

The Story of the Episcopal Church

Part 1

The Early Reformed Church

With the Reformation in 1560 the Church in Scotland changed from being part of the Catholic Papal Church to becoming a Reformed Church. The reformers still believed in **one** church. The emphasis was placed less on the sacraments, adornments and saints and more on teaching. Power rested with a General Assembly who chose 10 Superintendents to enforce their Book of Disciplines. Bishops were reduced to a lesser role but not abolished.

Andrew Melville returned from Geneva in 1574 to teach at the University of Glasgow and later at St Andrew's. He became the leader of a group who demanded the abolition of bishops and the establishment of Presbyteries (elected committees of ministers and important laymen) to run the church. Between the years 1578 - 1580 his supporters at the General Assembly won the day. However, the struggle continued until, later in the decade, the two offices were to work together.

The leading clerics of the day believed, like many of the popes of the 11th and 12th centuries, that the Church was superior to royal government. Knox's attitude towards Mary Queen of Scots is well-known. Andrew Melville told James VI to his face that he was 'God's silly vassal'. The Church in Scotland had always supported Royal Government but now the Reformed Church led the opposition to the king. Little wonder that James VI restored bishops through which he could control the wilder elements among the clergy.

Some of the clergy, most hostile to royal policy, were to be found in Edinburgh. In 1560 John Dury (sometimes spelt Durie) was minister of Colinton. He later became a minister in the city and was not shy to criticise royal government. In 1582 he was exiled from the capital but was allowed to return in the following year. However, his attitude did not change and in November of that year he was forced to leave the capital.

John Peacock our Archivist has been researching the history of the Scottish Episcopal Church in Edinburgh. This part appeared in the February 2018 edition of the Sign.