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"In my end is my beginning": Families, Factions, Faith and Femininity as the Fatal Inheritance of Mary Queen of Scots

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Dedicated to Nana, praying your rosary for you

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Introduction: *The Well-Known Tragedy of a Brilliant Politician*

Garret Mattingly opened his account of the infamous conflict between the English Navy and the Spanish Armada with the execution of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots. She is depicted as an extravagant martyr on a global stage.[1] Since her birth, she has been in the spotlight. Her reputation has evolved throughout the ages as much as it did throughout her own life due to the biases and perspectives of those with whom she engaged, both her supporters and enemies. Much of the voluminous scholarship and popular history available analyzes the later years of Mary Stuart's life. Her time ruling Scotland is frequently considered in terms of Elizabeth and England. Mary's youth and reign are overshadowed by the image of her later years, a woman of questionable integrity imprisoned in a tower awaiting her eventual martyrdom at her cousin's order. This is the story that people know well, but this is not the whole picture.

Mary Stuart was born in 1542 to the king and queen of Scotland at a time when the monarchy was severely weakened.[2] In 1523, King James V, Mary's father, inherited an impoverished monarchy.[3] Before Mary's birth, Marie of Guise, Mary's mother, spearheaded many cultural ventures that popularized the rulers but drained their resources. When King Henry VIII determined that he would overtake Scotland, Scotland's forces were underwhelming. King James V was defeated at the Battle of Solway Moss and died on December 14th, just six days after Mary's birth

[1] Garrett Mattingly, *The Armada* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 1-5.

[2] John Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots* (New York: Penguin, 2019)

[3] Rosalind Kay Marshall, *Mary of Guise: Queen of Scots.* (Edinburgh: National Museums Scotland, 2008)

at Linlightgow.[4] With the reigning monarch being only six years old, a governor, James Hamilton, Earl of Arran was instated. He oversaw the creation of the Treaties of Greenwich on July 1, which betrothed Mary to the Prince of England, the future Edward VI of England.[5] As Arran's loyalties began to shift from Protestant to Catholic, Scotland was at risk from England. Once Mary was crowned Queen of Scotland, her mother would turn to France for military support, signifying a reversal of the balance of power. With Marie of Guise growing in power, the pro-French faction was ascending.[6]

Henry VIII's efforts to enforce the Treaty of Greenwich, specifically the proposed marriage between Queen Mary and the future King Edward VI of England led to what is known as the Rough Wooing of Mary Stuart. Marie's familial connections with the powerful Guise family and the possibility of an alliance through marriage led King Henry II of France to lend his aid to Scotland, renewing the Auld Alliance.[7] Henry VIII's forceful attempts at swaying the young Mary Stuart into marriage were skillfully deflected by her mother who stalled to halt negotiations. This is only the beginning of a back and forth between English and French dominance in Scottish affairs because when England invaded, Mary was sent to France.

Mary's time in France occupies very little space in the popular mind. Her childhood growing up in the French court had a great impact on her personality and the surrounding politics influenced her policy. When it came time for her to become Queen of France, she fit in perfectly.

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[4] Antonia Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots.* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1969), 15; Guy Mary Queen of Scots, 12-13, 501.

[5] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 19-21.

[6] Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 26-27.

[7] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots,* 1969, 30-31; Marshall, *Mary of Guise: Queen of Scots,* 136-137.

Her marriage to the dauphin, Francis, took place in 1558 and she took on a prominent but strictly ceremonial role.

The Guise were the relatives of Mary's mother, Marie. The Guise, most powerful family in France other than the ruling Valois, viewed Mary as a tool in their political arsenal. Her Guise uncles played more of a role in the decision-making of France than she did, which is why this period of time is not highlighted in studies of her life. She was not an active agent in France, but she was taking an interest in Scotland as much as she could.

Her ability to do so, however, was limited by the intervention of the Scottish nobility, which valued the power that they held too much to risk intervention from a young, foreign queen. The death of King Henry II of France lifted her social prominence but when her husband, the sickly Francis II, died in 1560, Mary was forced to consider her options. Pushed to the sidelines by her mother-in-law, Catherine de Medici, she elected to return to her birthplace rather than take on a marginal role as Dowager Queen of France. Her return to Scotland made a major impact on the political climate of not only Scotland but also France and England. Even at this point, however, her story is largely skipped over. The focus of this paper is on this period when Mary charted her course as reigning Queen in Scotland as a result of the factors that shaped her personal development in France.

Mary's status as a Catholic queen in a Protestant country placed her in a precarious position between her kingdom and her faith. Her childhood in France taught her to emphasize her femininity as a tool but the political climate of Scotland required more force than that to which she was accustomed. Mary Stuart, out of her element and determined to rule, found Scotland to be a hostile homeland. With the Reformation's hold on the nobles, Mary's decision to maintain the status of religion as she found it was more of a survival technique than a political ideal.

The thesis of this paper argues that Mary Stuart was not the impressionable and unfocused ruler that history sometimes paints her. She was a politician focused on maintaining an impossible balance between the powerful Scottish nobles and the powerless people outside of Edinburgh as well as foreign influence. Her Catholic relatives always had her ear, but pressure from Queen Elizabeth forced her to accept Protestantism without pursuing and promoting the persecution of Catholics. The instances of Catholic monarchs tolerating Protestantism as a presence at all are few, with the instances of Catholic monarchs allowing Protestantism to dominate being still fewer. This is the dynamic that this paper will explore in detail, analyzing the factors that led to the policy's and Mary's downfall.

One of Mary's methods of maintaining her popularity with the English-aligned Protestants and the Catholics in France and the Highlands was through marriage. Many of her council members, diplomats, and fellow rulers offered their opinions as to whom would be an eligible match for the young queen. After rejecting a Habsburg match proposed by her Guise relatives, Elizabeth's decision to put her favorite and rumored ex-lover, Robert Dudley forward was met with scorn by Mary.[8] She retaliated by betrothing herself to Henry Darnley, a Catholic who strengthened her claim to the throne of England. This attempt at balancing both sides proved more harmful than helpful when Henry Darnley proved to be both easily impressionable and more treacherous than Mary could have imagined.

Darnley was a prideful man who was sure of his position and power, as well as being both promiscuous and insecurely assertive of his masculinity. Mary had experienced dramatic physical attraction to him but she had likely lost faith in him even before their marriage.[9] He felt he deserved

[8] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 212; Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots,* 180-185.

[9] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 225.

the title of King and all that it entailed but his temperament and lack of political principle excluded him from that possibility in Mary's mind. Despite her attempts at limiting his power, Mary found that Darnley utilized her name to lend himself legitimacy and to undermine her authority. Worse still, he tried to push his wife toward aggressive support of Catholicism which endangered her policy of religious compromise.[10]

Noblemen who sought to prey on this division between husband and wife chose David Rizzio, an Italian musician who had been promoted to the position of the Queen's personal secretary, to be the mode of gaining power. Her husband's failure to act as a companion led her to bring Rizzio into her confidence. This was met with disdain by both Darnley and her other advisors. Mary, pregnant with her son James, bore witness to the brutal murder of Rizzio by her closest advisors and her husband in March of 1566. They stabbed him and imprisoned her to gain power for themselves. The plan to put the malleable Darnley on the throne was pushed by the noblemen to secure their place as the government of Scotland.

They did not account for the fact that Mary was more talented at persuading her husband than they were. Their plan failed because Mary was able to seduce Darnley back to her side. Freed, Mary exacted her revenge on the advisors involved. This marked a notable turning point in Mary's religious policy toward Catholicism through the unfortunate influence of Henry Darnley.

His support of the Catholic cause was intended to draw the attention of the Pope despite a lack of fervent faith. Darnley had been selected for the reason that he was a Catholic in name only. It was his lust for power that led him to showcase his Catholicism as a lightning rod for international power. Mary's faith remained central to her own life, which left her vulnerable to outside pressure for Catholic supremacy. In 1566, Mary Stuart's religious policy shifted from

[10] Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots,* 211.

maintaining the status quo toward Catholicism. Even as her popularity throughout Scotland grew, her popularity amongst her nobles declined. The only person that they loathed more was the traitor, Henry Darnley. Mary also never trusted him again. By the birth of her son a few months later, she and Darnley were separated, leaving Darnley feeling criminally neglected.

In early 1567, Henry Darnley was recovering from syphilis. Mary took her under personal care at a house not far from her own residence. After his slow recovery, he was murdered. When he was asleep gunpowder was lit and exploded in the room below his. His body was found yards away from the building, unaffected by the explosion. He was strangled, half-naked a few feet from a chair. The murder was never solved. Mary's critics hold her responsible. Her apologists cite inconsistencies in documentation as evidence of her innocence.[11]

The Earl of Bothwell, Mary's chief advisor, was suspected and tried. Mary played a major role in clearing his name. In doing so, she incriminated herself. Whether other nobles genuinely suspected her or simply pretended to, faith in the monarchy wavered more than it ever had. The following April, Mary was abducted by Bothwell. Her marriage to her kidnapper led her to become wildly unpopular due to Bothwell's unsavory reputation.[12] By the end of 1567, Mary, Queen of Scots was abducted again and forcefully deposed. A fugitive in her own country, Mary had the choice to flee either to France or to England. France was the homeland of her childhood and where her family still resided. England held the prospect of another queen who was liable to respect the plight of a deposed queen. In the end, distance made England the only truly available refuge.

Mary chose England as a base from which to reclaim her throne. The story that begins with a murder investigation and ends with a beheading is the one that is commonly known. For nineteen

[11] Ibid., 280.

[12] Ibid., 502.

years, Mary was held captive by her cousin. To Elizabeth, she represented a threat to her throne and a destabilizing influence due to her connection to the Tudor line and her Catholic faith. Her alleged complicity in various conspiracies led Elizabeth to order her cousin's execution for her role in a proposed revolution. Desperate for freedom, Mary was arguably pushed to this point and entrapped by Elizabeth's advisors and spies. The extent of her role and the justice of the process which condemned her is hotly debated and her actions as a captive say more about her deteriorating mental state than about her political ambitions.

After Mary's execution two prominent views of her developed. Her apologists view her as a martyr and victim of unfortunate circumstances coupled with crippling betrayals that left her with no more control over her life than she had over her country. Her critics view her as a decadent woman determined to lead a lavish life in the lap of luxury and power regardless of the effect it had on her people. Those who view her as a martyr see her as an object of tragedy, a victim of bad circumstances and constant betrayals who had no more control over her own life than she did over her country. Critics see her as a corrupt seductress determined to lead a lavish life in the lap of French power with no regard for morality. Neither of these stereotypes are accurate and this paper aims to argue why.

It will be argued here that Scottish noblemen viewed her as a pawn that could be molded until King Henry VIII forced her to voyage to France. As she came into adulthood and took her throne from the ruling regency council, Mary Stuart was forced to maintain a balance between the politicians and people vying for her attention and power. The Scottish Protestant and Catholic nobles, John Knox, Queen Elizabeth Tudor, and the French courts all had competing views and opinions on her policies and her life. Mary Stuart's management of these factors is what defined her factionalist policy that was hinged on religion.

Historians have now developed a portrait of her life based on newly found sources and a thorough reexamination of a mass of familiar documents, it becomes increasingly apparent that neither of these views is accurate. Rather, Mary Stuart was a Catholic woman raised in France who was Queen in Protestant Scotland.. She faced these issues of Protestantism, societal tension, and rebellious nobles with a well-developed political policy of factionalism that hinged on the controversial question of religion. That policy only unraveled when she became entangled with a unscrupulous and treacherous husband who disturbed the balance of power, her public rule, and her physical and emotional health.

Chapter I

Mother and Daughter: Regent and Queen of Scotland, France, and England from 1542-1561

Marie of Guise as a Predecessor to the Policies of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scotland

The religious policy of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots was shaped by mounting turmoil of religious conflicts, Marie of Guise's religious policy, and Mary's early formation in Catholicism. Mary's actions and underlying attitudes can be traced directly back to her childhood and education in France. She was only six when she was rushed out of Scotland and sent to France. Her formative years were spent there where she was surrounded by French politics and culture and education, which was largely defined by courtly intrigue and the assumption of loyalty to the French King, Henry II.

The difficulty of adjusting to the change of environment had repercussions throughout the entirety of Mary's political career. The adjustment from French to Scottish society took a lot of time and was reminiscent of Marie of Guise's reign as regent. Though she was far from her mother geographically, Mary maintained an intense affection for her. It was natural that she would later emulate her governing policies in Scotland. Marie's early successes have been defined by a strong

French military presence and compromise with Scottish nobles. Marie, like her daughter, later on, found the unique position of being a governing Catholic tolerating a powerful sect of nobles loyal to the Protestant Reformation. Marie of Guise, therefore, had the opportunity to set a precedent for Mary to follow that was unique to their experiences.

Despite Marie's ability to convince the Scottish people that they were her priority, she viewed her arrival and rule in Scotland in the context of the Guise network. The Guise family had strong ties with one another and Marie, moving into a position as Queen of Scotland, could be used to benefit the family that remained in France. She entered Scotland as the wife of James V with the primary goal of gaining popularity and giving birth to a child. She did both successfully. Her French training, specifically under her Guise relations, had encouraged her charm and her Guise genes were equally helpful in producing a daughter, Mary Stuart, future Queen of Scots. This combination of factors earned the fierce loyalty of the Scottish people and, briefly, the Scottish nobles who had been slowly accumulating power after the death of James V.

Despite her popularity during the reign of James V, Marie took time to accumulate enough support to obtain the regency. She allowed a council of noblemen to reign until their unpopularity with the Scottish people toppled their control, with assistance from her well-formed spy network.[13] When the Scottish people became confident that the nobles did not have their best interest at heart, they removed their support for their rule. The Royal Governor's squandering of the estate of the late King James V forced the raising of taxes, which furthered their unpopularity.[14] Marie bid her time before making a move for the regency. Originally, the noblemen that surrounded the regency council attempted to place James Moray, Mary Stuart's half-brother, in a position to share the

[13] Marshall, *Mary of Guise: Queen of Scots*, 136.

[14] Ibid., 137.

regency with Marie. Marie's pro-French policy and pushback against Henry VIII had convinced the population that she had the interest of Scotland at heart more than Moray himself. Her French policy set her up as a direct enemy to Henry VIII, who was Scotland's main antagonist. An alliance with France would offer protection from England. As a result, Marie was able to gain the position of sole regent.[15] This position entailed holding in tension Anti-English and growing Anti-Catholic sentiment.

As she began to accumulate popularity and power, Marie began to occupy a key role in Guise relations, though she did not act only in the French interest.[16] The Guise family was one of the most influential families in France, with ties spreading all across Europe. They occupied a particularly notable place in Scottish, English, and French history that was growing more influential around the time of Mary Stuart's birth. At the head of this network was the Duchess Antoinette of Bourbon, Marie's mother.[17]

For the majority of the regency of Marie of Guise, the Cardinal of Lorraine, Marie's brother who had significant influence over the French court and Mary's education, was deeply involved in the political affairs of Scotland. He rose to power in the French court as a religious and political figure. As his stature in the Church grew, his influence over his Guise relatives also flourished. French participation in political affairs, as well as military presence, put Scotland at ease, even the noblemen who viewed the French as an encroachment on their power. The French seemed to be the only alternative against the English invasion, but this did not mean Scotland was comfortable

[15] Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 32-58.

[16] Marshall, *Mary of Guise: Queen of Scots*, 142.

[17] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 7.

with the French presence.[18] Their fear was rightfully placed considering how adamant the Cardinal of Lorraine was that it was Marie's responsibility to fight back against the Protestant Reformation. [19] This was a direct attack on the power of most of the noblemen and that is why Marie stayed her hand. Her decision to do so would be largely influential in the building of Mary's later religious policy, specifically regarding Protestantism being the primary religion despite the queen being a Catholic ruler.

The political influence of France through the combination of Marie of Guise's regency and the Cardinal of Lorraine's interference was not the only area in which France penetrated the world of Scotland. Marie of Guise and Madeleine of Valois, King James V's first wife, were both Frenchwomen who created a channel through which French culture could gain a foothold in Scotland. Mary's later attraction to Linlithgow and its French chateau design and her leaning toward French doctors, tailors, and apothecaries, was inherited from Marie and further made the nobles uneasy in terms of her Scottish loyalty. [20] Marie of Guise was unabashedly and unapologetically a French woman, however popular she was with the Scottish people because of her youth and protection of them from England.

Her popularity with the Scottish people was counteracted by the attitude of the Scottish nobility. Marie was forced to consider marriage options for Mary at a very young age. The young princes of both England and France served as a possibility for Mary Stuart.[21] Even before her regency, Marie's presence in the Register of the Acts of the Privy Council in the notation "*Presentibus, Regina et Gubernato.* "suggests her influence was substantial on the decision-making

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[18] Marshall, *Mary of Guise: Queen of Scots*, 147.

[19] Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots,* 102.

[20] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 9; Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 13.

[21] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 18; Marshall, *Mary of Guise: Queen of Scots*, 170.

of the Scottish nobility. [22] As she assumed the regency her administrative talent was showcased. She was patient in a way that her daughter struggled to emulate. Marie of Guise, despite aiming for a French marriage, waited for the Scottish population to become accustomed to for such a firm French alliance.[23]

The foregoing discussion is an early example of Marie's patient political skill. When deciding between marriage for Mary between the Protestant prince of England, Edward, and the Catholic prince of France, Francis, religion played an important role. With the reformed faith gaining influence in Scotland, religion was a central source of division and Marie knew better than to cast herself as the enemy of the Reformation. It is this policy of humane religious toleration, even in the face of King Henry II of France's demands, that allowed Protestantism and Marie's popularity to grow.[24] In reality, it was Marie's design to work for the Catholic, French marriage that led her to give concessions to Scottish Reformers, and those concessions continued after the marriage was acquired to maintain her popularity. Shortly after the French marriage was arranged, Mary was sent to France and French troops began to occupy Scotland.

The concessions that Marie made ended up granting the nobility too much space to accumulate power. As their power mounted, they pushed the narrative which identified Protestantism with Scottish nationalism that would carry into Mary's reign. Marie's effort to bring the Highlands into the fold was viewed as an ploy to centralize the Scottish monarchy, which was staunchly opposed by Scottish lords. They preferred to maintain power within their own smaller regions, regardless of the conflict it might cause. They used French tensions and Catholicism to

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[22] Brown, et. Al, *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland.* United Kingdom: General Register House.

[23] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots,* 25

[24] Ibid.

push against an otherwise popular regent.[25] This religious divide was paradoxical in that the Protestants held all of the positions of power, although Catholics comprised the majority of Scots. The Protestant Scottish nobility manipulated Marie's French and Catholic connection to make her seem anti-Scotland rather than protective of the nation's interests and identity. The same issue that originally lent her popularity, caused resentment toward the end of her political career

Eventually, this resentment boiled over into rebellion led by Mary's half-brother, James. Marie preferred to be able to engage in conflict indirectly, through intrigue and political motions but was relegated to action that was only barely supported by her French relations.[26] Marie's attempts to convince the Scots to fight for their country were successful but once she was no longer able to appeal to her people in person, because of her failing health, they gave up hope.[27] Her genuine care for the ordinary people of Scotland was overshadowed by the voices of the nobility that insisted the French presence was a detriment.[28]

When Marie of Guise was deposed as regent in 1559, the end of her reign was met with deep sorrow from her daughter and many of the people in Scotland. Knox viewed it as recompense for the siege of Leith, where Marie was rumored to gloat over Protestant loss of life. The truth of this claim is questionable at best.[29] Marie was confident, especially by the end of her reign, that the religious conflict was more motivated by politics than by genuine faith.[30] She believed that a centralized government and a period of peace was what would bring the country together, giving

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[25] Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 103.
[26] Marshall, *Mary of Guise: Queen of Scots*, 170.

[27] Ibid., 172.

[28] Ibid., 187-188.

[29] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 98.

[30] Marshall, *Mary of Guise: Queen of Scots*, 201.

her the chance to help the common man through things like a reformed judicial system. [31] Marie's attempts at centralizing the Scottish government were met with pushback, even as she conceded the Protestant right to convene publicly.[32] This was the most important precursor to Mary's religious policy. Where Marie bestowed it reluctantly as a peace offering, Mary later would implement it to preserve the status quo.

By the end of Marie's life, she was frail, suffering from swelling in her legs and dropsy in 1560, and was forced to rely on the French forces, which left her weak and open to being overpowered by the noblemen. She died from dropsy in 1560, after her health had been deteriorating for many years, leaving her unable to stand up to push back the noblemen. Marie's relative passivity, particularly at the end of her life left the nobles woefully underprepared for the force of Mary Stuart's personality and effort to build on her mother's policies.

French Education Becomes French Policy

Mary's education was distinctly French, and her understanding of government, social movements, and self-identity bore a French imprint. The French government was infamously grounded in the monarchy and was actively consolidating more power as time went on. Upon her later arrival to Scotland after the death of Francis, Mary would expect that the Scottish monarchy would operate similarly. This expectation of monarchical dominance set her at a disadvantage among Scottish nobles who were accustomed to ruling themselves. The French response to the Wars of Religion that was building during her formative years influenced her handling of religion

[31] Ibid., 205-211.

[32] Ibid., 216.

in Scotland. Mary would deviate from the zero-tolerance policy that her Guise relatives would go on to advocate during the French Wars of Religion but the reputation followed her.[33]

From the moment that she was sent to France at the age of six, Mary's goal was made to succeed in the French court. She was being groomed to be Queen of France by both her Guise relatives and the ruling Valois dynasty through the indoctrination that comprised her education. With the French royal family to guide her education, she had access to a better education than even most of the people in Europe. The curriculum was comprised of languages, rhetoric, history, and poetry. History and languages were considered by her elders to be the most important pieces for governing purposes but Mary found herself to be particularly passionate about poetry. She placed herself under the tutelage of the Pléiade, an innovative and romantic group of poets in France that reacted against the classicists during the Renaissance.[34] Mary succeeded in academics, mostly to the praise of her teachers and her guardians. Her success in the French court in a wider scope was due to her charm and her position of power.

This princely education was accompanied an intense dedication to developing her already blossoming beauty. Mary was educated as a future ruling monarch but still was subject to the expectations of a woman. Her beauty helped her to easily assimilate into the French court.

By charming French courtiers and allowing them to think that both Scotland and England were destined to be under French control, Mary was thrust into a prominent position. She thrived in the atmosphere of affirmation and attention. Equally, she put a lot of pressure on herself to succeed in this manner. When she perceived a failure to do so, she would become physically ill

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[33] Konnert, Mark W. *Early Modern Europe: The Age of Religious War, 1559-1715.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 102-107.

[34] Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 67-72.

and anxious.[35] Even in her success, however, she would occasionally become sick to the point that many feared for her life. Overall, she was successful in the French court and took full advantage of the spotlight, earning particular favor from King Henry II, who saw Francis' marriage to Mary as a piece of a larger French imperialist strategy. In his view, Mary would bring Scotland and England under France as provinces. With this in mind, Henry II granted French citizenship to Scots, which threatened the Scottish ideals of national independence. [36] The Scots had been so long embroiled with the influence of England and then of France that they desired both cultural and political independence. The juxtaposition of the French court and Scottish ideals put Mary at odds with Scottish nobles, who required the Treaty of Haddington to ensure that they had not lost their traditional rights and liberties in this arrangement. Though Antionette of Bourbon had negotiated the treaty, Mary demonstrated understanding of her people by ensuring that this stipulation was made.[37]

John Knox fed into this Franco-phobia intentionally as both an enemy of Marie of Guise and her daughter. Knox argued that by sending Mary to France, Marie had sold her daughter and Scotland out to the French. He hated the attachment to Catholic France and condemned it for the terror he feared it would reap on Scotland and the Reformation that he was working to advance.[38]

Mary's upbringing in France also put her at a disadvantage as much as it threatened the status quo of Scotland. In Mary's absence, Scotland grew more chaotic as noblemen began to fight among themselves and the attempts by the French to govern through Marie only increased

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[35] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 61

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[36] Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 87.

[37] Ibid., 88.

[38] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 34-35.

animosity toward France rather than defusing the already tense situation.[39] Though France's entry to Scotland was initially intended to push out the despised English, resentment toward France only grew in its wake. But in France, Mary remained blissfully unaware of this animosity, even as Marie worked so hard to combat it. The bond between Mary's childhood in France and her marriage to Francis only solidified the French influence that the Scots feared. In this position, Mary came to embody the link between Scotland and France, succeeding the position that her mother held. Where her mother's connection to France was viewed as a protective measure against England, Mary's French upbringing was perceived as a threat to Scottish independence.

The Guises, with the support of Marie herself, undertook a more prominent position in Mary's life to ensure that the Scottish-French connection would not only be made by Francis' family but also Mary's own. [40] In her relationship with the Guises, Mary was able to see the support that Marie was able to rely on as regent of Scotland. With her grandmother at the head of the family, Mary developed a certainty that the family was a dependable source of support. Families kept themselves tightly knit; the job of the individuals was to support the family.

This method was effective enough at amassing power that King Henry II of France feared the Guises discovering his affair with Mary's governess for fear of backlash.[41] Throughout Mary's childhood, the Guise brothers took on more power and responsibility in the French court. François of Guise became Lieutenant-General and the Cardinal took on the responsibilities of a noble that had been captured.[42] Eventually, the Guise accumulated enough power that the king grew tired of

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[39] Ibid., 52.

[40] Ibid., 55.

[41] Frieda, *Catherine De Medici: Renaissance Queen of France*, 99.

[42] Ibid., 109.

them but the support of Queen Catherine de Medici kept them well placed.[43] Mary's rise to a position as Queen of France secured the Guise position. Marie of Guise and the Cardinal of Lorraine followed the example of Duchess Antoinette nearly perfectly in prioritizing family benefits over personal gain. Considering this, Mary learned to trust her family implicitly, even handing over signed blank letters before they were written for her uncle to use at his discretion.[44]

In contrast to the intense familial loyalty of the French Guise, Scottish families were nowhere near as loyal. Most of the Scottish nobility was related in some way and therefore the bonds of family were not taken as seriously. The goal was not to uphold the family name as much as it was to uphold oneself in a position of power. Marie had the luxury of relying on the family she had grown to trust when governing Scotland. Mary's Stuart family did not view familial ties as binding any more than the ties of alliance of convenience. As Mary grew in trust, Scottish nobility grew in duplicity.

The French court taught her courtly charm, beauty, and familial reliance were the key to success. None of these virtues were prioritized in the Scottish court. A ruler brought up in Scotland, who understood the inner workings of the Scottish court would have been prepared for the events of their rule. Mary's time in a centralized court to which she was acclimated left her startlingly ill-prepared for the conflicts of Scotland.

A Cradle Catholic and the Complexities of Private Worship

In France, Mary's Catholicism developed centrality in her life. Her devotion to her baptismal faith, although not marked by excess in asceticism or rigidity, was unwavering. Her

[43] Ibid., 112.

[44] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 55; M. Stuart, *Capital Collections,* 1553.

unbending insistence on the rights of private worship, as well as resistance to conversion, played a large role in the distrust that her nobles had in her. Her time in the French court was particularly influential in developing her Catholic faith. From the age of six, Mary was invested in her faith. Marie allowed her French relatives and the French royals to take the lead on Mary's secular education, but she remained personally and heavily involved in Mary's religious education. Marie demanded that Mary was to attend daily mass, have both a French and Scottish personal chaplain at her disposal, and was to receive only from her personal communion vessels. These efforts were not wasted, and Mary was remarkably excited to receive her first Holy Communion.[45]

The tenent of Holy Communion being the "source and summit"[46] of the Catholic faith was one of the defining theological teachings that differentiates the Catholic Church from Protestantism. The Eucharist in the Catholic Church is the bread and wine that "become Christi's Body and Blood" during the consecration of the Catholic Mass.[47] The Council of Trent, which reasserted this, took place in three periods between 1545 and 1563, beginning before Mary's arrival in France, resuming during her upbringing there, and concluding after her return to Scotland. Her uncle, the Cardinal of Lorraine, who played a significant role in her education, also played a major role in the confirmation of the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation at the Council of Trent. This doctrine confirmed that the Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Christ during the Mass.[48] Mary's excitement to receive her first Holy Communion is an early indicator of where her personal religious devotion lay. Protestantism's direct attack on the Eucharist, as she would have

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[45] Ibid., 50-51.

[46] Catechism of the Catholic Church 135-138, n.d. *Vatican Archive.* Accessed Online November 19, 2021. https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/__P3X.HTM.

[47] Ibid., 1333.

[48] Evernnett, *The Cardinal of Lorraine and the Council of Trent: a study in the Counter-Reformation*. O'Connell, The Counter Reformation 1559-1610 (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1930), 93-103.

viewed it, defined the greatest divide between Catholicism and Protestantism. Most Calvinists typically believe that the bread and wine are symbolic of the Body and Blood. As a child, she was excited because of the gravity that was placed on the sacrament, and that her later insistence upon her right to Mass in her private chapel at Holyrood as a young queen indicated a deep personal piety.

If the sincerity of Mary's faith is called into doubt later, it cannot be questioned in her youth. There is no marked change in the way she approaches her faith as she grows, which indicates that it did not fade and might have even grown stronger with time, particularly under duress. Though her personal devotion appears at odds with her toleration of Protestantism, the standards Marie set for her religious education also set the precedent that faith is a private thing. With two private chaplains to say Mass for her and her own communion vessels, it is not surprising that Mary did not grow up to see a contradiction between her personal faith and the public faith of a country, whether she ruled it or not.

Feminine Charm, A Danger, and an Asset

As noted earlier, Mary's femininity, delicate charm, and vivaciousness were staunchly encouraged in the French court. The culture of France and Scotland were at odds with each other in many ways. The French court emphasized behind-the-scenes deals, elegance, and charm that were ultimately aimed toward monarchical loyalty. The Scottish court placed more emphasis on the power of the nobility, military strength, and masculine aggression. The way that Mary was taught to present herself was distinctly feminine and French. The nobles in Scotland interpreted this as weakness.

Understanding that Mary was acutely affected by the praise and criticism of those around her is highly instructive in understanding the dangers that Mary put herself in later in her life. This sensitivity was regarded at the time as feminine and at odds with the requirements of a queen. If the domestic slight or social insult was enough to make her ill in France, where she was ultimately protected by the power of the French monarchy, the criticisms and betrayals that were commonplace in Scotland were liable to put an immense strain on her.[49] This strain was viewed by the noblemen, already in power in Scotland, as evidence of her feminine frailty, something they intended to take full advantage of upon her rise to power.

Mary's femininity was encouraged in France and did not have the same damning consequences that it had in Scotland. Diane de Poitiers was the mistress of King Henry II and during Mary's childhood was one of the three most powerful women in France. The other two were Catherine de Medici and the Duchess Antionette of Guise, who took on traditional mother roles as their defining character traits. It was to Mary's misfortune that her personality bore more similarities to the mistress, Diane de Poitiers, than it did to either Queen Catherine or Duchess Antoinette. The Roman goddess Diana was a symbol that both Diane and Mary adopted at various points in their lives and was representative of the sort of feminine charm that they sought to exhibit. These similarities were utilized to accuse Mary of having been corrupted by de Poitiers, regardless of how Mary conducted herself.[50] Throughout her time in France, however, this charm served her well and quickly made her a favorite of nearly everyone who encountered her.

The combination of this charm and her feminine submission to her guardians meant that she was an adventurous but well-behaved child. Her sensitivity was balanced out by a sense of

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[49] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 61.

[50] Ibid., 69.

humor that brought her to prominence. Her uncles took full advantage of the lessons she was taught about the role of a woman as inferior to men as a means of attaching themselves to the rise of a young and beautiful Queen.[51] Unfortunately for Mary, the combination of familial trust and indoctrinated femininity resulted in her not possessing the strength of will to doubt or push against her uncles. This is not to say that she did not take an interest in Scottish politics. Many of the letters contained in Capital Collections at the Museum in Edinburgh reveal evidence that she took a great interest in the details of Scottish politics, even with a regent in place. She took direct action in markets, an interesting place for a young queen to start with such little experience regarding money. The fact that her interest lay firmly in both politics and poetry led her to romanticize the role that she would have in Scotland

Even in her youth, her feminine charm became a notable claim to fame, drawing the valued attention of many. The French court encouraged this in a girl destined to be a queen taking power in Scotland and England to simply place them under the care of the King of France. Mary had the example of Catherine de Medici, an influential figure in the French court and politics, to look up to as a mentor. Her control over the education of Mary Stuart meant that she was influential in Mary's image of a queen. Catherine was first and foremost a matriarch and her position as Queen Mother defined the reign of her sons. A woman this powerful in the court of France during Mary's youth was not overlooked by her or by the nobles that surrounded them.

One of the major tools that Catherine de Medici utilized in her reign was that of creating intrigue. Catherine de Medici, during the Wars of Religion particularly, did not hold the military or political power to overrule the Protestant population outrightly. The skill she did hold, however, was that of creating division between her nobles. By creating social and political drama in the

[51] Ibid.

French court, she generated enough excitement that accumulating power did not become the priority of the court around her, even in a court infamous for its "relative decorum."[52] Following the untimely death of her husband, Henry II due to a tournament accident, Catherine de Medici successfully prioritized her position as a mother and an intriguer as the key to maintaining power through the affection of her sons. Mary's inability to learn the latter skill of intrigue in conjunction with the former would place her in a precarious position later.[53]

Mary's femininity caused her to focus on the aspects of youth and charm rather than those of the mature matriarch, Catherine. Her similarities to Diane de Poitier led her in the direction of court pleasure and the development a vibrant personality rather than the calculated and infamous maneuvers that either a Catherine de Medici or even a Marie of Guise. Mary's childhood could either lead her to great heights or damn her. Her love of risk did not provide her with the calculations required of the feminine intrigue that might have complimented her religious life.

Scottish Religious and Political Reformation:

While Mary's personal and religious life was developing, so too was the political climate of Scotland was evolving in her absence. A huge detriment to Marie's later ruling years was that Scottish politics were becoming an increasingly volatile mixture of religious tensions, noble factionalism, and foreign influence.

The Reformation was gaining influence in England as a result of Henry VII's creation of the Church of England and was prepared to spread westward. While it did not take effective roots

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[52] Frieda, Leonie. 2006. *Catherine De Medici: Renaissance Queen of France* . New York: Harper Perenial, 115.

[53] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 103.

in Ireland, Scotland eagerly responded as a means of gaining English favor. In France, the Cardinal of Lorraine encouraged Catherine de Medici not to arrest Protestant preachers to avoid aggravating an already tense situation, which prefigured Mary's handling of the Protestant Reformation.[54] The Governor's support of Henry VIII and his dissolution of the monasteries was used as a ploy to ally himself with the English over the French, who stood behind Marie of Guise. In response to the Rough Wooing and French military presence that had taken root in Scotland, the nobles began taking sides on one or the other, even before Mary was sent to France. As nobles gained power, their conflict took on a grander scale. The English faction became united in Protestantism and the French faction took on the Catholic identity. At the time that Mary was sent away, the Catholic faction was almost as powerful as the Protestant, a balance that Mary would learn to keep in tension.

The Protestant faction held control over the government because of the number of Protestants in the regency circle. By the time Marie of Guise moved into the regency position, Protestantism had cemented itself as the official religion of Scotland. The idea that Protestantism was the religion of the masses outside of Edinburgh itself, however, was a myth propagated by John Knox and the Protestant elites. [55] Religious fervor was in short supply in the seat of power, on the sides of both Catholics and Protestants but not for those who practiced the faiths both publicly and privately throughout Scotland. The Calvinist minority aimed to determine the religious policy of Scotland, particularly through the town council,[56] but the Catholics would not have adopted a radically different policy if they controlled the regency.

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[54] Frieda, *Catherine De Medici: Renaissance Queen of France*, 103.

[55] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 122.

[56] Ibid., 133-134.

The situation that Mary would eventually encounter was one of mutual disdain that only rarely resulted in actual persecution. The private worship of Catholics was not often questioned outside of Edinburgh, and that was only because Edinburgh was under the hold of John Knox. Catholicism still had particularly strong roots in the Highlands and the rise of Protestantism relied on the unspoken rule to not interfere with the Highland clans because they consisted of the vast majority of Catholics.[57] The status quo that evolved in Mary's absence, rather than being an actual policy, was a balance of actions and reactions depending on where the lines were drawn. Religion was just the clearest way to set noble factions against each other because it was through infighting that individuals gained power.

Since religion's prominence in Scottish politics was not often based on intense devotion, Marie's solution of relative tolerance should have been far easier to implement. She only begs the "heretik[s]"[58] to convert back to Catholicism but does not exact punishment of any kind during her time as regent, regardless of the desire of the French government. When her brother took up the position of the French equivalent of Inquisitor, more pressure was placed on her to keep Scotland Catholic.[59] In contrast to her daughter's later reign, Marie's role as a regent, subject to the opinions of nobles to an even greater degree, left little room for anything but tolerance. Even this somewhat forced tolerance, however, was viewed by many as a weakness of character, rather than as a positive trait as it is today.

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[57] Ibid., 14.

[58] Brown, et. Al, *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland.* United Kingdom: General Register House., 64.

[59] Frieda*, Catherine De Medici: Renaissance Queen of France*, 111.

John Knox took advantage of this perceived weakness of the regent, Marie, and used it as an opportunity to open her up to public criticism. John Knox's critique of Marie was not founded solely on Marie's rule. It was mostly a reactionary policy to Mary Tudor. He then extrapolated his reasoning to apply to Marie of Guise and then her daughter. His philosophy was relatively all-encompassing. He claimed that "Rule by women opposed God's will" because there was no biblical precedent for female rule other than Deborah, who took on such a role through a Divine exemption.[60] He argued that in his time, God had made this exception for Elizabeth on account of her Protestant beliefs.

The foundation of Knox's belief originated from the theology developed by John Calvin that female governance was unnatural and against the way things were meant to be in Eden and heaven. The idea of subverting the natural order inherently meant defying God's will. Nevertheless, Knox was faced with a world where female rulers were becoming nearly normalized, regardless of how similar they might be to the biblical Deborah. The defining difference between Knox and Calvin is that the former believed dissimilarity to Deborah was enough cause for rebellion while Calvin did not.

Marie's tolerance of Protestantism and even willingness to acknowledge it as the official faith of the nation did not do much to appease Knox. He continued to argue the two reasons to reject female rule. He argued that "(1) God's commands had made it a virtue for a woman to serve man, and (2) God's punishment of Eve had put a woman in subjection to man."[61] He believed that women on the throne was punishment for the sins of a nation, even punishment for having accepted a

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[60] Healey, Robert M., and John Knox. 1994. *"Waiting for Deborah*," *The Sixteenth Century Journal,* 371.

[61] Ibid., 376.

female ruler in the first place.[62] This was his explanation for Mary Stuart's reign following that of Marie of Guise, both of whom were Catholic women.

Knox supported the Scottish Parliamentary motion to establish Protestantism for two reasons. As a zealous Protestant, he believed the Catholic Church to be so corrupt that anyone who followed it would bring God's wrath upon the world. Furthermore, the Scottish Reformation cemented itself through a Parliamentary act, rather than one spearheaded, or even approved, by the queen. By backing the Reformation, the Scottish nobles were able to cement their stake in the government. [63]

The most powerful of these noble individuals saw themselves as co-rulers with the queen and regents.[64] The others could not accumulate wealth and influence and therefore had to rely on alliances. These alliances with each other as royals and regents were fluid. Especially during Mary's youth, when a rotating council of regents was in power in Scotland before Marie took control, the image of nobles as being protectors of Scotland developed. Through this image was how they justified their continually shifting allegiances and later did not feel they owed Mary their loyalty. This situation contrasted greatly with the revered monarchy of France, which both Mary and Marie were accustomed to.

Lord James Stewart, who was Mary's half-brother from one of James V's affairs, took the opportunity to resist Marie, withholding his influential support. His attempts at brokering a deal with Marie were backed by negotiations with Queen Elizabeth I of England's advisor, William Cecil.[65] Elizabeth I played a careful game in Scotland, allowing the Scottish nobles to risk being

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[62] Ibid.

[63] Fraser, M*ary Queen of Scots,*103.

[64] Guy*, Mary Queen of Scots,* 89.

[65] Ibid., 104.

accused of treason and deposing Marie themselves. Her failing health and waning French support made her an easy target and bolstered the confidence of the Scottish lords. They replaced her regency with that of a council of twenty-four, which gave them the freedom and ability to increase the power of the nobility and further decentralize the Scottish government.[66]

Mary's role in these circumstances was as large as she could manage, limited by both the nobles and her Guise relations. Her letters back and forth, granting royal allocations and market alterations were her attempts to stay involved in the business of running Scotland.[67] The regency council did their best to keep her from being extremely involved for fear that she would return to Scotland to gain control.[68] She was considered a foreigner by the time Marie was forced off the throne and the nobles were not keen on welcoming her back to a position of power, especially as a Catholic Frenchwoman. Her purpose in France was to maintain the French alliance and the protection that it earned.[69] Her Catholicism was considered to be an unfortunate byproduct of this 'auld alliance.' Her relationship with the Church, connected her in the minds of the nobles to extreme wealth that the Catholic Church was infamous for at that time. However strong her personal faith was, she could not freely access their funding. This further condemned her in the eyes of the Protestant nobles, who had been operating without oversight from a royal or the Pope, since the death of Marie and were growing to fear influence from the young queen.

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[66] Marshall, *Mary of Guise: Queen of Scots*, 138.

[67] Duke of Chastlerault, James. 1553. "Capital Collections." July. Accessed April 2021. https://www.capitalcollections.org.uk/view-item?key=T3siUCI6eyJ0eXBlIjoxLCJpZHMiOls2ODE4XX19&WINID=1634329611939#nFaVIhF7aCwAAAF8haK32w/50636; Stuart, Mary. 1553. "Capital Collections." July. Accessed April 2021. https://www.capitalcollections.org.uk/view-item?key=T3siUCI6eyJ0eXBlIjoxLCJpZHMiOls2ODE4XX19&WINID=1634329611939&pg=9#nFaVIhF7aCwAAAF8haK32w/50627.

[68] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 111.

[69] Ibid., 22.

Conclusion

Mary Stuart's attitudes and policies drew direct inspiration from her mother, Marie of Guise. Both were Catholic and French women forced to navigate the rule of a country with complex courtly relations that they were not raised to understand. Marie defied the influence of her brother and the king of France in favor of maintaining control over the Scottish nobles that were steadily gaining power. Marie navigated the Scottish government to blaze a trail for her daughter. A monarch with a French and distinctly feminine style, as well as a strong Catholic faith, she saw the value in perpetrating factionalism.

It was natural for Mary to replicate her mother Marie's policies because of the similarities between their education, experience, and political indoctrination. Mary's growth in the French court led to her viewing monarchy as the French did: a strong monarch of divine right, with centralized administration, supported by ambitious nobles who remained fundamentally loyal to the monarchy. Her personality flourished under the protection of the French court. As she matured, she learned to care about and even intervene in the affairs taking place in Scotland without having to reap the consequences. Most importantly, she viewed the Scottish monarchy through a French lens.

In this environment, her femininity was encouraged and flourished. She began to see the uses of intrigue and charm. While she took to charming the court and the people naturally, her development of intrigue as a skill was remiss. She lacked the instinct for intrigue, though she wreaked the consequences of having Diane de Poitiers associated with her name. To a degree, the examples set by both her mother and Catherine de Medici resonated with her enough to teach her that popularity with the people would be an advantage, and motherhood itself was essential for a woman in power.

Similarly, her mother's influence in the form of religious education centered on the doctrines and sacraments of the Church, helped Mary's Catholicism flourish. Her devotion to the Catholic faith was prominent in her life from a young age and was the foundation out of which her religious policy grew. Though she would go on to refuse the persecution of Protestants and even accept their faith as the official religion of Scotland, she never entertained the idea of conversion. The adversity she later faced only strengthened this faith that was established in her youth.

In many ways, it was precisely this Catholic faith that seeded resentment in the Scotland that she had left behind as a child. As Mary grew more acclimated to a centralized French government, Scotland decentralized. Mary's expectation of noble loyalty was disproven when her sickly mother was deposed, but it did not change her perspective. The Scottish Reformers became the most significant pillar of government, countered by the Catholics only through the strength of the French. As resentment for France and Catholicism increased in Scotland, its Queen grew up in France only to become a French-style monarch devout in the Catholic faith.

Chapter II

Balancing the Noble Factions and Holding the Throne

Factionalism in the Scottish Nobles:

When Mary Stuart landed in Scotland, the environment required her to keep many factors in mind. The nobles had spent the last eighteen years in near-complete control of everything in Scotland. Despite the factional infighting, the moment Mary landed at Leith, the nobles had a common enemy. Scotland was balanced precariously between French and English influence. Mary was an outsider, a Frenchwoman, and a Catholic. The implementation of any form of religious policy would require Mary to maintain a balance of factors. Addressing the religious question placed her in a position between loyalty to her faith and maintaining power in Scotland

The Scottish noblemen and Mary both had to work with the conflicting interests of England and France in addition to the influences within Scotland itself. The court of Scotland was radically unlike the French court of Mary's childhood. Having grown up under the wing of the Guise family, Mary's instinct was to rely on her family. Her illegitimate half-brother, James, was one of the most powerful nobles in Scotland.[70] She expected that he would be a reliable resource for her. Upon her arrival in 1561, she did not duly consider the role that James and his supporters had played in the deposition of her mother.[71] She nevertheless felt that if she could succeed in persuading him to her side, she would have a foothold on which to rely.

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[70] Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 119.

[71] Ibid., 138.

Mary was immediately faced with the decision regarding the composition of her Privy Council. Whomever she allowed on her Privy Council would have the ability to influence not only her decision-making but also would have more power than the rest of the nobles with whom she was forced to contend. To maintain the status quo, particularly in religion, she placed seven Protestants in her Privy Council of twelve. Her innermost council was comprised of Maitland of Lethington and the Earl of Morton, who were her brother's main supporters, and her brother James, Earl of Moray, himself.[72]

By December 2, 1561, she was willing to give James the ability to preside over a court in Jedburgh.[73] While Mary's arrival in Scotland inherently removed some of the power from the nobles, particularly from her half-brother, she also made concessions. Mary's decision to grant James the ability to preside over a court is one example of this. She allowed certain nobles, particularly those who held prominent positions to maintain a certain level of their power that she could afford to disperse. This policy exemplified the balance that she was trying to establish between her nobles.

The best way that she could find to implement this balance was by using religion, the cause for major divisions between the nobles and even between different regions of Scotland. It was an easy line to use for division. The wealthy people in the cities tended to lean towards the official religion of Protestantism. The Highlands, maintained their ways of life and left almost entirely untouched by the cities, remained firm in their Catholicism. Religion represented the difference.

Factionalism emerged as a major political tool for Mary. Raised in the political environment of France, she already recognized that when nobles and their families were divided

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[72] Ibid.

[73] Brown, et al, *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland,* 187-188.

against each other, they could not rise against a monarch. Mary's goal was simply to maintain the division that they had already created. Her selection of nobles to her Privy Council was set with the goal of "creating a broad coalition of advisors willing to subordinate their private quarrels to royal interests."[74] This is inspired by her time in France, where division among the most powerful magnates ensured that no faction could undermine the power of the monarch.

Rather than having the centralism of the French monarchy, Mary was forced to rely upon her political skill and the creation of law. There is a fine line between using factionalism as a tool to keep her otherwise powerful nobles from unifying against her and creating a nation too sharply divided along clear regional, cultural, and theological lines. If these divisions became too firm, Mary could have had a civil war sweeping across Scotland. One of the methods of ensuring these rivalries did not exacerbate the situation was codifying forgiveness. In 1561, she decreed that "under the pane of dishonour, infamy, and defamatioun," one of the nobles could not be attacked.[75] Her fiscal and military weakness meant that she relied on her popularity with the common people and on the military of her allies who assisted her in passing the law to enforce it.

This tactic was effective insofar as it kept nobles busy enough not to revolt against her. Once things escalated to a certain point, however, factionalism was no longer an effective tool for her to maintain power and loyalty. George Gorden the Elder, Earl of Huntly, notably a disgruntled Catholic, was the first to rebel enough so that Mary had to address his conduct within the context of the Privy Council. On October 27, 1562, it was recorded that "Forsamekill as George Erle of

[74] Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots,* 138.

[75] Brown, et al, *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland,* 183.

Huntlie, continewand in his tressonable conspiraciis, is cumand fordwart towert this burch of Abirdene, of deter mit purpois to persew our Soverane Ladeis propir persone."[76]

A key piece of this tactic was the enforcement of the policy. Since otherwise, an empty threat would be easily dismissed. The Gordons were a powerful family, but they were not so powerful that making an example of them would create long-term difficulty for her. On September 10, 1562, John Gordon was tried "for the contempt and in obedience committed by him."[77] Moreover, strict enforcement allowed her to periodically reshuffle her alliances, an additional benefit

This political instability was nothing like the hardline loyalties of France, but Mary quickly learned the necessity of allowing nobles the hope of edging their way back into power. While the reshuffling of alliances was disorienting to Mary; it was even more disorienting for the nobles falling in and out of favor. In addition to religion, the other factor that forced the alignment of Scottish lords back in the air was the question of Mary's marriage. Protestant or Catholic, from Scotland or abroad, were only a few of the factors that Mary had to consider when choosing a spouse.

Speculations regarding Mary's marriage plans forced the Scottish nobles to reshuffle their alliances around a new card being inserted to the deck. Introducing a new king would force every player to rethink how he might want to play his hand. Every single line of allegiance of Mary's future husband would influence who would have control over him. Domestic or international, family relations, and wealth all played a role, but none so big as the role that religion would play, regardless of how devout he was.

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[76] Ibid., 218.

[77] Ibid., 222.

On the surface, Mary's decision to marry Henry Darnley, a Catholic English Lord, should have been a perfectly neutral choice. It was impossible to account for the flippant, malleable nature that Darnley possessed, and so effectively hid. The power that he gained from Mary went directly to his head and made him a liability. When Mary Stuart, Queen of Scotland, married Henry Darnley on July 29, 1565, she changed the direction of her factionalist policy.

Popularity and Pushback

Upon Mary's arrival in Scotland, her popularity immediately soared. Mary was the young, long-awaited queen arriving to combat the selfish greed of the nobles who had been governing the realm. Catholics were overjoyed at the return of a Catholic monarch. Protestants were only slightly fearful of her Catholicism but were secure enough to be excited by her youth and vivacity. John Knox and the powerful Protestant nobles were the exceptions. With so much to lose to a popular Catholic Queen, the most influential people hesitated in their support of Mary's return.

John Knox had been the loudest voice against Marie of Guise when she had held the regency. Mary had little reason to believe that his sentiments had changed from when he said to her mother, "These things may easily abash the mind of a woman; but yet if ye shall a little consider with me the causes why that ye ought to hazard all for the glory of God in his behalf, the former terrors shall suddenly vanish."[78] Knox's hopes for Marie's conversion were not likely to be any different for Mary. He had told Marie that conversion to Protestantism would cure her of her distress over her many struggles.

Upon Mary's arrival, Knox had the choice of how to engage with the queen. Burned by the behavior of her mother, Knox took an aggressive approach. He exclaimed that he had a right to his

[78] Healey and Knox, *"Waiting for Deborah,"* 379.

religious opinion regardless of her official position, he "shall be as well content to live under [her] as St. Paul under Nero."[79] This personal attack, which occurred in the context of a meeting between Knox and Mary regarding religion, hit the fairly sensitive Mary hard. He was combative and anticipating a fight that she did not intend to pick.

In 1556, Scottish bishops had condemned him on account of heresy. Knox's sense of his calling as a preacher were not confined to doctrine and private morality. Politics were inherently ingrained in his sense of the preaching mission. Knox had sent a letter to Marie appealing for his right to preach his faith in his native land. His plea was denied then and he expected the same hostile reception from Marie's daughter.

After he met with Mary, Knox took to the pulpit to condemn her rule on account of her sex and her religion. He claimed that he would prefer another invading army to land in Scotland than to allow the Catholic Mass to be celebrated there.[80] The only legal Mass occurring in Scotland was in Mary's private chapel but this did not much matter to Knox. What mattered even less in his rhetoric was that Mass had been occurring in the Highlands nearly uninterrupted even under the regency of the Protestant Governing Council. Mary was then confronted with the choice of whether she would confront Knox about his insurgency. On September 4, Mary Stuart called John Knox into a royal audience to address his rebellious sentiments against both her mother and herself, his dismissal of the authority of female monarchs in "The First Blast of the Trumpet," the uproar he caused in England, and even an accusation of necromancy.[81] The conversation did not go well, setting up Knox firmly as an enemy of her reign.

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[79] Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots,* 136.

[80] Healey and Knox, *"Waiting for Deborah,"* 382.

[81] Ibid.

Knox reiterated his sentiments that he was St. Paul to her Emperor Nero but at this point, he gave further information for the basis of his rebellion. He stated "If the realm finds no inconvenience from the regiment of a woman, that which they approve shall I not further disallow than within my breast, but shall be as well content to live under your Grace as Paul was to live under Nero; and my hope is, that as long as that ye defile not your hands with the blood of the saints of God, that neither I nor that book shall either hurt you or your authority..."[82] The reign of Marie of Guise had left a bad taste in his mouth and the aggressive Catholicism of Mary Tudor had set him up to dismiss feminine rule altogether. Utilizing biblical explanation, he dismissed Mary's reign as inherently tyrannical because of her sex. She had no reason to suspect that John Knox did not speak for the powerful Protestant parties.

His opinion that she was an idolatress, was founded on her Catholicism and that she was "a woman guided by hot and uncontrollable outpourings of passion instead of cool reason."[83] Knox's assumption that she was guided by passion was Mary's refusal to convert to Protestantism, which would have been, to him, the only natural result of leading from the head. Furthermore, Knox believed that Catholic women, and more specifically, Mary, were driven by sexual desire and this nature made her a harlot.[84] Knox was the progenitor of the idea that Mary was a sexually driven harlot which only played into the Virgin/Whore dichotomy. Because Knox was content to hold Elizabeth I up as the Virgin Queen, Mary Stuart fulfilled the opposite role based solely on religious allegiance.

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[82] Ibid., 382-383.

[83] Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 170.

[84] Ibid.

Queen of Scotland, French Queen Consort, and English Heir to the Throne

Mary Stuart had the issues of a closely related Scottish nobility and a lack of economic resources. Her claim to the throne was reliant on her father's bloodline, descended from the Bruces. Yet, the other noble Scots derived their lines from the same person to a further degree. Therefore, her bloodline was not enough. Moreover, she did not have the wealth to impose her will on the nobles without external political, financial, and even military support.

As Queen Consort of France and the heir to the English throne, Mary had the possibility of foreign backing to solidify her power as a monarch. Pressure was put on Mary to confirm her right of succession in England. With Knox and her nobles attempting to plot against her, aided and encouraged by some of Elizabeth's most rabidly Protestant advisers, Mary had to contend with opposition among some of the most powerful of her own people as she sought assurance of what she believed was her legitimate right to the English throne.[85]

Mary's attempts at building a diplomatic relationship with Elizabeth Tudor were tempered by the resentment Elizabeth held for her from her time in France and the ire of her nobles. On one hand, Elizabeth would offer her friendship. On the other, the English Queen's advisors would finance the nobles rebelling against her. In moments like these, Mary would lean on the threat of French support.[86] Although Mary rarely received actual aid from her French relations, the fear of a French invasion was enough to keep England out of directly interfering with Scottish politics. France and England kept each other at bay with Mary square in the middle.

[85] Ibid., 130.

Mary played an important role in England's discussion of succession for a couple of reasons. The first was that Elizabeth's claim to the throne was shaky as a result of her mother, Anne Boleyn, being delegitimized. Catholics, as well as other dissenters, did not consider Elizabeth to be the rightful queen and quickly observed that Mary had a very strong claim to the throne through her grandmother Margaret Tudor. Although England was a Protestant country, there was strong support brewing for Mary in England, especially among its Catholics. Elizabeth had to engage with Mary Stuart who could at any time be a lightning rod for a rebellion of English Catholics.[87] Mary and Elizabeth maintained an uneasy relationship contingent on the former's decision to continue with the status quo in Scotland and not push the international Catholic agenda.

Yet, maintaining the status quo was not the path to universal appeasement. The Pope had found Mary's religious policy lacking because she allowed Protestantism to flourish. Knowing this, she had the political training to know that her French relations would have a better chance of coercing Pope Pius IV out of frustration. She needed to maintain her policy without losing the support of the Catholics abroad. She relied on the Cardinal of Lorraine to convince Pope Pius IV that she was doing everything within "[her] inclination and [her] ability" to promote the Catholic faith.[88]

She needed papal support because of the money that the pope could provide. Moray's rebellion in the name of Protestantism allowed for the perfect opportunity for Mary to showcase that she was a thoroughly Catholic Queen. She required more financing to effectively wage war against a Protestant cause. Although the political strategy generally had very little to do with religion, the Pope did not know this. [89]Mary was able to utilize religion as a tool even against the foreign power of the papacy. Mary

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[87] Ibid., 151.

[88] Stuart, Mary, edited Agnes Strickland. *Letters of Mary, Queen of Scots.* (London, H. Colburn, 1844), 42.

[89] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 234-235.

knew that her uncle had the ear of the Pope, but she also was not naïve enough to imagine that she could leave it entirely to France.

As noted above, Mary Stuart, raised in the French court, was a charmer. She was skilled with words and used this talent to maintain a friendship with both Elizabeth and the Pope. She had to convince Elizabeth that she would not alter the state of religion but also assure Pope Pius IV that she would change things if she could. She wrote:

> It is ever our intention, since our return to this kingdom, to employ, as we have done, our studies, thoughts, labour, and manneres, such as it has pleased God to give us, in bringing back to the truth our poor subjects, whom we have with the greatest displeasure found to have wandered from the good path and to be plunged in the new opinions and damnable errors which are now prevalent in many places of Christendom; we are extremely annoyed that the evil of the time is so great as to prevent us from doing our duty, as we desire, I the assembly of this holy council; and we implore your Holiness to believe that this proceeds from no defeat on our part in doing all that is possible to send thither a number of the prelates of our kingdom, of whom a great portion is absent.[90]

Her direct correspondence with the Pope was simultaneously meant to convince the pontiff not only of her dedication to the Catholic cause but it was also meant to maintain her alliance with France. With France in the chaos of the Wars of Religion, Mary knew that it was in a vulnerable state. Her ability to aid France economically at that time could lead to them lending her additional, possible military, aid should she require it in the future. She encouraged economic trade to prosper between Scotland and France and even went so far as to codify it.[91]

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[90] Stuart, ed. Strickland, *Letters of Mary, Queen of Scots,*142.

[91] Brown, et al, *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland,* 222.

A Feminine Ruler

As discussed previously, Mary's femininity was considered out of place in the eyes of the Scottish noblemen. They did not hold an appreciation of her charm that the French court did. For it to be an asset, she would need to alter the dynamics of Scotland. Luckily for Mary, she was skilled at inverting expectations.

Even in France, where propriety was highly valued, Mary had developed an enjoyment in the subversion of expectations, particularly where it applied to gender norms. She was infamous for "frolics and high jinks that inverted sexual or social stereotypes."[92] She was tall and tberefore enjoyed dressing up as a beggarman to test the charity of her court. This indicates both her sentimental side and her lack of regard for gender roles.

Mary was further aware of Knox's arguments against a female ruler and that they were founded on her sex. Her life would have been undeniably easier had she been born a man. She would not have needed to contend with the misogyny that was rampant in her court. She wished to be a man because she wished "to lie all night in the fields, or to walk on the causeway with a jack and a knapscall, a Glasgow buckler and a broadsword."[93] She wished for freedom, not for the ability to rule without question.

With Mary' accession to the Scottish throne, Knox further radicalized his rhetoric. He argued that God had commanded that a woman should serve man and that this was a result of Eve's subjugation to Adam.[94] Following this logic, Mary could not rule because she was required by virtue to be subservient to her Privy Council. She could not oversee her Privy Council or her

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[92] Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 151.

[93] Ibid., 158.

[94] Healey and Knox, "*Waiting for Deborah,"* 372.

male subjects. This logic also increased the dangers that accompanied Mary's marriage prospects. Catholics and foreign princes would be her overseer and would be able to manipulate Scotland into whatever they wished.

Marriage remained the solution. By marrying, succession and reputation would both be ensured. In England, Elizabeth's advisors had been attempting to convince her for many years that marriage was a valuable political strategy. Elizabeth's fear of subjugation and overthrow kept this proposition at bay. This same rhetoric followed in Scotland.[95] Mary had grown up in France where subservience in marriage was key. If she were to marry, the expectation was that she would follow the standard dynamic seen in France and other courts. Mary had no intention of submitting to a husband she had not begun to select, particularly when there were so many people involving themselves in the search.

Elizabeth hoped that Mary would marry someone that she could influence and promised to name Mary heir if she followed her recommendation. The Privy Council wanted one of their own on the throne and considered themselves to be her guardian in this arena. Similarly, her French family became extremely involved in the courtship process. One foreign suitor, the Prince of Condé, did not connect with her or her people directly. Rather, he issued a proposal to her Guise family, promising that he would manage the Protestants.[96] He entreated the people with neither investment in the state of Scotland nor involvement in its affairs for her hand in marriage with the promise that he could manage the Scots with whom they had no connection. The Guise still viewed Mary as an extension of their power and intended to use her to their advantage and her suitors understood that expectation.

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[95] Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 161.

[96] Stuart, ed. Strickland, *Letters of Mary, Queen of Scots,* 145.

Knox had a conception of her autonomy that he viewed as being inherently dangerous. Her place in society and her sexuality made her "a manipulative siren whose moral defects and unfitness for the rule was evident from her dancing, banquets, and flaunted sexuality."[97] Her delay in making a marriage decision only cemented this thought that he had already held for so long.

Knox's anxieties surrounding Mary's subservience to a husband who may have been foreign or Catholic were at odds with the anxieties surrounding Mary not submitting to the natural order. Should she have married someone that would have combatted the Reformation, she would, theologically, be obligated to follow his lead? In his mind, the only acceptable solution was a Scottish Protestant. This is the standard understanding of marriage that Mary had to contend with but Mary hadprimarily her own interest in mind. The anxieties that surrounded her with possible matches were eased when she refused matches abroad, she did so because they were "less serviceable for the advancement of my interest."[98]

Personal Faith and Public Policy

Mary struck a unique balance between her public religious policy and her religion that required constant maintenance and balance. Her maintenance of Protestantism as the official state religion while maintaining her Catholicism created a dichotomy that alienated her from her noblemen and her French support. It did, however, increase her popularity.

Mary Stuart entered Scotland as a beautiful, young queen who stood in a position to change the state of Scotland. The state of Scotland was incumbent upon religion. While her French roots and her Catholicism made her incredibly unpopular with the nobles, her subjects found her

[97] Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 170.

[98] Stuart, ed. Strickland, *Letters of Mary, Queen of Scots,* 146.

alluring. This is because most of them were still Catholic themselves. Outside of Edinburgh and the city centers, Catholicism had greater numbers. From them, she had full support.[99]

The question of her religion was a defining characteristic of her early days. She made a few facts plain. The first was that she would not convert. The second was that neither would anyone else. Mary asked for Mass to be celebrated in her private chapel. Knox attempted to convince the nobles, specifically her half-brother, that "to allow the queen to have a Mass publicly or privately within the realm of Scotland would betray the cause of God and expose religion to the uttermost danger."[100]

The goal of Knox and the major Protestant players was to completely remove Catholicism from Scotland.[101] A Catholic Queen was going to make that all but impossible, particularly considering the level of her devotion. Her refusal to convert made her "proceeding from evil to worse."[102] They feared that she would attempt to rip their religion from them. The fact that she had already pronounced that she would not fail to comfort them entirely.[103] She needed an opportunity to prove herself.

The Earl of Huntly provided one. He had been the leader of the Catholic nobles for some time. He began spouting the idea that Mary had not been doing enough for the Catholic cause. His rhetoric evolved from words to a call to arms. He led a rebellion that recruited as many Catholics

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[99] Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 170.

[100] Healey and Knox, "*Waiting for Deborah,"* 372.

[101] Stuart, ed. Strickland, *Letters of Mary, Queen of Scots,* 151`.

[102] Healey and Knox, "*Waiting for Deborah,"* 372.

[103] Brown, et al, *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland,* 187-188.

as he could manage, which became far fewer than Mary could. She quashed the rebellion without ever needing to draw blood but in doing so she had protected the Protestants.

The Catholics needed a new mouthpiece and Lady Margaret Douglas, the wife of a prominent English Lord who had been exiled from Scotland, obliged. Her main goal was to influence Mary's marriage prospects. With Elizabeth on one side pressuring for a Protestant, English marriage, and Douglas on the other, Mary had two very loud voices attempting to dictate her future. This is not even to mention Knox.

Although Mary had demonstrated that her intention was not to attack the Protestants but rather to defend them, Knox supported the kidnapping Mary's decrees, she and her Protestant-dominated Privy Council agreed that this was treason. The two Calvinists who had threatened the priests were imprisoned.[104] On one hand, Mary had defended the Protestant cause on a grand scale by putting Huntly's rebellion down, and on the other, she had defended the Catholics in a small but meaningful way.

She took care to hold both religions in place. Her marriage prospects had to also fulfill the same job. She could not risk her husband upsetting the balance that she had so carefully crafted. Therefore Henry Darnley, Margaret of Lennox's son, was the perfect option.

> Darnley was not a Protestant, but neither was he an orthodox Catholic. He did not take his religion very seriously, and was able to attend a Catholic Mass in the morning and a Protestant sermon in the afternoon unfazed by any sense of inconsistency.[105]

He was a choice that would not greatly upset the delicate balance that Mary desired to maintain. His courtship had convinced her of his devotion to her. Ultimately, Mary was a romantic and wanted a partner with whom to take on the complexities of politics with. She declared her intent to marry Henry

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[104] Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 180.

[105] Ibid., 187.

Darnley. [106] Rather than risk allowing her decision to marry a Catholic upsetting her Protestant subjects, she reissued her proclamation of religion to confirm that the status quo of religion would remain the same.[107]

No matter how much Mary tried to prevent it, Darnley's arrival and rise to power led to a realignment of the noble factions with whom Mary had been toying. Some of the stronger Protestants, whose voices were no longer going to be the first in Mary's ear, began rallying against a Catholic marriage. Moray, who had been one of her chief Protestant advisors, felt the sting of being tossed aside. He feared the Earl of Lennox's accumulation of power, as Lennox was managing to cross religious lines in gaining support.

Moray claimed religion as the cause for his concern, but it was ambition. This is easily discernable because Moray was initially in support of the match. He even went so far as to offer to. convince the other nobles who had placed themselves in opposition.[108] He maneuvered in a way that was only intended to bring him power. His use of religion shows that Mary was no longer the only one who knew that religion could be used as a tool.

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[106] Brown, et al, *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland,* 187-188.

[107] Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 196.

[108] Stuart, ed. Strickland, *Letters of Mary, Queen of Scots,* 150.

Chapter III

Murder, Betrayal, and Rebellion

Nobility and the Disguise of Religion

Mary Stuart, having been raised in a particularly refined court of France faced the immensely difficult task of managing a balance between warring groups of proud and ambitious men whose loyalties were tenuous at best. Her devotion to her faith meant maintaining her personal faith life alongside the structures in place with her Protestant subjects. She had accepted the idea that she was a Catholic sovereign over Protestant peoples even before she arrived in Scotland.[109] While she was responsive to the concerns of her subjects, she was hesitant to alter her internal perception of what a monarchy should look like, which was modeled after the centralized monarchy of France.

A balancing strategy forced her to make constant adjustments to all of the factors at play. It does not take long for things to collapse when the balance is lost. By 1566, Mary wrote to her aunt, the Duchess of Guise that she "shall use no fine words in telling you how much in a short time, my scene has been changed from the utmost ease and content in myself to continual trouble and vexation, as you must have already heard by the secretary of my ambassador…"[110] Not only does this indicate that the line of communication between Scotland and France was consistent, it also indicates that Mary was either at a weak enough point in her career that she was willing to

[109] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 159.

[110] Stuart, ed. Strickland, *Letters of Mary, Queen of Scots,* 146.

communicate her weakness or that she trusted her family enough to communicate this vulnerable information to them.

The letter suggests Mary's desperation more than a constant assurance of Guise support against her brother, the Earl of Moray. James Stuart had recruited many nobles, mostly Protestants, to de-emphasize the power of Mary's monarchy.[111] Moray had rallied many troops and nobles to challenge Mary's control. Mary responded by utilizing her popularity to rally her populace to chase Moray's relatively small numbers around Scotland and suppress his rebellion. Mary's enforcement of her policy necessitated that she met this hostility with corresponding furor. Their resistance to the power of the monarchy meant that she could effectively label them as "republicans."[112] To Mary and most monarchs, this was a scandalous thing to be. She had to respond forcefully, not only because a show of force would gain respect for her monarchical authority, but also because this was the standard that both her Guise family and other Catholic monarchs had set.

Huntly's Catholic rebellion earlier in her reign was nowhere near the threat that Moray's Protestant resistance posed now. This threat required her to take a harsh stand, one inspired by the firm actions of her uncle, the Duke of Guise. In 1562, during the French Wars of Religion, the Duke of Guise combated the French Huguenot threat. The Wars of Religion were notoriously bloody, with a particularly brutal massacre happening under the direction of the Duke of Guise, Mary's uncle. When the Guise men came across a barn full of Huguenots openly worshiping according to the Protestant religion, in direct defiance of the orders of Catherine de Medici, the soldiers attempted to disperse the people. This proved ineffective and the soldiers opened fire, killing twenty-three and injuring nearly one-hundred people, all of whom were completely

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[111] Ibid., 149.

[112] Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 224.

defenseless.[113] This massacre began the reputation of the Guise family being the most ruthless Catholic faction in France, and by extension, Europe. For this reason, Knox easily made the connection between Mary and this policy of ruthless eradication.

Mary's physical distance from France did not distance her from the reputation of the family she left behind. The noblemen, many of whom were Protestant themselves, would have been on edge knowing that the family who raised her responded to Protestantism in that manner. In their minds, she was a Guise, and the Guise were their enemies. No amount of factionalist intrigue could disguise this fact for long, particularly as their mistrust of her grew.

Moray's rebellion was founded in the name of Protestantism, claiming that her marriage to the Catholic Lord Darnley would endanger the freedom of Protestantism. The rise of Moray in 1565 was met by Mary directly as well as with a majority of loyal nobles. After she put down the rebellion, she began to rely on her foreign alliances and the middle class that lacked clan rivalries and loyalties. This slight shift led to less reliance on her nobles, even those she considered to be loyal.

Mary's attempts at balancing the conflicting factions were not limited to her noblemen. As those closest to her allied themselves on religious lines, international allegiances followed easily. Within the first three months of the Wars of Religion in 1562, England had gotten involved. This meant that her relations with her Guise family also endangered her growing relationship with Queen Elizabeth of England. International relations stalled and Scottish Lords quickly got restless.[114]

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[113] Ibid., 153; O'Connell, The Counter Reformation 1559-1610, 137.

[114] Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 155.

Even after the first major battles of the French Wars of Religion subsided, the complexity of Mary's familial relations made life difficult for her. She was forced to battle the assumptions made by those around her that she was in league with her Guise relatives without having any of the actual support of her family. The nobles of Scotland distrusted Mary's French relations, but she enacted measures to ensure that copies of her letters were not getting back to the Cardinal of Lorraine through the replacement of her secretary with the controversial David Rizzio.[115] The Cardinal was the man that trained her in the ways of politics, but that meant she knew enough about his tactics that she could not trust him. This act of distancing herself from her uncle, the leader of the Guise, signaled to the nobles that her ties to France were not a cause for distrust. This is an example of the complex balancing act that Mary had to maintain to stay in control. She could not rely on anyone, despite her sentiments toward her family.

As a resentful faction twisted the reputation of David Rizzio from young secretary to the queen's possible lover and evil influence, a plot developed to kill him. Lord Darnley played a role in the assassination of David Rizzio on March 9, 1565. Moray and his followers had insisted that they would place Darnley on the throne, which was how he had been convinced to participate. Mary's fury at Darnley and her nobles did not prevent her from taking action, utilizing Darnley's weaknesses to arrange her escape, and maintain power.

The birth of her son came after the murder of David Rizzio and the betrayal of her husband, Darnley, which meant that the queen was drowned into a complex storm of emotions. Mentally and physically fragile, not only did she doubt that she would live, she hoped she would not. At this moment, however, her thoughts went to her Guise relatives. Although she could not fully trust them, she instinctively turned to the people who had raised her. Desperate and feeling alone, she

[115] Ibid., 196.

listed them as her main beneficiaries, should she die. The letters from France she received were a defining note of joy in an otherwise depressing life.[116]

Mary's ability to reshuffle her allegiances was an effective action plan, but it often left her feeling alone. With an already delicate psyche, this was a difficult idea with which to wrestle, particularly when she had been taught her entire life to rely on family. Her relatively dour mood had already manifested itself in a 1562 letter to the Duke of Nemours, "…it must be an inconvenience to employ yourself…in writing to one so much out of the world as I am here [Scotland]…"[117] She fell ill, collapsing under the strain of giving birth and being betrayed by her husband. These letters were partially the reason that when she was facing her end, she thought of France. They had been the greatest joy that Mary had to look forward to for some time. These letters kept her affection for her French family alive. As these letters became more sporadic, her anxieties surrounding her relationship with them grew and eventually manifested themselves in a fear of inconveniencing them with constant letters

The fact that James was Mary's half-brother meant that part of her power, specifically the piece that came from her royal Scottish blood, was no longer a strong enough reason to hold her on the throne. At most, the family held the position of "primus inter pares" among the powerful Scottish families.[118] The claim to the throne was based on the fact that at one point, they were the strongest leaders but the idea of noble blood being in any way different from the royal bloodline was completely absent in Scotland due to dynastic origins.

A shaky dynastic claim would not be enough to combat her brother's attempts at a rebellion. She would fail to recruit the Scottish families around her on those grounds. With this

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[116] Ibid., 257.

[117] Stuart, ed. Strickland, *Letters of Mary, Queen of Scots,* 1.

fact, the tools she had left beside the failing factionalism were the political intrigue that had already failed, her popularity, and the power she had accumulated through wealth and military strength.

Although her popularity was robust, her power was weak. The decentralization of the Scottish monarchy began with the lack of a clear bloodline for the throne but was further weakened during the reign of Mary's grandmother, Margaret Tudor. The Scottish marriage to the English Margaret Tudor was an attempt to put a patch on the financial instability that already existed. Tudor, however, was more interested in cultural development than she was in building up the strength of the throne. Therefore, by the time King James V came to the throne, it was nearly bankrupt.[119] By the time Mary came to power, the situation was growing increasingly dire.[120] This situation meant that any attempt to rally troops would have to be funded by the support of the Scottish noblemen. Financial weakness further put her at the mercy of the lords, all of whom were still vying for the crown's power. The only consolation that Mary could rely on, then, was that they did not want James Stuart to be victorious any more than she did.

Mary could have looked to her mother's reign for precedent on the handling of contentious nobles. A similar battle for power had arisen when the position of governor of the regency council was vacant when Mary was first sent to France and before Marie came to power. This could have been used as an example of how to pit the nobles against each other. It is certainly an example of the pre-existing factionalism that Mary later attempted to use to her advantage. The hereditary claim for the position of Arran and Cardinal Beaton was drawn along lines Mary would later have to contend with. The solution that Marie put forward so many years before was the splitting of the

[119] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 4.

[120] Marshall, *Mary of Guise: Queen of Scots*, 182.

power between Huntly, Moray, Argyll, and Arran.[121] Her unofficial toleration of Protestantism was the grease that allowed this to be effective.[122] This meant that no single man would take over the palaces, jewels, and treasury. Each was selfish enough that they were unable to put aside their differences to combat Marie's influence.

This same selfishness among the nobility was the one thing that Mary could count on to play to her advantage against Moray. The rivalry between the governors had not fully dissipated upon her return. The only one of the few that Mary was concerned about was Arran, whose indecision left her in limbo but also meant he could be pushed and pulled as needed.[123] The lords, usually Protestant, were not organized to create any real resistance, particularly with the plausible fear of French intervention. Mary's dissolving relationship with her Guise relatives was not understood by the noblemen, which allowed her to weaponize the very relationship that was causing her stress. In October of 1552, Marie of Guise's influence was bolstered by French support the Scots could not repel until they garnered English support.[124] But now with England tied up in the French Wars of Religion, the Scottish nobles were aware that any rebellion would have had to be a guaranteed success to be worth the risk of losing royal favor.

Upon being defeated, James of Moray was faced with the consequences of his rebellion. Mary's response to the rebellion of her half-brother, advisor, and powerhouse noble would determine how the other nobles would receive her for quite some time. Having been betrayed by the Protestant faction, she turned to John Leslie, the Bishop of Ross, who would become one of

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[121] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 15.

[122] Healey and Knox, "*Waiting for Deborah,"* 379.

[123] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 16; Marshall, *Mary of Guise: Queen of Scots*, 137.

[124] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 97; Marshall, *Mary of Guise: Queen of Scots*, 147.

her greatest allies. As a Catholic representative, he suggested: "that Mary should detain Lord James in France, and herself disembark at Aberdeen."[125] Mary quickly dismissed the idea as extremist but maintained that she took his counsel into account. Looking at the powerful men around her, she determined that a conciliatory approach would be best for the maintenance of her goal of balance. [126]

Gratitude defined the response of the returning lords. Maitland, who had previously occupied the position of Secretary in the Privy Council promised dedicated service going forward.[127] Mary knew better than to trust that this devotion was genuine. It was likely the result of desperate gratitude at having kept his foothold in Scotland. Sentimental as she was, Mary did not make this decision out of the kindness of her heart. Ultimately, she was aware that the loyalty of the Scottish people lay with their lords or clan heads. Her goal was to maintain the appearance of their loyalty if she could not maintain the loyalty itself. Scottish culture had established that the lords were nearly independent within the context of their lands.[128] What kept them in line was not satisfaction or gratitude, it was the desire for more. If they wanted advancement, they had to either retrieve it by force or through the favor of the crown. Force had failed. They were relegated to reliance on Mary's generosity.

But without any Scottish familial ties within memory to rely on, Mary's position as a Frenchwoman endangered her ability to acquire that loyalty that she so desperately needed. Therefore, a defeated rebellion was the best opportunity to earn the loyalty.[129] It was particularly

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[125] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 120.

[126] Brown, et al, *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland,* 218.

[127] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 125.

[128] Ibid., 144.

[129] Ibid., 147.

beneficial because it targeted the exact group that Mary had found herself alienated from until this point. The same people who had led a rebellion and that had been uneasy for Mary's meeting with Elizabeth because they feared that she would charm their Protestant protector to her side were the people whose freedom was a gift from the person they swore they hated. [130]

This placed Mary at an interesting halfway point between outsider and beneficiary. One that required her to attend to the loyalties of those around her but also brought information to her attention. Though she was no closer to understanding the family ties that defined Scottish relations, she now had those willing to report to her. The failed conspiracy of James, Earl of Bothwell, which sought to kill James and Maitland and abduct Mary, was thwarted because Randolph, the English Ambassador, exposed the plot.[131] Randolph, a man known to be loyal to Protestantism, had developed more allegiance to Mary than to Bothwell. Whether Mary understood the inner workings of the Scottish court, she had inserted herself into it.

Furthermore, she had to toe the line between being involved in the court dynamics and lowering herself to an equal level. This meant declaring neutrality when necessary. For a Privy Council Meeting, Mary needed to have all the nobles in one place and therefore she required peace among them long enough to be productive. Therefore she utilized her resources and put into writing that "it is convenient that thai lay asyde all particular querrellis, grudgeis, and elestis, gif ony be standing amangis thame, but ony maner of invasioun or dis plesing contenance to be schawin be ony of thame to utheris, quhairthrow ony tumult may be rasit, or hir Majesteis service in ony sort impedit."[132]

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[130] Ibid., 167.

[131] Ibid., 172.

[132] Brown, et al, *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland,* 342.

The major rule that she did understand was that they tended to be loyal to whoever had the best chance to grant them power. This meant that the most powerful faction earned the loyalty of those who waffled back and forth. While Mary could not rely on her power, she built up local tribunals that would push against the power of the nobles.[133] While it could be perceived as a neutral means of supporting her people, she was actually bolstering her power and undercutting those who would oppose her. Utilizing the loyalty of the Protestant faction meant that the Catholic faction felt largely ignored. This led the Gordons to react against her with the support of Huntly.[134] Yet, even though her Catholicism was influential in her life, she limited its influence on her policy.

The Catholic faction, feeling ignored started to speak out against her as a result of the dashed hopes of a Catholic minority. In electing to maintain the status quo, Mary forced the maintenance of Catholic freedom into the hands of all the individual Catholic Lords. She grappled with earning the loyalty of Protestants without losing that of the Catholics. Her foreign nature still represented a difficulty in this arena. Though France was Catholic, the Wars of Religion made even this assumption more difficult.[135]

This made the Catholic faction particularly volatile. In response, Mary's factionalist policy was more reactive. Still, they were the weaker faction, so she could allow them to act to determine how much they were willing to try. When Huntly, a Catholic representative began to rebel, she decided to simply go on northern progress and allow him to react.[136] She demonstrated that she was not nearly as afraid of the Catholics as she was of the Protestants. Despite this, Mary would

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[133] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 175.

[134] Ibid., 193.

[135] Ibid., 139.

[136] Ibid., 195.

not tolerate wars in the name of religion that was not grounded in faith. According to a decree on September 12, 1565, Mary stated that she would not tolerate claims of fighting for religion as a "clok to covir their uther ungodlie disseignes."[137] She issued this statement from both herself and Darnley, something she did to lend even more severity to her statement. Forced to confront the Protestant threat primarily, she allowed religion to serve as legitimate grounds for dissent so long as it was controlled. However, this statement shows that she would push back against nobles who explicitly used it as a power grab. This policy was enough to keep the Catholics that she wanted to succeed patient until she was secure enough in her power to grant them leniency.

Mary's Catholicism led her to hope for the Catholics' own religious freedom but she could not allow them to disobey her legislation. She would allow them the space to express their religion but they could not actively combat the Protestant cause. Mary's handling of her Scottish noblemen was key in implementing a steadily more lenient religious policy that would allow for complete freedom for both parties, Protestant and Catholic. As she accumulated power, she was able to make decisions more in line with her own beliefs rather than those of the faction in power because she was not limited by the reactions of her nobles. A key piece of Mary Queen of Scot's religious policy was the noting and rearranging of the nobles around her through investigating and rearranging their alliances because she had to be aware of the possibility of backlash.

Quiet Popularity and Concentrated Contempt

Mary's attempts at balancing all the political factors were further complicated by the angry and revolutionary speech that John Knox continued to spew throughout her reign. There were many dissenting voices that bombarded her. The voices that had difficulty making it to the Queen's

[137] Brown, et al, *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland,* 342.

ears were those of the people themselves since those that had access to Mary were the rich and powerful.

By the time Mary was secure enough in her rule, it would be difficult to alter the course the Privy Council had supported her because their cooperation had been fundamental in her reign. The divide between the rich and the poor was wide and steadily increasing.[138] The poor lived in the Highlands, Catholic, and separated from the Protestant-controlled cities. They had little care for the political strongarming that occurred between Mary and the nobles. Their concerns were far more practical. Mary's popularity with them came from her attention to these matters.

In 1565, she wrote to establish "and the keping of civile societie amangis hir subjectis in all poyntis and claussis thairof."[139] This was not enough to exhibit any actual change in the lives of her subjects. Mary's commitment to reform began in the Court of Session, to devote more to the cases of the poor. After giving the judges a raise she warned them of her expectations for fairness. She further checked in on the developments in the court personally, stoking her reputation of caring for the poor and average people.[140] The image that her enemies attempted to project of frivolity was dismissed in favor of the practicality of her concern for "civile societie."[141]

With this development, Mary quickly realized that her seat of power lay in her popularity in the Highlands and Lowlands. The Gaelic Highlands and Scots Lowlands were united in a disdain for the nobility that was so determined to keep their power down. Mary took advantage of this, knowing that a young Queen from an ancient line would appeal to the ostracized groups. Her dedication to their cause drew their allegiance to her away from the nobles in charge of their lands.

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[138] Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 130.

[139] Brown, et al, *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland,* 342.

[140] Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 186.

[141] Brown, et al, *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland,* 342.

Her devotion to her faith also made her more accessible to these people. Unlike most of the nobility, religion meant something to her and the average person. The fact that most of the nobles utilized religion as a tool more than a personal experience has been well established. Mary sought to differentiate herself from that mentality, even if she maintained Protestantism as the official religion. The easiest way to do this was to draw a differentiation between faith and money. She closed the markets on Sundays and invoked the name of King James III to do so.[142] She also called on the memory of her familial rule to touch the faithful hearts of her people.

This did not sound like the Queen that John Knox had described. His assertion that she was a frivolous heretic who ruled exclusively from the heart did not hold up in light of her reforming actions. He believed that because she was a woman, she could not rule as a Catholic. This was not only untrue but, considering her behavior, his logic was flawed. Moreover, Knox's view that this did not apply to Elizabeth because she was an "exceptional" personality exposed that his damning of Mary resulted purely from convenience. [143] Knox did not have a hold outside of Edinburgh and neither did his rhetoric.

Knowledge of Mary's popularity did not alleviate the stress that she experienced from the attacks on her character. As her reign continued, her unpopularity with the people closest to her grew. Mary took this personally, particularly on account of the accusations being unjust. This sensitivity had not been bred out of her in France and had not yet been beaten out of her by Scotland. Fraser points out that this weakness of hers was an early cause of anxiety for those who were raising her in France because "for there was no certainty that she would always be surrounded

[142] Ibid., 296.

[143] Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 186.

with the right sort of advisers to provide a balancing stability of attitude."[144] The sort of distress that Knox visited on her was like the anxieties that had made her so ill in France.

His attacks on her slowly began to have less of a hold on her. The personal confrontations became fewer and fewer. She began to care more for what her people took from him rather than his personal perspective. While it seems to be a minute difference, it made a large difference to Mary's maintenance of her mental health. Acknowledging her popularity, she could leave Knox's words at his pulpit. Knox, however, cared more about his words being just in the eyes of God than if they were well received. According to Healey, "…his own point of view of history vindicated his discernment of the will of God."[145]

Knox considered himself a champion, having delivered Scotland from the hands of the Catholics through the safety of the Scottish Reformation. Mary was a shining hope to the people whom he considered to be defeated. Knox was famous throughout Scotland but his popularity was concentrated in Edinburgh and the cities. Losing ground outside of those realms made him only more determined to stand up to Mary.[146] Her determination to maintain balance using religion was actively combatted by the biggest zealot in the kingdom.

John Knox was a true believer in the Protestant cause. The nobles who followed his torch were not so dedicated to the cause so much as they were dedicated to a rallying cry and their own self-interest. They were infinitely more concerned with maintaining the inner workings of the court so that they as individuals could advance. The key to this goal was, to them, alliances which coaxed

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[144] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 61.

[145] Healey and Knox, "*Waiting for Deborah,"* 385.

[146] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 154.

them from Knox's extremism to the shifting allyship of the court. Knox took issue with this as a man who had proudly defied the Queen.[147]

Mary's division of the nobles and their Protestant support system that was noted in the section on Factionalism was different from her strategy with her non-noble people. In most cases, she looked favorably on the people in the north who were traditionally dismissed as savages. When asked about her perspective, she replied that she would try to actively avoid "giv[ing] cause for the further quarrel between the clans."[148]

Her basic goals were to unite the clans under allegiance to her and to divide and weaken the nobles so they could not resist her reign. Mary, being raised in high intrigue France, where intrigue was the method of creating factions rather than ideology, meant that she excelled at playing them against each other. Her popularity was only one of many tools and considering her relative poverty, it was a necessary tool. The intrigue she had watched Catherine de Medici and Diane de Poitiers employ were on a much more isolated level. She quickly learned to employ the same tactics on a grander scale.

When the nobles began stirring up more trouble all across Scotland, Mary easily garnered more support from the common people. Protestants and Catholics were united on one thing: they were tired of being dragged into war. Mary had been in power for four years and all of the warnings that the nobles and Knox spewed began falling on deaf ears. Mary had proven herself to be loyal to them rather than to her nobility.[149]

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[147] Ibid., 159.

[148] Ibid., 197.

[149] Ibid., 273.

Particularly regarding their religious practices, she had shown that she had no intention of intervening one way or another. As a result, he was rewarded with the loyalty of her subjects. Even the French ambassador reported to Catherine de Medici that she and her subjects had "not a single division to be seen between them."[150] When the time came for money to be raised to celebrate the baptism of her son, the Prince, both Protestants and Catholics enthusiastically raised money. [151]

Nevertheless, Mary's popularity among her people could not protect her from the ire of her nobles. The support she had garnered was a threat to the power that the nobles had accumulated. In 1566, a few of the nobles, in league with Henry Darnley, murdered David Rizzio. Even this emotionally jarring event was met by Mary with compassion for the people who were involved in the murder plot. The nobles were charged but "the common and utheris that accidentlie come thaireftir to their Majesteis palic" were granted mercy."[152]

David Rizzio's murder was evidence that Mary Stuart was fiercely unpopular within the confines of her court. Her political acumen prevented this from overtaking her, but this would not have been possible were it not for her overall popularity with her subjects. Unlike the nobles she contended with, Mary demonstrated intentional care for those in the Highlands and the Lowlands. The poor and average people, so often overlooked, were given hope that they had not experienced in years. The young, Catholic queen became a symbol for change. Mary was limited in what she could accomplish when entrenched in a political battle with those who were supposed to support her. Still, she prioritized those that needed it most and earned the benefits of widespread popularity in return, even though it took her many years to realize this.

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[150] Ibid.

[151] Ibid.

[152] Brown, et al, *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland,* 296.

The Queen and King Consort

The obligation of a single queen was to continue the bloodline and marry to become subservient to her husband. In England, William Cecil had been trying to convince Elizabeth for years that marriage was the key to her problem. If Elizabeth never married and therefore never attained an heir, the Catholic Mary Stuart was effectively her heir.[153] The fear that held for those in England was minimal in comparison to the fear of Scottish nobles jockeying for control of Scotland again.

This is the reason that Mary "consent[ed]" to marry. In her own words, she said she did so "to please all, at least honest people, Catholics, and those of my own name." [154] She knew she had to marry not only to secure her authority but also to ensure that the period after her reign would not be consumed by civil war. Her effort and her fair governance made her very popular among her subjects. For Knox, this subversion of the natural order by feminine rule made Mary a harlot. [155] Another reason for Mary to get married was to combat this belief.

Ironically, Knox's view of Mary's immoral status was far from the truth. Mary Stuart, Queen of Scotland was famous for her chastity. When Mary arrived in Scotland from France, the masque that was put on for celebration was centered on Chastity. A eulogy was given for the pure mind and beauty that the child who played chastity symbolized.[156] Knox was not discouraged by

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[153] Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 155.

[154] Stuart, ed. Strickland, *Letters of Mary, Queen of Scots,* 146.

[155] Healey and Knox, "*Waiting for Deborah,"* 378.

[156] Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 181.

this royal entry and continued to insist on his rhetoric even though the longer she stayed in Scotland, the fewer people were likely to listen.

Elizabeth paid no heed to the hearsay that Knox put forth and involved herself in Mary's courting process. As a means of establishing friendly relations between them, Mary agreed to allow Elizabeth to offer a suitor. She suggested Robert Dudley, her favorite, with whom she had likely fallen in love. But, Elizabeth could not bring herself to send the man she loved away. Rather, in her mind, she expected that if Mary and Dudley were to marry, they would live with her and Elizabeth would support them financially .[157]

Elizabeth expected that Mary's marriage would subordinate her to and lessen the woman's ability to be involved in ruling Scotland at all. She expected her to be dominated by Dudley and live in England. In this light, Elizabeth's own decision not to marry becomes clearer. She had internalized the misogyny around her differently than Mary had. Elizabeth had accepted it and would work around it. Mary was determined to fight it.

In fighting it, Mary was aware that she could not completely abandon the expectations of a wife. When she married Henry Darnley, she already had accepted that he was not going to be the partner for whom she had hoped. He was not so much an ally as a liability but even in issues in which she "[had] no other interest,"[158] she would involve herself for the sake of her husband. She took the responsibilities of a wife seriously and also understood that the problems of her husband would quickly become her own, even before she married him.

Once Mary did marry Darnley, the nobles in Scotland and England expected that Darnley, easily manipulated, would be at the head of the royal family. They rejoiced at the idea of an heir

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[157] Ibid., 185-186.

[158] Stuart, ed. Strickland, *Letters of Mary, Queen of Scots,* 146.

to unite Scotland and England. They had also convinced her that this would be enough to excite the allegiance of the people in both England and Scotland.[159] Her decision to not share power with Darnley should have upset the situation but most subjects cared more about her mandates than gender roles.

Even knowing Darnley's deficiencies, she also had to save face. She required the approval of the Privy Council to move forward with the marriage. She could not afford to be accused of romantic notions and therefore persuaded multiple lords to agree with her marriage choice. She was not permitted in the room when the decision was made, however, showing that despite being a Queen, in her personal life, she was still at the mercy of men.[160]

Mary thought that her previous would have earned some level of loyalty. Her persuasive ability did not depend on any preestablished loyalty and rather depended on her ability to charm and convince those around her. She expected, even subconsciously, a level of loyalty that she had witnessed in the French monarchy. Therefore, she expected support from those to whom she had been gracious, especially in a matter in which she was so explicit about her hopes.[161] She expected that loyalty because of the spirit of intimacy that grew out of her personality.

Mary's inner circle of the Privy Council thrived in the intimacy that grew out of her personality. The imagery of the Roman goddess Diana that she borrowed from Diane de Poitier had a grandiose and adventurous charm that worked effectively on her subjects, who only saw her as a symbol. The young Queen was everything that they had dreamed she would be. The fear that this instilled in her nobles was balanced by intimate and domesticated femininity that ruled over

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[159] Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 155.

[160] Ibid., 207.

[161] Stuart, ed. Strickland, *Letters of Mary, Queen of Scots,* 151.

her court.[162] The high intrigue, the factionalism, and the feuding required this feminine balance. She needed to soothe as much as she divided because otherwise, she knew that she would be turned on. The intentionality of this decision, however, was minimal. Rather, it was her natural inclination.

Her charm that kept her nobles at bay did not have the same effect on John Knox. Mary loved dancing and frivolity. These traditionally feminine traits left Knox feeling that the entirety of the court had become silly to the point of sinfulness if not outright indecency. He believed dancing to be from the devil himself to lead people into the sin of lust.[163] In his mind, Mary's love of dance only further revealed her to be a harlot. The innocence of this joy held no sway over his opinion. Her ability to ignore his opinion only made him more fervent in his belief that her insolant femininity was enough to warrant her deposition.

Other Protestant leaders did not feel as strongly about Mary's reign as Knox did. Knox believed that Mary's "lack of resemblance to Deborah" as a result of this tendency toward frivolity was grounds enough for rebellion. [164] Neither Calvin nor Bullinger agreed with this position and considered it to be too radical to be practical. Mary was a fair and just ruler and her people were aware of that. Knox's claims were founded on an appearance that held very little truth and was accordingly unpopular except to the most puritanical.

Knox would be proudly classified as a Puritan and therefore was equally scandalized by Mary's attire. The expectation of a Queen for that time was resplendent garb that showed her

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[162] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 179.

[163] Ibid., 182.

[164] Healey and Knox, "*Waiting for Deborah,"* 373.

wealth and power.[165] Mary also loved the beauty of these clothes. Knox considered this to be indicative of inner materialism that was categorically opposed to the faith that he professed. Elizabeth withheld her femininity as much as she could but participated in this display of splendor, yet Knox did not condemn her, only Mary.

Knox was careful, however, to converse with Mary in a way that did not expose his misogyny. He judged her actions. He judged her garb. He judged her belief. He even judged her ability to govern. Outside of his *First Blast of the Trumpet*, particularly when he addressed her in person, he did not address her by words that he would not have addressed her husband. He did not, however, give her the same recommendations that he gave Marie of Guise and Elizabeth Tudor.[166] He no longer believed in Mary's ability to govern properly and would not give her the chance to prove herself. *The First Blast of the Trumpet* alone indicates that Knox held more than the standard amount of sexism for the time but he does not explicitly say anything to her that she could point to expose his misogyny and vendetta against women as the basis for his argument. He hesitates to expose his sexism was because it was unsupported by Calvin and the nobles he was relient on. [167]

Mary was undoubtedly feminine. She loved to dress up and dance and did not take John Knox's criticism of her love of fun to heart. Elizabeth responded differently, utilizing her wardrobe as a tool to showcase her power. From this, Mary took inspiration. At a banquet, she once dressed as a man leading her army against rebels. This was in 1565, the year after Moray's rebellion.[168] Mary knew that to don the guise of masculinity would be to intimidate those who would rebel against her.

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[165] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 182.

[166] Healey and Knox, "*Waiting for Deborah,"* 373.

[167] Ibid., 385.

[168] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 186.

Mary's perspective on gender and sexuality was confidently feminine. She knew and loved the charms of femininity. She understood the benefits she reaped from it as well as the disadvantages. The few times she donned the guise of masculinity was for sport. She loved the joy of play more than the masculinity itself but she understood its uses. Unlike Elizabeth, she was not ashamed to be feminine. She was proud and refused to accept that taking on a more aggressive masculine leaning would ease her difficulties.

Mary Stuart: Violently Sensitive Risk-Taker

Mary Stuart's natural disposition was that of a risk-taker. She grew up in the relative security of France but did not lose her adventurous edge upon her arrival in Scotland. In Mary's mind, there was a high premium on her role as a Queen. Her willingness to take risks helped her to maintain her balance since her nobles and Knox did not have any indication of her limits. What they did not realize was that her weaknesses were not in politics, they were psychological. Mary's grip on Scotland only began to fade when her mental health begins to deteriorate.

Looking back to the early days of her reign, specifically to the outrage that she expressed at the rebellion led by Huntly, it is visible in the early stages that Mary was outraged at Huntly's boldness. She was furious with him. When he invited her to stop at one of his strongholds during one of her progress is Mary first addressed the invitation with anger and spite first. She thought of the reasons she should be cautious with this rebellious man as an afterthought.[169] Both responses kept her away from Huntly's stronghold but her political strategy oftentimes came second to her violent emotions.

[169] Ibid., 196.

These emotions tended to overcome her often. Her outrage would consume her as much as her moods of depression. Back in France, when she suspected that her mother was angry with her, she was sent into a depressive, sickly state for days. The tie between her emotions and her physical health therefore was closely knit. These emotions were notoriously violent and often had a direct impact on her statesmanship, not just on those who earned her ire. When writing a letter to France, she said, "I beg you will excuse my bad writing, for my present state does not allow me to take that trouble easily."[170] Whether this comment was about the amount of personal intention and emotional investment that she had to dedicate to the state of Scotland, or about the difficulty she would occasionally have with bringing herself to write, it is impossible to know. Either way, it indicates a deep difficulty with communication and emotional regulation.

While her above statement gives the image of the frail Queen Mary relegated to the Tower by Elizabeth, this is not the whole picture. This is only her greatest weakness. Mary thrived in the high stakes. The fact that those who had started rebellions and plotted against her on so many occasions put her in "the very spice of danger"[171] which was exactly what she loved. She loved the thrill of intrigue and standing on the tipping point. This is also likely a large reason that she maintained a political strategy of balance. It was a high-risk, high reward game that required constant attention.

Her enjoyment of risk-taking, her gambler's instinct, led her to sometimes act quickly, not taking the time to mull over the consequences. This was the pace of the Scottish Court and is likely what kept her on top for so long because none of those vying against her had time to get organized before the rules of the game were changed. France did not look so kindly at this politicalpacing.

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[170] Stuart, ed. Strickland, *Letters of Mary, Queen of Scots,* 196.

[171] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 198.

The Guise had sent a critique of her tendency to rush into a decision, sometimes without due diligence. Yet, she intentionally maintained this practice in the Court of decision making to keep her nobles busy. The Guise advised her to slow her pace, to which she responded graciously.[172] She valued the opinions of her family but knew that she could not afford to leave her enemies idle. She informed her Aunt that she feared "having acted with too much precipitation,"[173] demonstrating that even the time that she waited to receive word from France was wasting time.

The key to the intrigue was constant maintenance. Though Mary was a specialist when it came to factionalism, she did not have the talent of Catherine de Medici when it came to intrigue. Factionalism was a grand-scale political strategy that hinged on turning major groups against each other to ensure that no faction gets too powerful. Similarly, intrigue was a strategy that involved turning individuals against each other to ensure that they were too busy to rise against the intriguer. The differences are centered on the fact that intrigue required a delicate, duplicitous touch that factionalism and dissimulation did not. Mary had a notable and volatile personality that lacked the subtlety of an intriguer. She enjoyed it greatly and loved watching the motions of it but the letters and schemes that are the core of intrigue were not within her skill set. Mary was infamous for grand gestures. She would amass large armies to make a show of making a stand. She would force nobles to take radical stances. However much she wanted to be, she would not be content with the finesse of true intrigue, no matter how French her upbringing.[174]

She preferred these big, sweeping actions because she had a genuine love of commitment. She stayed true to her decisions. She preferred action and would commit to it, regardless of the

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[172] Stuart, ed. Strickland, *Letters of Mary, Queen of Scots,* 146.

[173] Ibid.

[174] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 198.

consequences.[175] This made her a formidable adversary because she would throw everything behind the slightest campaign. This fear alone kept most of the nobles in check. The threat of exile, the threat of battle, and the threat of losing everything, combined with the knowledge that she would follow through, kept her enemies at bay.

Unfortunately for Mary, this commitment also applied to loyalty. She was loyal to a fault, even when the machinations of Henry Darnley led her into danger. His will to amass personal power put Mary and her strategy in danger. Mary wrote, "in order to excuse his conduct, he may tell you one thing instead of another, and perhaps to the very contrary and farthest from my meaning…"[176] She very explicitly states that her husband is not trustworthy. Nevertheless, did not trust him to ensure good conduct himself and then is aware that he will lie to cover himself. She does not divorce him. After all, she was a devout Catholic is not even until he actively plotted against her in the murder of David Rizzio that she even separated from him.

This loyalty explains why Moray was given so many opportunities. He was also guilty of plotting against her on multiple occasions but her familial loyalty led her to give him more and more chances. Her sensitive anger did not have enough strength behind it to override her loyalty to the only family to whom she had consistent access to. This loyalty was the reason that she allowed Moray so many opportunities to redeem himself.

Her concern to preserve familial ties grew out of the distance that she was experiencing from the Guise in France. She wrote to and received letters from her family with slow regularity. She looked forward to and was overjoyed at receiving letters but was aware that she was no longer their priority. This recognition weighed heavily on her but she knew that, in their eyes, she had a

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[175] Ibid., 238.

[176] Stuart, ed. Strickland, *Letters of Mary, Queen of Scots,* 158.

duty to fulfill. She informed them of the major decision but hesitated to say more. She closed a letter in 1565 by saying, "not to weary you, shall extend this letter no farther…"[177] This line alone is evidence of her love for her family as well their distance.

Mary's psychology was a delicate intersection between highly emotional responses and intense sensitivity to the thoughts and feelings of others. When that high emotion swung in the direction of this sensitivity, it would result in deep depression. These deep depressive states would overcome her and make her virtually unable to govern. When this condition occurred, it eventually led to her inability to maintain her balanced political strategy.

Personal Faith and Public Religion

The personal faiths of monarchs across Europe were the determining factor of the public state of religion. The private practice of a monarch was the public practice of its state. Mary entered into a very passionate Protestant state that was neither welcoming towards Catholics nor a French woman. Her life would have been made much easier were she to convert to Protestantism, but Mary's dedication to her Catholic faith would not allow for that.

Many of the Protestants of note, particularly within England were hoping to persuade Mary away from her fervent Catholicism. The view of religion as being a tool for political gain and power was rampant and disdainful to her. When attempts were made to convert her through the allure of Elizabeth's favor, she responded, "Would you that I should make merchandise of my religion, or frame myself to your ministers' wills? It cannot be so."[178] Mary demonstrated no willingness

[177] Ibid., 146.
[178] Guy, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 206.

to compromise on the issue of religion. Not even Knox's loud opinion being preached from the pulpit was not enough to alter Mary's subjects' opinions of her [179]

A large part of the reason that she was unbothered by the pressures of the influential Protestants was that she was preoccupied with proving them wrong. Knox's argument from the pulpit against a catholic queen claimed that she would be focused on "material and sexual indulgence" rather than on the running of her country and that she would strip Protestants of their religion. [180] Mary's attention to detail in politics meant that she had to combat the former reputation effectively. The Scottish population had been persuaded. To ensure that the latter argument could not circulate, she gave signs of reassurance. In addition to attending a Protestant baptism and even a few sermons, Mary's policy of allowing her populace to live how they saw fit made her violently popular with those she governed. Even Knox was unconvinced that she posed a threat to the Protestant church itself in 1564 when Moray was attempting to rally a Protestant rebellion.

Moray's politically motivated rebellion was met directly by Mary. She did not care for his decision to hide behind religion, but this brought to light a startling realization for her. She was not the only one who could utilize religion to reshuffle alliances. Moray had now ensured that Mary viewed Protestantism and revolution as the same. Her attachment to Catholicism increased as Darnley's commitment to becoming a Catholic powerhouse grew.[181] Religion was becoming increasingly political and was very different from her original arrival in which Moray was willing to concede the private Catholic Mass to her on account of it not being a threat.[182]

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[179] Ibid., 211.

[180] Ibid.

[181] Ibid., 226.

[182] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 122.

The interest of foreign powers in Mary's religion was palpable. The King of France encouraged temperance. French royal agents gave specific advice on familiarizing themselves with the Protestant powers. The Guise encouraged harsh responses to curb the power of those opposed to her Catholicism. In the end, Mary imitated the policies of her mother, policies of religious moderation and tolerance. These policies did not result from a lack of Mary's devotion to her father. Rather, they resulted from an early understanding of the separation between her own faith and her public policy and a belief that public policy should not determine the faith of the individual.[183]

When Lord Lindsay of Byres, not one of the particularly powerful nobles, argued that the priest who celebrated Mary's mass should be killed for idol worship, it was Moray who initially blocked him. Mary preferred to take a strong stance that no one should alter the state of religion in any way. She used the opportunity to defend her faith and the faith of other Catholics as much as she was using it to comfort the Protestants. She accepted the difficulty of the situation and tried to stay out of the religious issue as much as possible.[184]

In 1565, she reissued a statement that she still did not intend to alter the state of religion. Her initial proclamation upon her arrival was a maintenance of the status quo. Despite the rumblings otherwise, she set out to assure her people that no alterations were being made. This Proclamation is relatively brief in comparison to the other statements before it. She has been ruling for some time and believed that the precedent she had set would have spoken for itself. It is meant to be reassurance in the face of Moray's rebellion with which he had attached religion. His lack of support had made her comfortable but she still takes the time to chastise him for his rebellion in the Proclamation. She points

[183] Ibid., 123.

[184] Ibid., 153-159.

out that she had given them the freedom to allow the "[using of their religioun and conscience frelie" and that he had used that freedom to "spred safar contrarious to hir expectatiouns."[185]

This is a far cry from the Mary Tudor-inspired approach that the Pope had encouraged her to take.[186] The Massacre at Vassy, orchestrated by the Guise, demonstrates that this is a far cry from the approach of the powerful French Catholics. Accusations of timidity would not encourage her to alter her public religious approach. [187] Though impressionable, Mary prioritized her political balance over the appearance of public devotion and would not be swayed by foreign pressures when she was secure in the knowledge that her personal faith was strong.

She was, however, very aware of the pressures from her subjects. There were few issues on which Protestant and Catholic Scots could agree. One of those issues was the issue of her marriage. When Mary married Darnley, it was because of the pressures from her people.[188] She aimed to ensure that when the religious divide could be crossed, it would. This is the theme of her rule and why when Moray rebelled, she was able to gather support from them. Moray's argument stated that she was attempting to take away their religion; now she was able to condemn the rebels without hesitation.[189]

Thus, Mary was able to quash the rebellion but she was not able to restabilize her rule or her psychology. She began to lean further in the direction of her Catholicism. It was her comfort and her source of strength. As her mental health deteriorated, she could no longer maintain her factionalist policy. Her reliance on popularity could be maintained, provided she assisted the Catholics. Mary had

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[185] Brown, et al, *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland,* 338.

[186] Stuart, ed. Strickland, *Letters of Mary, Queen of Scots,* 148.

[187] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 153-159.

[188] Stuart, ed. Strickland, *Letters of Mary, Queen of Scots,* 148.

[189] Brown, et al, *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland,* 339.

begun to meet with John Knox to combat the persecution of Catholics in the west. He took the opportunity to remind her that the official status quo was that Catholicism was illegal.[190]

When calling nobles to her court, she decreed that they "sould contene thameselffis in guid quietness, and keip peax and civile societie amangis thameselffis,"[191], particularly about the issue of religion. This proclamation says two things. The first was that she was not willing to completely overthrow the outlawing of Catholicism but that she expected her nobles to understand that they were not to persecute. The second is that she feared her nobles growing increasingly out of hand and increasingly powerful. Following Moray's rebellion, she no longer had the energy to maintain the religious policy that was so reliant on her strong-arming those around her to accept a policy of quiet toleration. She had never specified what the status quo was that she was maintaining. Rather, she relied on the vagueness of the language to maintain the carefully crafted amnesty. Moray's rebellion required her to make a clear statement.

She reiterated the same policy only a month later. In September, she reasserted that the state of religion would not change but that those who had fought for Moray were not to be held accountable. The ties of a person to their landowner were too strong for her to punish them for their actions. In the past, she had not even had to fight against Huntly's rebellion. Mary's policy had always been defined by a lack of words and a show of force. Now, she was relegated to an emphasis on words and a lack of action.[192]

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[190] Fraser, *Mary Queen of Scots*, 215.

[191] Brown, et al, *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland,* 355-357.

[192] Ibid., 372.

Conclusion

Mary Stuart was the lead of a tragic story that ended in her imprisonment and execution. After Moray's rebellion, Henry Darnley was murdered and Mary's search for a new husband ended after she was raped by and betrothed to Lord Bothwell. Bothwell was notoriously unpopular and was as unkind to her as Henry Darnley had once been. The difference was that Bothwell was a more skilled politician and therefore could intentionally topple Mary's balancing act to benefit himself.

Her marriage to Bothwell and deteriorating mental health led to an imbalance she could not stabilize. She was anxious, physically worn, depressed, and desperate. Her desperation led her to throw away all of the work that she had put into her reign. Like her mother, she was a victim of her human limitations rather than a lack of skill.

Mary Stuart had entered Scotland with no advantage. She had a connection with France that her nobles mistrusted. She held an opposing faith and no concept of the pre-existing dynamics of Scotland. She was not raised to be the ruler of the violent and treacherous Scotland. She was raised to be the Queen Consort of the genteel court of France. She adapted and rose to the occasion.

Mary utilized a brilliant and high maintenance strategy of factionalism to manage and balance the factors playing against her. She used her wild charm to work her way into alliances. She embraced her femininity and refused to compromise, knowing that it had its virtues for court dynamics. She clung to her Catholicism, giving Catholics hope for a better future. Her compromise with Protestants left them at ease. The failure of this policy was in its abandonment rather than in its flaws.

At the center was the issue of religion. Religion was the issue that her enemies used to refute her legitimacy because of her sex as well as the lines along which alliances were drawn.

Mary was more aware of the place that it played in Scottish politics than nearly anyone. She utilized religion as much as she possibly could.

Mary's fate was tragic. That her physical health failed to keep up with her brilliance led to her deposition is a true tragedy. Her decision to flee to England was a moment of weakness in which she hoped to be able to rely on the sympathy of Elizabeth, whom Knox touted for ruling with her head rather than her heart. Mary underestimated the threat she presented to Elizabeth's throne and paid for it with her life.

However, her French roots and connection to her mother had stained her reputation before she had the opportunity to alter it. She was viewed as an outsider and an enemy. There was always the fear that she would invoke the aid of France among her nobles. They did not know that she had virtually no support from them. Her personality and flair for the dramatic, present even in her shift to a red gown in the final moments of her life, were what led her to risk-taking behavior during her life. She managed it well for the majority of her reign, until her flight to England. Her absence from Scotland ensured that she would never have a complete understanding of the inner workings of the Scottish court. She managed the factors that she understood as well as she could. Even some of those she could not understand were managed with grace under pressure.

Her tool of choice was religion. Religion made her a threat to Elizabeth but it also made her successful. Mary Stuart was a skilled politician who managed to maintain the complex intersection of factors using religion in maintaining a factionalist policy, despite the disadvantages of her French roots and femininity.

The scene of her execution overshadows the nineteen years that she spent in prison as well as the rest of her life. Mary Stuart walked to her end aware that she would be made a martyr for the Catholic cause. The irony was that she had played a careful game of toleration with the

Protestant cause and largely ignored the Catholic cause throughout her reign. She did not find her faith in prison. She had always been steadfast, but she was careful.

The image of her martyrdom leaves behind the brilliance of her political strategy. Her whim to flee to England overshadows the careful attention that she gave to politics. Her religion, however, always remained at the center.

This is why she spoke the words “In my end is my beginning.” She was likely referencing that in approaching her execution, she was beginning her journey to heaven. History has widely regarded it as the moment in which her memory became a symbol. Her end, her martyrdom, has been the subject of extensive research. However, in looking at her end, it is abundantly clear that the factors that were her end were present at the beginning.

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