

THE CHURCH BEFORE THE COVENANTS

The Church of Scotland

1596-1638

Walter Roland Foster

A fresh assessment of the national Church of Scotland in the early seventeenth century, a crucial period in its history when the reformed Kirk was not only completely united but, equally important, thoroughly presbyterian and fully episcopal. Considerable progress was made in the spread of presbyteries, the establishment of reformed parishes, the growth of schools, and the financial reorganization of the Church. A pragmatic solution as much as a doctrinaire one, the Scottish Church was a unique Reformation experiment.

Rather than rely solely upon the polemical histories written at the time, Professor Foster has drawn on primary sources – presbytery minutes, synod records, journals, letters and wills – and thus achieves a closer understanding of the ordinary operation of the Church, which is revealed as both effective and harmonious, and not beset by intense rivalry or factions.

Apart from its historical importance, Professor Foster's study has clear implications for re-union plans which seek to embrace both the reformed and episcopal traditions.

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