June when the silver was originally handed over to the Council. It was only “the maist coistly ornaments” that were included and various other valuables from St. Nicholas were subsequently received by the Council.¹¹⁰

On 23rd January, the Council met once again to discuss the future of the friaries. Probably a letter received from the Earl of Huntly prompted this discussion. With regard to the Grey Friars, the decision was to maintain the building and to place four men in it to prevent pilfering.

The said day, the counsell concludit, all in ane voce, to wphald and menteyne the gray freirs place within this burght, and to suffer no hurt, violence, nor distruction be don thairto, to defend the samen at thair wtter pover fra all distructioun and iniur, of quhatsumeuer persone or personis, and ordanit the thesaurar to produce four honest personis to remane thairin and awayt diligently thairupoun on the townis expenssis, becaus the saids freirs hes resignit all thair tytill and interes of the said place in fauors of the toune, to be wnder thair menteinans and protectioun, on distroyit or castin

Aberdeen and Banff, Vol. 3, pp. 352-3, so presumably the identification of Knowis as her brother is correct; see Edward Meldrum, “Sir George Skene’s House in the Guestrow, Aberdeen – its History and Architecture”, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, Vol. 92 (1958-9), pp. 85-103 (especially p. 100). On the strength of this relationship, White claims Knowis as a Roman Catholic sympathizer; but his lack of support for Menzies shows that this is unlikely. He was elected an elder at the first election in November 1562 and again in 1573 and 1575, *Selections from the Records of the Kirk Session, Presbytery, and Synod of Aberdeen*, p. 3; NRS CH2/448/1/25, 83. He was apparently still alive in March 1587/8, *Aberdeen Council Letters*, Vol. 1, p. 14. In 1545, the father, also called Alexander, built what is now known as Provost Skene’s House. It was later considerably extended, particularly in the seventeenth century.

¹¹⁰ On 7th December 1560, Gilbert Collison handed over various brass and iron candlesticks that were in still his possession, and as late as 16th March 1561/2, the former chaplain of St. Nicholas, Sir William Walcar, gave in a cross, a silver spoon, and other items. By this time, the silver work had been roused, being sold in January 1561/2 to the highest bidder, Patrick Menzies. Gilbert Menzies and Gilbert Collison dissented from the sale. The proceeds went, as David Mar had originally suggested, to the common good; and on 8th May 1562, it was decided that the money should be spent on repairs to the harbour pier and to the Brig of Balgownie, *ABR 1398-1570*, pp. 320, 323, 328-30, 344.

doun; and conforme to the counsellis ordinance, thai gyf ansuer to my Lord Huntlyis missiue bill send to the prowest and baillies.¹¹¹

The exact nature of Huntly's "missive bill" is not clear but presumably it related to the preservation of the Grey Friars buildings. A decision was also taken regarding the buildings and crofts of the Black and the White Friars but unfortunately this decision has not been preserved. It is referred to, however, in the Council minute for 11th March from which we learn that a number of unnamed people dissented. This suggests that the decision was in the direction of dismantling the buildings and applying the money to the common good. At the same meeting of 11th March, Gilbert Menzies elder, Gilbert Menzies younger, Alexander Chalmer, and Mr. George Middleton again recorded their "title and tacks respective to certain crofts pertaining to the saids friars for certain years to run" and protested that no act or ordinance prejudicial to their right should be made by the town. Duncan Forbes of Monymusk, on the other hand, while also claiming title to some of the friars' crofts, and not seeing why private individuals should profit from these, had no objection to their being devoted to the common good.¹¹² The buildings of the Black and White Friars were still in existence on 11th November 1560 but, being unguarded, they were rapidly disappearing.¹¹³

¹¹¹ *ABR 1398-1570*, p. 321. In the event, two Grey Friars, William Lamb and John Geddy, were appointed to take care of the friary, G. Donaldson (ed.), *Accounts of the Collectors of Thirds of Benefices, 1561-1572* (Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1949), pp. 99, 154, 219. The Grey Friars' buildings eventually became the site of Marischal College. Their historic church, where the General Assembly met in 1640, survived for nearly three and a half centuries until March 1903 when, after a long dispute, it was demolished by mutual agreement between the University of Aberdeen, the Town Council, and the Church of Scotland. A new and larger church was built and a grand façade added to Marischal College.

¹¹² *ABR 1398-1570*, p. 323. In 1561 Duncan Forbes was granted a licence by Queen Mary to "intromit with the lands of the Black and White Friars and with the Grey Friars place", Anderson, *Aberdeen Friars, Red, Black, White, Grey*, p. 98.

¹¹³ MS Aberdeen Council Register, Vol. xxiv, p. 47; White, "Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen", p. 163; Foggie, *Dominican Order*, p. 164. The Privy Council referred on 15th February 1561/2 to the "places of freris, as yit undemollissit" in Aberdeen, Elgin, Inverness, and Glasgow. As far as Aberdeen was concerned, the building of the Grey Friars was almost certainly all that was in mind, *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, Vol. 1 (A.D. 1545-1569), p. 202. By March 1565/6, the buildings of the Black and the White Friars had disappeared, *ABR 1398-1570*, p. 359.

VII. The aftermath: March 1559/60-September 1560

Though Protestant worship was, for the time being, established in Aberdeen, there were still some major issues to address. One of these was the settlement and payment of a minister. The legal right to the Church money remained with the pre-Reformation clergy and they were still endeavouring to collect this. Not surprisingly, the reluctance among the people was unabated, and on 23rd February the Council once again had to appoint four officers to assist the chaplains of St. Nicholas in collecting their annual rents.¹¹⁴

Another issue was the permanence of Protestant worship. In part, its future depended on the outcome of the civil war and on Monday 11th March 1559/60 the Council met again to consider the burgh's position regarding the conflict. The decision of 23rd January regarding the Black and White friaries was confirmed, and the Council at last gave formal, if equivocal, support to the Congregation.

The said day, the haill communitie of this guid toune, being warnit to this day, and compeyrand for the maist part, grantit and consentit to support the congregatioun, as the counsell sall think expedient, efferring to thair pussans and faculte [according to their power and status], be sending to thame of certane men of this toune for to stent ane taxatioun to furniss certane men of weir, to be wnder the charge of ane capitane, for defens of the liberty of this realme, and commond weill of this burgh, alwais nocht granting to the said support to interpryss ony purpose aganis the autorite; and thairefter the counsell, being conuenit in the counsell hows, modifyt the said support to the sowme of four hundreth pondis, to be stentit on the haill communitie of this burgh, for furnessing of fourtty men of weir to be send to the congregatioun for defens of the liberte of the realm, provyding, as said is, that it be nocht to interpryis ony porposs contrar the quenis grace and hir autorite, and nemyt Gilbert Malysoun, John Tullideff, Wm. Forbes, Androw Hunter, and Patre Gray, taxtaris, to stent the said taxation.

The said day, Gilbert Collysoune, in special for himself, tuk act and instrument that he dissentit to sending or furnessing of ony

¹¹⁴ *ABR 1398-1570*, p. 322.

support contrar the authorite of Scotland, bot allanerly refusit the same.¹¹⁵

The decision of the Council was evidently a compromise – indeed it seems hardly consistent to send forty men to support the Congregation in their war with the Queen Regent and at the same time to forbid these men “to enterprise anything contrary to the Queen’s grace and her authority”. It is not entirely clear, however, that “the Queen” is the Queen Regent and not Mary Queen of Scots; and it is possible that the Council was following the approach of the Treaty of Berwick in distinguishing between “the French”, against whom they were fighting, and the authority of “their Sovereign Lady the Queen” to whom they were rendering all due obedience. Presumably the pro-Congregation party would have sent more men, and perhaps without any constraint, while the anti-Congregation party would have sent no men at all. But with the exception of Gilbert Collison, they were all content to fall in with this expression of limited support for the Congregation.¹¹⁶ In military terms it amounted to little and would not exhaust the burgh’s finances or endanger many lives, but in political terms it was of considerable significance because it meant that yet another major burgh was forsaking the Queen Regent and siding with the Congregation.

The detachment of forty men, although minute in comparison with the 2,500 men furnished by Kyle and Cunninghame the previous May, was comparable to small forces that had been sent on previous occasions. For example, the town sent eighty pioneers against Broughty Castle in January 1549/50, two hundred pounds but no men at all to Peebles in July 1547 (prior to the battle of Pinkie); fifty men to Elgin in January 1544/5 “for resisting of the Ilismen”, a hundred men to Solway Moss in October 1542, and nine men to support the Duke of Albany in September 1515.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, a small force which can remain in the field may be as useful in the long run as a much larger force which has to disband after a fortnight. Unfortunately there is no account of the part played by the

¹¹⁵ *ABR 1398-1570*, p. 322.

¹¹⁶ Gilbert Collison was an inveterate “dissenter”; see *ABR 1398-1570*, p. 281 (24th March 1554/5), for another instance where he was a lone voice on the Council, dissenting in the strongest terms against the restraining of a lunatic who was troubling the burgh.

¹¹⁷ Sanderson, *Ayrshire and the Reformation*, p. 99; *ABR 1398-1570*, pp. 93, 185, 194, 215, 247-8, 266. A considerable number of Aberdonians were in fact at the battle of Pinkie in September 1547 because Walter Cullen records the names of twenty-nine who were killed there, *Spalding Miscellany*, Vol. 2, p. 34.

forty men from Aberdeen at the siege of Leith. It would be interesting to know in what way they observed the constraint laid upon them.

Probably there were various factors prompting this decision to support the Congregation. One was that Huntly was inching in the direction of the Congregation. On 10th February, Randolph reported that Huntly “has begun to reform religion in his country; and on 14th all the nobles of these parts assemble at Aberdeen”.¹¹⁸ There were so many misleading rumours concerning Huntly that one cannot place much weight on such statements, and it is certainly unlikely that the assembly of nobles took place. Nevertheless, the fact that such things were even rumoured must have boosted the already existing support for the Congregation in Aberdeen. Another factor was the destructiveness of the French campaign in Fife in January which had done nothing for their popularity, even among their allies. The prospect of a French victory was becoming increasingly unattractive. A third factor was the amicable contact that Aberdeen merchants were having with the English further south. On 12th February, Admiral Winter had written to the Duke of Norfolk from the Leith Roads: “The English are very well used by the Scots on Fifeside. Merchants repair from Aberdeen, Dundee, and those parts to Burnt island with great store of wine, barreled salmon, cod, and herring, upon hope of the camp coming.”¹¹⁹

The most significant thing, however, was the military support of the English for the Congregation. Admiral Winter had reached the Firth of Forth on 22nd January and the Treaty of Berwick, in which Queen Elizabeth pledged to support the Lords of the Congregation, was signed on 27th February. The effect of this was that those, such as Thomas Menzies, who were anxious not to be on the losing side, were having to reconsider their allegiance.

On the political front, there are no further noteworthy events relating to Aberdeen prior to the Treaty of Edinburgh on 6th July. On the ecclesiastical front, however, we have already mentioned the return of Adam Heriot to St. Andrews, probably in May. Heriot’s place in Aberdeen was taken by the reformed preacher John Brabaner, a native of Aberdeen, of whom we now give a brief account.

Little is known about John Brabaner, and the Brabaner family is not easy to disentangle. There appear to have been two John Brabaners

¹¹⁸ Bain (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Mary Queen of Scots*, Vol. 1, No. 647, p. 313.

¹¹⁹ Stevenson (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign, Elizabeth, 1559-60*, No. 717, p. 370.

connected with Aberdeen before the Reformation. The first was born perhaps about 1480 (judging by the date at which his son and grandson became burgesses). He was an Aberdeen burgher, though not recorded in the register.¹²⁰ He appears on several Aberdeen Baillie Court juries between 1531 and 1546.¹²¹ A deed of 1536 shows that his wife bore the unusual name of Agnes Slugy and that his son Gilbert was married to Isobella Boece.¹²² Gilbert became a burgher on 31st July 1534 and his son James on 29th August 1547.¹²³ On 9th January 1543/4, John was seeking to recover money due to him for transactions in lambs and salmon at Aberdour, Monkegy (Keithhall), and elsewhere in the North East. He was tacksman of the Aberdeen mills and was involved in a successful legal dispute with the Black Friars from February 1546/7 to May 1547.¹²⁴ He was still alive in February 1549/50, but the division of the Aberdeen fishing in September 1553 mentions only Gilbert, so it is likely that John was dead by then.¹²⁵

The second John Brabaner, presumably a relation, was a friar, though the only mention of him as such is in the payments to the Aberdeen friars subsequent to the Reformation.¹²⁶ He is probably to be identified with the John Brabaner who witnessed a charter in the crypt of St. Nicholas in March 1542.¹²⁷ It is the friar John Brabaner whom we suppose to have been the reformed preacher.¹²⁸ The first mention of him acting as a reformed preacher is undated but probably relates to the end

¹²⁰ Andrew Brabaner, probably his brother, became a burgher in 1507, *New Spalding Miscellany*, Vol. 1, p. 44.

¹²¹ Kennedy, *Annals*, Vol. 2, pp. 477-81.

¹²² *Illustrations of the Topography and Antiquities of the Shires of Aberdeen and Banff*, Vol. 4, pp. 634-5. Gilbert's marriage took place in 1532. Isobella was a relation, probably a niece, of the eminent brothers Hector and Arthur Boece (see entry on Hector Boece in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)*).

¹²³ *New Spalding Miscellany*, Vol. 1, p. 53. The date at which James became a burgher is confusing. Either there were two Gilbert Brabaners, or James was a son by a previous marriage, or the boy became a burgher very young. We incline to the second of these possibilities.

¹²⁴ *ABR 1398-1570*, pp. 186, 225, 249-251. John Brabaner, burgher, appears as a witness to a charter in May 1536 and probably also in July 1527, Cooper, *Cartularium*, Vol. 2, pp. 149, 272.

¹²⁵ R. H. Lindsay (ed.), *Protocol Book of Sir John Cristison, 1518-1551* (Scottish Record Society, Edinburgh, 1930), No. 424; *Aberdeen Charters*, p. 55.

¹²⁶ *Thirde of Benefices*, pp. 97, 154 (for 1561-2 and 1562-3 respectively).

¹²⁷ Cooper, *Cartularium*, Vol. 2, p. 217. He is possibly also the witness John Brabaner in March 1537/8, *ibid.*, p. 278. Whether he was a friar at this stage is unclear.

¹²⁸ White supposes that John Brabaner, the burgher, was the reformed preacher; see "The Menzies era", pp. 227-8.

of 1558 onwards. With Paul Methven, he was preaching in Angus and particularly before Robert Maule, Laird of Panmure. The two preachers were regarded as the “chiefest ministers in the country”. The testimony of the Maule family historian was that “this Jhone was ane vehement man; inculcatine the lawe and peane thearof; bot Paule Meffane was ane mair myid man, preachine the Evangel of grace, and remissione of sinnes in the blud of Christ”. In the title to a poem about him, John Johnston refers to Brabaner as minister of Montrose and of Dun (“Ecclesiastes Celurcanus, et Dunensis” – Johnston’s usual way of describing his subject’s place of ministry). Knox mentions that Montrose had a minister by 2nd September 1559 and this is likely to have been Brabaner.¹²⁹

By the end of 1559, probably in December or January, Brabaner appears signing the band in St. Andrews, apparently as a private member of the congregation (presuming that this was the same man).¹³⁰ Perhaps he was suffering from ill health; and possibly he recovered sufficiently to minister at Dun in the following months. With Adam Heriot’s departure to St. Andrews in about May, Brabaner took over in Aberdeen and acted as minister until Heriot’s return. On 20th October 1560, the Council register records:

The said day the counsel ordains david mar Thesaurar to delvier Johnne brabaner Ane garmonnd of cleithing of fronsche or flanders blak that is to say bunett gowne coitt hois and dowblatt For his lauboweers cuir and diligence tane in tymes by gane in precheing techeing and administrationne of the sacrametce Without ony recompensioune. Quhilk salbe allowit to the said thesaurar in his nixt compte.¹³¹

Thereafter Brabaner disappears from the scene, dying on 2nd November 1564. He was considered a man of eminence and many years later John Johnston numbered him among the principal Scottish martyrs and reformers whose lives he commemorated in Latin verse.¹³² In their

¹²⁹ H. Maule, *Registrum de Panmure* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1874), Vol. 1, p. xxxii. The laird of Panmure, who was illiterate, became a Protestant before his death in 1560; Hay Fleming, *Reformation in Scotland*, pp. 208-9; Bardgett, *Scotland Reformed: the Reformation in Angus and the Mearns*, p. 68; Laing, *Works of Knox*, Vol. 6, p. 78.

¹³⁰ *Register of the Minister, Elders, and Deacons of St. Andrews, 1559-1600*, Vol. 1, p. 9.

¹³¹ MS Aberdeen Council Register, Vol. xxiv, p. 22.

¹³² M’Crie, *Life of Knox*, p. 465; *Musa Latina Aberdonensis* (3 vols., New Spalding Club, Aberdeen, 1892-1910), Vol. 3, pp. 102-133 (especially pp. 106, 117-8). John Johnston

references to Brabaner, both Bardgett and White suggest that Heriot was preferred to him as minister of Aberdeen in July 1560 on account of Brabaner's excessive "vehemence". It does not appear, however, that Brabaner had a university degree, and for this reason it is unlikely that he was even considered for a charge in a university town. In any case, his health probably precluded him from continuing in the ministry and he is not recorded as a minister after the Reformation.

The allocation of the small number of Protestant ministers between the various important Scottish burghs was made on 19th July. Paul Methven, as we have seen, was appointed to Jedburgh and Christopher Goodman to St. Andrews. The minister chosen for Aberdeen was Adam Heriot. In the words of Spottiswoode, "when order was taken for the distribution of ministers amongst the burghs, [Heriot] was nominated for the city of Aberdeen (in which there lived divers addicted to the Roman profession), as one that was learned in scholastic divinity, and for his moderation apt to reclaim men from their errors".¹³³ Father White has a discussion on this choice of Heriot which calls for comment:

The burgh [Aberdeen] could not afford to abstain from the process of settlement of the realm. Accordingly three delegates were sent to the Reformation Parliament of August 1560 to pursue a limited policy of cooperation with the new regime. Their presence there gave them the invaluable opportunity of selecting the first minister of the reformed kirk in Aberdeen. Clearly this was a key appointment; an enthusiast, a political opportunist or a radical evangelist would have provided a centre of agitation or a focus of discontent which might have polarized opinion within the burgh. The Reformation actually offered the Council the opportunity of extending their control over the burgh . . . it was also clear that

(c. 1565-1611) was born in Aberdeen and baptized by Adam Heriot. For a detailed account of his life, see R. Lippe (ed.), *Selections from Wodrow's Biographical Collections: Divines of the North-East of Scotland* (New Spalding Club, Aberdeen, 1890), pp. 282-96; J. K. Cameron (ed.), *Letters of John Johnston and Robert Howie* (Edinburgh, 1963); *ODNB*. His mother's name was Isobell Boyes (Boece) (d. 1616) so he was almost certainly related to Brabaner by marriage. His Latin poem on Brabaner conveys little information: "Aberdeen gave him birth; he repaid it with the gifts of a new life." The fact, however, that Brabaner was remembered in this way in Aberdeen suggests that his preaching there was of lasting significance. One wonders if his "vehement" ministry of 1558-9 extended as far north as Aberdeen and was one of the reasons for the growth of Protestantism in the burgh.

¹³³ Spottiswoode, *History of the Church of Scotland*, Vol. 2, pp. 197-8.

they intended to control the pace and direction of reformation. In Adam Heriot, the town's first minister, they chose wisely and well. He was scholarly, retiring, and not even a pale shadow of his volatile counterpart in Edinburgh, John Knox. The choice of Heriot was not simply an expedient, it was a definite option for a particular kind of church. . . . From the very outset it was clear that the Reformation settlement in Aberdeen was to be different to that in other major burghs.¹³⁴

The three representatives sent by Aberdeen were David Mar, Thomas Menzies of Pitfoddels, and Duncan Forbes of Monymusk.¹³⁵ The Parliament met on 10th July and immediately adjourned, as appointed in the Treaty of Edinburgh, until 1st August. Few of the nobility arrived before the beginning of August, and the Parliament did not properly commence until 9th August. It was not the Parliament but "the Commissioners of Burghs with some of the Nobility and Barons" that met on 19th July to allocate the ministers.¹³⁶ We have not seen any proof that Mar, Menzies, and Forbes were definitely present on 19th July.¹³⁷ Leaving this aside, however, Mar was undoubtedly a supporter of the Congregation, Forbes had not followed Menzies in opposing the destruction of the friaries (and is described by White himself as "one of the prominent Protestant burgesses of Aberdeen"), and Menzies seems to have been something of a weathercock.¹³⁸ He appears as a powerful figure in Aberdeen but as a sycophant in Edinburgh. Thus the assertion that these three men had gone south with the intention of pursuing "a limited policy of cooperation with the new regime" is certainly incorrect.

¹³⁴ White, "The impact of the Reformation on a Burgh Community", p. 94. The same claims are advanced in "Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen", p. 166; see also "The Menzies Era", p. 230.

¹³⁵ *Spalding Miscellany*, Vol. 5, p. 112. The list of "Lords and Burgesses" who attended the Parliament, printed in Keith, *History of the Affairs of Church and State in Scotland*, Vol. 1, pp. 311-15, refers to the "Commissaries of Burrois, viz. Edinburgh, Striveling, Perth, Abirdene, Dundee, etc." without specifying the individual names.

¹³⁶ Laing, *Works of Knox*, Vol. 2, pp. 76, 84, 87-8; Dickinson, *John Knox's History*, Vol. 1, pp. 325, 332, 334-5; Bain (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers, Mary Queen of Scots*, Vol. 1, Nos. 871, 879; Spottiswoode, *History of the Church of Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 325.

¹³⁷ The Commissioners for Ayr did not leave for Edinburgh until 1st August, *Ayr Burgh Accounts, 1534-1624*, p. 33.

¹³⁸ A. White, "Queen Mary's Northern Province", *Innes Review*, Vol. 38 (1987), pp. 53-70 (see p. 64); see also "Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen", pp. 189, 194, 210.

Furthermore, Heriot was presumably sufficiently "radical" to have been urging the destruction of the Aberdeen friaries, and Menzies had manifested a dislike for his ministry at that time. The idea, therefore, that Menzies and the others, out of closet sympathy for Romanism, were carefully choosing the most tolerable and least Protestant minister that they could get for Aberdeen, is without foundation. Though confidently asserted on more than one occasion, it is not consistent with the evidence. There is every reason to accept Spottiswoode's account that the decision to send Heriot to Aberdeen was a Protestant one to further the Reformation rather than a Roman Catholic one to hinder it. "Neither did he fail the hope conceived of him," says Spottiswoode, doubtlessly rather simplistically, "for by his diligence in teaching both in the schools and church he did gain all that people to the profession of the truth."¹³⁹

Heriot returned to Aberdeen as minister probably at the very end of August. On 4th October, his annual salary was fixed at £200 to be paid by the town from the common good fund, with the first term to begin on 1st November:

The said day the counsall ordanis ye thesaurar to pay Adam Hereot minister of the toune the soume of tua hundreihit pounds usuall money of Scotland for his ministratioune and preaching for the space of ane year nixt and immedyatly following the first day off November next to cum to be payit to hym proportionatly at four termes in the year and the first terme of payment to be and begyn uponne the first day of November next to cum quhilk sall be allowit to him in his nixt compte.¹⁴⁰

As with the subsequent gift to Brabaner, Heriot was also to receive a suit of clothing consisting of gown, coat, doublet, hose, and bonnet to recompence him for his "greyt and countinuall cuir and laubors bygane". The Treasurer's account for 1559-60 records the payment for the suit of clothing and then adds a second payment:

Item, for ane garment and hail stand of claythis to maister Adame Herreot, at the townis command, 28 lib. Item, Adam Herreot, himselff, his seruand, and his horss, the space of ix. owkis [weeks] ellis bigane, 25 lib.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Spottiswoode, *History of the Church of Scotland*, Vol. 2, p. 198.

¹⁴⁰ MS Aberdeen Council Register, Vol. xxiv, pp. 10-11.

¹⁴¹ *Spalding Miscellany*, Vol. 5, p. 112.

It seems likely that this second payment was for nine weeks of Heriot's ministry in Aberdeen preceding the first instalment of his regular salary, which would date the commencement of his ministry to the end of August. The payment of his salary from the common good fund was only a temporary expedient until some other source could be found, and on 19th October 1562 the Council unanimously discontinued his payments. By this time the thirds of benefices had become available and the Council was determined that "the bischope of Abirdene aucht to sustene [Heriot] upoun his expensiss, by ressoun that he ressauiis of thame his stipendteyndis and duetie thairfor".¹⁴² Thus Thomas Menzies' original objection of 12th January 1559/60 finally prevailed.

With the legal settlement of Heriot as the minister of the parish, it can be said that Protestantism was finally established in Aberdeen; and this is a convenient place to conclude our account. The subsequent progress of Protestantism in Aberdeen is another subject.

VIII. Discussion and concluding remarks

This paper has presented evidence that Protestantism in Aberdeen was substantially stronger in 1559-60 than has generally been thought. We now want to draw some conclusions from this evidence.

1. If Protestantism in Aberdeen was stronger in 1559-60 than is usually realized then this was probably also the case in the years before 1559. This, however, is a topic requiring separate investigation.
2. The establishment of Protestantism in Aberdeen in 1559-60 was not something imposed on a reluctant Aberdeen from outside – it was "indigenous". This is contrary to the conclusion drawn by Allan White:

The ecclesiastical settlement in Aberdeen after 1560 came about through a combination of external pressure and the conjunction of national politics with local minority opinion; it was not the result of a steady growth of Protestant opinion within the burgh. The small Protestant party within the burgh was not strong enough to bring about a Reformation on its own; it was constantly dependent on outside encouragement. Protestantism was largely an alien movement facing a burgh elite which was experienced in government and the manipulation of burgh institutions.¹⁴³

¹⁴² *ABR 1398-1570*, p. 351; MS Aberdeen Council Register, Vol. xxiv, p. 533; White, "Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen", p. 211.

¹⁴³ White, "The impact of the Reformation on a Burgh Community", pp. 98-9.

In opposition to this, we have seen that the Protestant party in Aberdeen was sufficiently strong to alter the worship in the burgh through ordinary democratic methods, even though it was not strong enough to suppress the friaries unaided. It was the "anti-Congregation" party that was continually appealing to "authority", i.e. to outside power, to bolster its position. Furthermore, we have observed that even this anti-Congregation party cannot necessarily be regarded as uniformly Roman Catholic – some of its members, such as Thomas Menzies, seem to have been motivated by secular considerations rather than religious ones in their opposition to the Congregation.

It is interesting to consider how Protestantism in Aberdeen became so relatively strong numerically. There is no record of any Protestant preacher visiting Aberdeen in the years before November 1559 (though John Brabaner may have done so), and the spread of Protestantism in the burgh was probably therefore largely through literature, through contact with Protestantism elsewhere, and through local "privy kirks". There is little record of any of these things, but there must have been some way in which Aberdonians were becoming Protestants.

3. The establishment of Protestantism in Aberdeen did not derive from the influence of local lairds. Ian Cowan states it as a general principle that "the determining factor in any area in promoting the reformed faith was the attitude of the local lairds. Indeed even in burghs that showed some readiness to accept reform, pressure from outside the town was necessary before most, if not all, of the councils finally decided in favour of Protestantism."¹⁴⁴ Assistance may have been required in Aberdeen for the suppression of the friaries, but the heart of "deciding in favour of protestantism" was the introduction of reformed worship in the burgh kirk, and in Aberdeen this was freely introduced in October/November 1559, without any known external pressure, and without any record of a dissent having survived. There was certainly no local laird involved, unless Thomas Menzies is felt to have occupied that position. The most influential local landowner was the Earl of Huntly but his religious equivocation can hardly have impelled anyone in the direction of Protestantism.

¹⁴⁴ I. B. Cowan, *Regional Aspects of the Scottish Reformation* (Historical Association, London, 1978), p. 28; Cowan, *Scottish Reformation*, pp. 118-120 (quotation repeated on p. 118); see also M. Lynch, "From privy kirk to burgh church: an alternative view of the process of Protestantisation", p. 92; M. Verschuur, *Politics or Religion? The Reformation in Perth, 1540-1570* (Edinburgh, 2006) p. 138.

4. Protestantism in Aberdeen did not arise out of burgh politics. Mary Verschuur argues that the reformation in Perth was closely connected with the ongoing power-struggle between the merchants and the craftsmen:

The supporters of Protestantism in Perth were the upwardly mobile craftsmen from the established and recognized trades who had some entrée into the power structure of the burgh, but who wanted more. They hoped that by combining their political and social aspirations with their support for religious reform, that they would indeed advance in all three spheres.¹⁴⁵

Such a power-struggle may have been significant for the reformation in Perth but this was not the case in Aberdeen. There was a division between the merchants and the craftsmen in Aberdeen which came to a head in the 1590s, as we have seen in the “Summons against the Magistrates of Aberdeen” of 1591.¹⁴⁶ This division, however, is not known to have played any part in the introduction of Protestantism. In Aberdeen it was the merchants who introduced reformed worship in October 1559 and who seem, if anything, to have been more Protestant than the craftsmen. After the Reformation, some of the leading craftsmen persisted in prohibited pre-Reformation observances such as May Day and Robin Hood as a means of stirring up strife against the merchants.¹⁴⁷

5. The degree of popular support for Protestantism in Aberdeen in 1559-60 was probably reflected, if not considerably exceeded, in many other parts of Scotland. This is perhaps the most important conclusion of the paper and it is very different from the view on this subject which currently prevails. The dominant view is that which was anticipated by Ian Cowan thirty-five years ago:

We must beware of the assumption that the protestant success was based on widespread support from a populace alienated from a church no longer exercising its spiritual functions in an adequate

¹⁴⁵ M. Verschuur, “Perth Craftsmen’s Book”, *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, Vol. 23 (1988), pp. 157-174 (see p. 174); Verschuur, *Politics or Religion? The Reformation in Perth, 1540-1570*, chapters 4-6.

¹⁴⁶ “Summons against the Magistrates of Aberdeen”, *Spalding Miscellany*, Vol. 3, pp. 155-71; Bain, *Merchant and Craft Guilds*, pp. 73-89.

¹⁴⁷ *ABR 1398-1570*, pp. 343-4, 459-60 (4th May 1562 and 14th May 1565, respectively).

manner. This assumption has long been made and has seldom been questioned.¹⁴⁸

What is certain is that, even in those burghs that supported the congregation, there must have been only small bands of protestant sympathizers before the achievement of military and political success. The view so often stressed by historians that the success of the Scottish Reformation depended upon popular urban support must therefore be questioned. In most burghs support for Protestantism stemmed initially from a small minority of the populace who were only permitted to seize the initiative and win over their fellow citizens through the intervention of the local lairds.¹⁴⁹

Cowan's warning against the assumption of widespread Protestantism was eagerly embraced in some quarters.¹⁵⁰ In place of the old idea came the new model that the Scottish Reformation was a movement in which, through "a series of contingent events", a comparatively small but highly-motivated minority "forced their agenda on a reluctant or indifferent kingdom".¹⁵¹ It was in vain that Gordon Donaldson cautioned against this new model: "The notion that the Reformation was not a popular movement, but something carried through by a clique of nobles making religion a cloak for their own selfish ends and in defiance of majority opinion, and that Protestantism took root only after a parliament had legislated in its favour, cannot be entertained."¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ Cowan, *Regional Aspects of the Scottish Reformation*, p. 6.

¹⁴⁹ Cowan, *Scottish Reformation*, p. 119; *Regional Aspects of the Scottish Reformation*, p. 28.

¹⁵⁰ R. Mason, "Covenant and Commonweal: the language of politics in Reformation Scotland", in *Church, Politics and Society: Scotland 1408-1929*, pp. 97-126: "A point which is easily lost sight of in discussions of the Scottish Reformation is that the rebellion which marked its crisis met with only limited public support" (p. 98); "Recent scholarship . . . has made clear that the Protestant tide, if rising in the 1550s, was far from irresistible in 1559 and that both then and for some time thereafter the confessional allegiance of the majority of Scots showed no marked preference for the reformed faith" (p. 119).

¹⁵¹ Dawson, *Scotland Re-Formed, 1488-1587*, pp. 207, 215; see also Ryrrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation*, pp. 165-6. Hazlett summarizes: "A sixth characteristic of modern study of the Reformation in Scotland has been a challenge to the myth that Reformation legislation commanded wide and popular support throughout the country, so that it was somehow responding to pressure 'from below,'" *The Reformation in Britain and Ireland*, p. 129.

¹⁵² G. Donaldson, *All the Queen's Men*, p. 34; see also Kirk, *Patterns of Reform*, p. 101, where Donaldson's position is endorsed.

In view of this dominant error, it is worth summarizing once again the events in Aberdeen. The background was that Protestantism was strong enough in and around Aberdeen in January and February 1558/9 to be a source of concern to the Chapter of Aberdeen and to the Queen Regent, but the town remained outwardly Roman Catholic and loyal to the Queen Regent until September 1559. The change came in October when three things concurred: the election of new baillies, all Protestant; the view, arising from the truce at Leith in July, that the burgh was free to choose its own religion; and the fact that the Provost was acting for a short while with the Congregation. The effect of this conjunction was the unanimous or near unanimous adoption of Protestant worship, together with the reforming of St. Nicholas, in October/November 1559. As we have mentioned, there is no record of either external pressure or internal opposition (other than that of the chaplains) with regard to this decision.

The Protestant party wished for further reformation by way of suppressing the friaries but they were not in a position to proceed unaided. Seeking the Congregation's help, they confronted the burgh with a further decision regarding Protestantism: whether to protect the friaries or not. The crucial meeting was on 29th December with the Provost proposing the defence of the friaries. We do not suppose that there was a vote exactly, but at this meeting of the active burgesses of the town it was apparent that the majority did not support the Provost. It is reasonable to think that the ten men who recorded their protests that day comprised all the burgesses present who wanted to preserve the friaries, and that the others (unfortunately we do not know how many) concurred in their destruction. To many non-Protestants, the destruction of friaries is seen as the height of "fanaticism", but evidently a large number of Aberdonian burgesses were of such a spirit that day.

The events of the next fortnight, while showing that power was finely balanced in Aberdeen, do not disturb the conclusion that a substantial proportion of the Aberdeen burgesses were Protestants supporting the Congregation. Indeed the reply of the Lords of the Congregation on 24th December 1559, together with the evidence of 29th December to 12th January, suggests that it was largely the influence of Thomas Menzies that prevented Aberdeen from joining the Congregation at the time. The impression is not of a "small band of Protestant sympathizers" imposing Protestantism on Aberdeen but of a

small band of influential "conservatives" opposing the Congregation and holding Aberdeen back.¹⁵³

What happens if we extrapolate this degree of support for Protestantism to the twenty-two other towns mentioned by the Congregation as supporting them in December 1559 – Linlithgow, Jedburgh, Glasgow, Dumfries, Lanark, Ayr, Irvine, Dumbarton, Stirling, Kirkcaldy, Kinghorn, Dysart, Pittenweem, Anstruther, Crail, St. Andrews, Cupar, Dunfermline, Perth, Dundee, Brechin, and Montrose? Obviously the situation was potentially different in each place, but all these towns were more committed to the Congregation at that time than Aberdeen was. Thus it is reasonable to suppose, in the absence of other evidence, that Protestantism was at least as popular in these places as it was in Aberdeen. External factors, such as an influential local laird or the presence of the Congregation, may have masked this popularity; but the example of Aberdeen, where there were no such external factors, shows that burden of proof lies with those who think that indigenous Protestantism was weak in these places to establish their contention. If they cannot do this then, on the balance of probabilities, they should regard Aberdeen as typical and assume the popularity of Protestantism in these places, rather than the reverse.¹⁵⁴

Furthermore, Protestantism was, by all accounts, weaker in Aberdeen in the 1560s and 1570s than it was further south; which again suggests that there must have been a very considerable degree of support for Protestantism in these other places in 1560. All in all, we think that the assumption of "widespread support" for Protestantism – which Cowan dismisses – is almost certainly valid. Thomas M'Creie's description of Scotland in the summer of 1560 was not an exaggeration:

¹⁵³ Father Power blames Huntly, Bishop William Gordon, and Thomas Menzies for the Reformation in Aberdeen (*Protomartyr of Scotland*, pp. 35-6); and in a sense we are inclined to agree with him. If the three of them had been resolute Roman Catholics, and had acted as such, then, given the power that they wielded, it would have been much more difficult for the Protestants, numerous as they were, to have introduced reformed worship. But Menzies was not a resolute Roman Catholic and had even helped to introduce reformed worship in October 1559; Gordon apparently did nothing; and Huntly was stupefied throughout the period – a remarkable providence that is worth observing.

¹⁵⁴ We do not wish to exaggerate the degree of support for Protestantism. Robert Pont speaks of "the most part of the realm being in their [the Congregation's] contrary", Pont, *Against Sacrilege* (Edinburgh, 1599), quoted in M'Creie, *Life of John Knox*, p. 363. Pont was probably thinking especially of November 1559, which was one of the darkest hours for the Congregation. The example of Edinburgh at that time shows how fickle some of the supporters of the Congregation were and how precarious the balance of power could be.

“The Protestants were left in the possession of authority; and they were now by far the most powerful party in the nation, both as to rank and numbers.”¹⁵⁵

6. (A minor point, but still worth making). The expedition of the Angus and Mearns men to Aberdeen shows that one should not exaggerate the weakness of the Congregation’s position even at the end of December 1559. The French forces in Fife posed a highly dangerous threat, but the sending of a reforming party to Aberdeen comes across as an act of strength on the part of the Congregation rather than of despair. The Congregation controlled the country from Dundee northwards, and while the capture of St. Andrews (had that happened) would presumably have weakened their grip, there is no evidence of any weakening at that stage.

On the other hand, the Congregation was undoubtedly on the defensive in December 1559 and this circumstance must have been known to the Aberdeen burgesses. The fact that many of them nevertheless favoured the destruction of the friaries shows that they were not mere “fair-weather” Protestants. Again we see something of the strength and breadth of the support for Protestantism in Scotland in 1559-60.

7. The “myth” of an Aberdeen hostile to the Reformation developed very early. Bishop Lesley, writing in the 1570s, mentions some of the Aberdonians assisting the Angus and Mearns men in the destruction of the friaries but does not refer to the earlier introduction of reformed worship. He would have known of it but it was not relevant to his account. The reformation of worship in October/November 1559 was remembered in Aberdeen up until the “Summons” of 1591, but thereafter it was forgotten and not a single writer refers to it until Hay Fleming in 1903 and James Kirk in 1989. Spottiswoode, in the 1620s, was almost certainly unaware of it and Gordon of Rothiemay likewise in 1661. Perhaps even in 1559, with the other stirring events going on, it was not particularly widely known in Scotland; and in any case the visit of the Mearns men in January 1559/60 would have eclipsed it in the public mind. Furthermore, the visit of the Mearns men makes a better and simpler story if the Aberdonians resist them, and one can see this tendency at work in popular histories of Aberdeen.

¹⁵⁵ M’Crie, *Life of John Knox*, p. 159.

It was only with the publication of the *Extracts from the Council Register* in 1844, the "Summons" in 1846, and the Lords of the Congregation's "Reply" in the *Calendar of State Papers* in 1865 that the evidence for the true account became readily available. Of these sources, by far the best known and most obvious is the *Extracts from the Council Register*, but this, as it happens, does not refer explicitly to the introduction of reformed worship. The failure, however, of the burgesses to support Menzies' protest on 29th December 1559 should have alerted writers to the strength of Protestantism in Aberdeen, but by this time William Kennedy's "traditional" account of 1818 already held the field, and few seem to have paused to reflect.¹⁵⁶

Many of the recent writers on the history of Aberdeen or on the Scottish Reformation have been overtly hostile to the Protestantism of the reformers and thus disinclined to view events from a Protestant perspective. To the obvious question, "When was reformed worship introduced in St. Nicholas, Aberdeen?", we suppose they would have answered, "About 11th March 1559/60, when the burgh decided to support the Congregation".¹⁵⁷ Of the dynamics, however, which led supposedly "Catholic" Aberdeen to take this extraordinary step, we have seen no explanation.¹⁵⁸ Even without the extra information provided by the "Summons" and the "Reply", the "traditional" account has an incoherence which should have rung alarm bells, we feel, in the minds of careful investigators.

8. If Protestantism was stronger in Aberdeen in 1559-60 than is often supposed then it was probably stronger after 1560 than has recently been asserted. McLennan's thesis brought out the strength of Romanism in the region, but this has led to a careless confusion between Romanism

¹⁵⁶ Hay Fleming, however, picked up its significance: "The Provost regarded this [the proposed assault on the friaries] as manifest treason; but the town was so unmoved by his oration that only nine men adhered to his protest," *Scottish Reformation*, p. 83.

¹⁵⁷ Those familiar with the unprinted Council register, such as McLennan and White, might perhaps have answered, "On 8th January 1559/60, when the singers in the choir were dismissed". To which we would reply, "Did Thomas Menzies and his followers restore the singers and Roman Catholic worship when they returned to the scene on 12th January; and, if not, why not?"

¹⁵⁸ White offers an explanation for the Burgh's support for the Congregation on 11th March but makes no reference to the introduction of Protestant worship; see "The impact of the Reformation on a Burgh Community", p. 93. In fairness to White, he has obviously thought hard about the events of December/January 1559/60, and a close reading shows that he is aware of the difficulties, which, however, he has rather smoothed away than resolved.

being *relatively strong* and Romanism being *dominant*. White writes, for instance, of Regent Morton's visit to Aberdeen in 1574: "When Morton arrived in Aberdeen, he found a community dominated by Catholic survivalists and conservative [i.e. Roman Catholic] sympathies." The Protestants, it is claimed, formed only a minority of "the urban patriciate", and Protestantism was distrusted by "the conservative lairds [of the north east] and the equally conservative burgesses of Aberdeen . . . as an alien and divisive force".¹⁵⁹

In the light of what we have seen in this paper, such statements appear implausible. The religious composition of the burgh may not have remained static after 1560 but it would be remarkable if the national establishment of the Reformed religion and the settlement of Adam Heriot as minister had a drastic weakening effect on Protestantism in Aberdeen. To be sure, there was the renewed "conservative" influence of the Earls of Huntly, father and son; the continued shelter provided by the Bishop of Aberdeen (d. 1577); the undoubtedly Roman Catholic influence of several members of the Menzies family; and there is always the possibility that some temporary Protestants returned to Romanism.¹⁶⁰ Doubtless, effects such as these helped to nurture what Romanism there was, and may even have led to an upsurge, but they are unlikely to have reduced the Protestants in Aberdeen to a minority.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ White, "The Regent Morton's Visitation: the Reformation in Aberdeen, 1574", pp. 251, 256-7.

¹⁶⁰ Audrey-Beth Fitch objects to the idea (which she attributes to McLennan) that Romanism round Aberdeen was largely dependent on the Earl of Huntly and a few powerful families in the burgh: "Ascribing the 'lukewarm' reception of the Reformation in North Eastern burghs such as Aberdeen primarily to the power and influence of the Huntlies and a few powerful burgess families is to misrepresent the degree of spiritual commitment many North Eastern Scots felt towards traditional church rituals and beliefs." But she presents minimal evidence from 1559-60 to support her claim, "Religious Community in the North East at the Reformation", in J. Porter (ed.), *After Columba - After Calvin: Community and Identity in the Religious Traditions of North East Scotland* (Aberdeen, 1999), pp. 107-124 (quotation on p. 118).

¹⁶¹ Aberdeen certainly had a reputation as a centre of Romanism after the Reformation. A poem of 1567 speaks of "Abirdene, of sophists the well-spring", but this appears to be a reference to Kings College and Old Aberdeen, see J. Cranstoun (ed.), *Satirical Poems of the Time of the Reformation* (2 vols., Scottish Text Society, Edinburgh, 1891-3), Vol. 1, p. 56. Similarly, Robert Wodrow commented in 1726 that after the Reformation Angus and the Mearns formed "the frontier station, as it wer, betwixt the Reformed in the south, and too many remaining Papists in the north", *Collections Upon the Lives of the Reformers* (2 vols., Maitland Club, Glasgow, 1834-48), Vol. 1, p. 3. But, as we have said, Romanism may have been relatively strong in Aberdeen compared to other parts of the country without being the majority religion.

We have already in this paper seen some examples of Father White's tendency to claim greater support for Romanism than the evidence warrants – for instance, the idea (by no means unique to Father White) that Thomas Menzies was a decided Roman Catholic, or that Adam Heriot was preferred as minister of Aberdeen by the anti-Congregation party because he was less "radical" towards Romanism than other candidates. The present writer has not examined in detail the progress of Protestantism in Aberdeen after the Reformation, but it seems likely that some of Father White's evidence for post-Reformation Romanism in Aberdeen might prove equally unsatisfactory. To give an instance, he claims John Lowson as having "links with the conservative camp" in 1562 and Patrick Rutherford as having "close links with Catholicism" in 1574, in each case because they were married into the family of Thomas Menzies of Pitfoddels.¹⁶² Yet Lowson and Rutherford, as we have seen, were two of the Protestant baillies responsible for the introduction of reformed worship in Aberdeen!

The strength of Protestantism and Presbyterianism in Aberdeen between the first and second Reformations is a subject in need of "reassessment". DesBrisay has argued that there was far more support for the National Covenant in Aberdeen in 1638 than one would imagine from reading the usual sources.¹⁶³ If there was substantial Protestant sympathy in Aberdeen at the beginning and the end of the period between the Reformation and the Covenants then there probably was in the years between as well. Recent scholarship on the religious history of Aberdeen after 1560 has given a misleading impression because it has concentrated so heavily on evidence for Romanism and recusancy and has ignored mainstream Protestantism. The chapter on religion in Aberdeen in *Aberdeen Before 1800: a New History* dwells on Romanism, witches, Episcopalianism, and Quakers and gives only passing attention to Presbyterianism. There is no mention, for instance, of the Aberdeen

¹⁶² White, "Religion, Politics and Society in Aberdeen", p. 204; "The Regent Morton's Visitation: the Reformation in Aberdeen, 1574", p. 261. A related and highly dubious claim is the one repeatedly advanced by Michael Lynch, sometimes as a likelihood and sometimes as a certainty, that the first Aberdeen Kirk Session of 1562 was "largely made up of Catholics"; see M. Lynch, G. DesBrisay, M. G. H. Pittock, "The faith of the people", in *Aberdeen Before 1800: a New History*, p. 294; M. Lynch (ed.), *Oxford Companion to Scottish History* (Oxford, 2001, third printing 2011), p. 512. Among the supposed "Catholics" on the Session were Lowson and Rutherford.

¹⁶³ G. DesBrisay, "The civill warrs did overrun all': Aberdeen, 1630-1690", in *Aberdeen Before 1800: a New History*, pp. 238-266 (see especially p. 245); see also Barry Robertson, "The Covenanting north of Scotland, 1638-1647", *Innes Review*, Vol. 61 (2010), pp. 24-51.

General Assembly of 1605 – an event of national importance at which four local ministers were present.¹⁶⁴ It is hardly surprising that Aberdeen appears predominantly Roman Catholic/Episcopalian when such a one-sided approach is adopted.

To conclude, Ian Cowan in 1978 expressed the need for regional studies of the Scottish Reformation, the expectation being that these would undermine the idea that “widespread popular Protestantism was a central factor in the making of the Scottish Reformation”.¹⁶⁵ Contrary to this expectation, we can report that, as far as Aberdeen is concerned, the local evidence supports the long-held view that the rejection of Romanism and the adoption of Protestantism was widely popular with the people of Scotland in 1560.

¹⁶⁴ M. Lynch, G. DesBrisay, and M. G. H. Pittock, “The Faith of the People”, in *Aberdeen Before 1800: a New History*, pp. 289-308.

¹⁶⁵ Cowan, *Regional Aspects of the Scottish Reformation*, p. 6.