



# The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland

*Margo Todd*

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The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century brought a radical shift from a profoundly sensual and ceremonial experience of religion to the dominance of the word through Book and sermon. In Scotland, the revolution assumed proportions unequalled by any other national Calvinist Reformation, with Christmas and Easter formally abolished, sabbaths turned to fasting days, and mandatory attendance of weekday as well as Sunday sermons strictly enforced as part of an invasive disciplinary regimen. How was such a drastic shift accomplished and what effect did it have on the masses of people in the pew, or in the alehouse? In addressing this question Todd uses the abundance of source material from the operations of 'kirk sessions', the most local of the Calvinist church courts, which detail varied aspects of daily life: baptism, marriage and burial, poor relief and education, fasts and feasts, sexual offence and doctrinal error. She shows how the kirk sessions balanced the exercise of discipline with social service to produce a distinctively Scottish Reformed culture in which traditional ritual and drama, propitiatory devices and even imagery were not discarded, but reconstructed in a protestant guise. Holy space and holy time, however protestantised, continued to provide the anxious with comfort, and the ordinary lay person with an affective experience of the sacred. In this ground-breaking study Margo Todd has harnessed this vivid and rarely-used documentation to produce an extraordinary work of historical anthropology, and elucidate the spirituality of a people long hidden from history. Margo Todd is associate professor of history at Vanderbilt University and the author of 'Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order'.

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