

THE *October 15, 2000* STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

In This Issue:

EDITORIALLY SPEAKING

Prof. David J. Engelsma 26

Rev. Dale H. Kuiper
John Knox, Reformer and Preacher 26

Rev. Charles J. Terpstra
Predestination According to John Knox 29

Rev. Ronald H. Hanko
John Knox's Covenant Views (1) 32

Rev. Ronald L. Cammenga
The Scotch Confession of 1560 (1) 34

Rev. Daniel Kleyn
John Knox on Liturgy and Worship 36

Rev. Chris Coleborn
Knox and the Church Order (1) 38

Rev. Kenneth Koole
The First Blast ... A Review 41

Rev. David Higgs
Calvin and Knox's Relationship 44

Report of Classis West 46

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

Mr. Benjamin Wigger 47



**Special
Reformation
Issue:**

John Knox



VOLUME 77 • NUMBER 2

This issue of the *Standard Bearer* is our annual special issue commemorating the 16th century Reformation of the church.

These yearly remembrances are not motivated merely by historical interest.

We honor the Reformation as one of the greatest works of the Lord Jesus in post-apostolic history. The Protestant Reformed Churches and other faithful Reformed and Presbyterian churches throughout the world are the continuation of the authentic Reformation church. To us comes the sol-

emn calling to maintain and develop the truths restored to the church by that mighty, exciting, and faithful act of the risen Christ by His Spirit.

In addition, we hope to confront apostatizing churches, and the members of these churches, with their faithlessness to the gospel, worship, and discipline with which Christ blessed His church by means of the Reformation. "Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jer. 6:16).

This issue features a hero of the Reformation who may not be as

well known to many of our readers as some of the others whom we have featured in the past: the Scots Reformer, John Knox. All the more reason to explore his life and works in this special issue. All the more reason to read this issue carefully.

We thank all those who contributed.

A special welcome to these pages is in order to our friends and brothers of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, Rev. Chris Coleborn and Rev. David Higgs. To them, Knox is very well known indeed.

— DJE 

Rev. Dale Kuiper

John Knox, Reformer and Preacher

The man who in the estimation of friend and foe alike was the greatest man that Scotland ever produced was born in 1505 near the village of Haddington (some of his biogra-

Rev. Kuiper is pastor of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

phers place his birth as late as 1512). John Knox's education was at the Burgh School of Haddington, where the instructors were Roman Catholic and the instruction prepared young men for the clergy or holy orders. Latin was stressed at this school, so much so that the students were required to speak Latin

at all times. Knox himself was an outstanding Latin scholar. He did not study Hebrew and Greek until after his fortieth year. He remained in the Haddington school until he was seventeen, at which time he faced the question of where to attend university. By choosing to remain in Scotland, Knox avoided the

The *Standard Bearer* (ISSN 0362-4692) is a semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August, published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc., 4949 Ivanrest Ave., Grandville, MI 49418.

Postmaster: Send address changes to the *Standard Bearer*, P.O. Box 603, Grandville, MI 49468-0603.

REPRINT POLICY

Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgment is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for The Reader Asks department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be signed.

EDITORIAL OFFICE

Prof. David J. Engelsma
4949 Ivanrest
Grandville, MI 49418
(e-mail: engelsma@prca.org)

BUSINESS OFFICE

The *Standard Bearer*
Don Doezeema
P.O. Box 603
Grandville, MI
49468-0603

PH: (616) 531-1490
(616) 538-1778
FAX: (616) 531-3033
(e-mail: doezeema@prca.org)

CHURCH NEWS EDITOR

Mr. Ben Wigger
6597 40th Ave.
Hudsonville, MI 49426
(e-mail: benjwig@juno.com)

NEW ZEALAND OFFICE

The *Standard Bearer*
c/o B. VanHerik
66 Fraser St.
Wainuiomata, New Zealand

UNITED KINGDOM OFFICE

c/o Mr. Sean Courtney
78 Millfield, Grove Rd.
Ballymena, Co. Antrim
BT43 6PD Northern Ireland

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE

\$17.00 per year in the U.S., US\$20.00 elsewhere.

ADVERTISING POLICY

The *Standard Bearer* does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$10.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business Office and should be accompanied by the \$10.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is at least one month prior to publication date.

16mm microfilm, 35mm microfilm and 105mm microfiche, and article copies are available through University Microfilms International.

Website for RFP: www.iserv.net/~rfa

Website for PRC: www.prca.org

humanism that was rampant in the schools on the continent. He finally decided to attend the University of Glasgow, mainly because the most famous teacher in Scotland at that time, John Major, was on the faculty there. This university was a stronghold of Roman Catholic teaching. It sought to defend and advance Medieval theology and philosophy as well as the authority of the pope.

Knox was ordained into the priesthood shortly before 1540. He employed himself in giving private instruction to the sons of prominent Scottish families, rather than engaging in parochial duties. It is generally thought that Knox never renounced his priestly vows but considered his original ordination to suffice even as he took up the cause of the Reformation in Scotland.

Knox first professed the Protestant faith toward the end of 1545. Several influences were used by God to convert this peasant's son from the bondage of Rome into the freedom of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In his early manhood he read both Augustine and Jerome. Secondly, he attended the preaching of George Wishart for some time, became his personal friend, and even served as his bodyguard when Wishart's life was threatened. Knox embraced Wishart's Reformed preaching with enthusiasm. For this preaching, George Wishart was burned at the stake by Cardinal Beaton. Thirdly, a powerful influence in Knox's conversion was his correspondence with Calvin and Beza, and his residence in Geneva on several occasions. At first Knox was nearer to Luther than to Calvin in his views, but later he considered Lutheran a term of reproach, agreeing with Latimer that the German Reformation was only a partial receiving of the truth.¹ Knox's views regarding the papacy, the mass, purgatory, and other outrages show clearly that he embraced the teachings of the Genevan reformers.

But along with these three influences we must add Knox's wholehearted commitment to the Bible as the inerrant Word of God and as the only, final authority in matters of faith, worship, and life. Knox agrees with a certain Balnaves, whom he quotes, "They deceive you which say, The Scriptures are difficult, no man can understand them but great clerics. Verily, whom they call their clerics, know not what the Scriptures mean. Fear nor dread not to read the Scriptures as ye are taught here before; and seek nothing in them but your own salvation, and that which is necessary for you to know. And so the Holy Spirit, your teacher, shall not suffer you to err, nor go beside the right way, but lead you in all verity."² Knox expounded the Word of God, Old Testament and New, with insight and power. He applied the Scriptures to the situation in Scotland, England, and Europe. He loved the Psalms and explained them at length to those in spiritual distress with great understanding of them and with compassion for the weak. One of his favorite passages was Deuteronomy 4:2, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." This passage was a faithful guide to him in all his difficult labors, as it was to Luther and Calvin. He embraced the great Reformation principle of *Sola Scriptura*!

The bold reformer's first charge was at St. Andrews. The first sermon he ever preached had for its text Daniel 7:24, 25. He called the Church of Rome the man of Sin, the Antichrist, the whore of Babylon. He laid down the marks by which the true church may be discerned from the false. Some said, "Others hewed the branches of the papistry, but he strikes at the root to destroy the whole." Others said, "Master George Wishart spake never so plainly, and

yet he was burnt; even so will he be."³

A short time later the castle of St. Andrews became a refuge for those of Reformed persuasion because politically and religiously Scotland sided with England against Roman Catholic France. In 1547 a French army invaded Scotland and took Knox and other refugees captive, forcing them to row in the galleys for seventeen months. As a galley slave Knox suffered many torments, and his health was permanently damaged. After his release in 1549 Knox served several churches in England: Berwick, Newcastle, and London. While in London he joined with other pastors in approving "The Articles Concerning an Uniformity of Religion," a document which became the basis of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England.

The years 1554-59 found Knox in Europe. He served a congregation of English-speaking refugees in Dieppe, France, and a similar type of congregation in Hamburg, Germany, at Calvin's urging. This pastorate he resigned due to controversies over vestments, ceremonies, and the use of the English prayer book. He next became the pastor of an English refugee congregation in Geneva. During these years Knox did much writing, for this time in Europe was the most peaceful of his life. Although urged by Bullinger and Calvin to use caution regarding female magistrates, Knox published his *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*. Because Anabaptism was growing in England and in Scotland, a request came from England to the exiles in

1. F. Hume Brown, *John Knox, A Biography*, Adams and Charles Black, London, 1895, vol. I, p. 71.

2. Brown, vol. I, p. 97.

3. Kevin Reed, editor, *Selected Writings of John Knox*, Heritage Publications, Dallas, 1995, p. 7, and Brown, vol. I, p. 76.

Geneva that someone write against the attack being made by the Anabaptists against predestination. Knox was chosen to make this response. Understanding the importance of this issue for true religion he wrote, "But yet I say, that the doctrine of God's eternal predestination is so necessary to the Church of God, that, without the same, can Faith neither be truly taught, neither surely established: man can never be brought to true humility and knowledge of himself: neither yet can he be ravished in admiration of God's goodness, and so moved to praise him as appertaineth. And therefore we fear not to affirm, that so necessary as it is that true faith be established in our hearts, that we be brought to unfeigned humility, and that we be moved to praise him for his free grace received; so necessary also is the doctrine of God's eternal predestination Then only is our salvation in assurance, when we find the cause of the same in the bosom and counsel of God."⁴

Knox's views in the area of ecclesiology are remarkably similar to our own in the Protestant Reformed Churches. He thundered against the claims of the papacy. He called the mass an abomination and an idolatry. He considered the preaching of the gospel to be the chief means of grace, and the sacraments as secondary to preaching as a sign and seal. Baptism was the sign of entrance into union with Christ, and thus was to be administered to a person but once. The Lord's Supper was continuous nourishment for believers who were in Christ. He stood for infant baptism and was dead set against any re-baptism; the Anabaptists were his foe not only in the matter of baptism but also because they tried to upset the entire social order. We find it interesting also that Knox considered Roman Catholic baptism valid, and no reason for re-baptism. While insisting that baptism used in the papistry is an adulteration and pro-

fanation of the baptism which Christ instituted, insisting that Romish baptism leads people to put their confidence in the bare ceremony, and insisting that God's children ought never to offer their children to papistical baptism for this is to offer them to Satan, Knox nevertheless answers the question, "Shall we be baptized again that in our infancy were polluted with that adulterated sign?" with an unqualified "No." His grounds for this position were: (1) "The fire of the Holy Ghost has burnt away whatsoever we received at their hands besides Christ Jesus' simple institution." (2) "And in very deed, the malice of the devil could never altogether abolish Christ's institution, for it was ministered to us in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (3) "I confess, for the time it did not profit us; but now, as it is said, the Spirit of Christ Jesus, illuminating our hearts, has purged the same by faith, and makes the effects of that sacrament to work in us without iteration of the external sign."⁵

Knox held strenuously to the regulative principle of worship as we also know it and maintain it. Condemning the mass, he said, "And now, in a few words, to make plain that wherein you may seem to doubt: to wit, that God's word damns your ceremonies, it is evident; for the plain and strait commandment of God is, 'Not that thing which appears good in thy eyes shalt thou do to the Lord thy God, but what the Lord thy God has commanded thee; that do thou; add nothing to it; diminish nothing from it.' Now unless you are able to prove that God has commanded your ceremonies this his former commandment will damn both you and them."⁶ All religious ceremonies and institutions must have clear biblical warrant if they are to be considered valid expressions of worship. Always Knox's argument against false worship turns upon his defense of the regulative principle of worship.

Only in one respect did Knox differ from the Genevan theologians and us. He never really condemned the episcopacy. He was a man of his time and shared the views of his contemporaries in the matter of church government. His refusal of an English bishopric was for practical rather than principle reasons. He preferred pastoral work in a humble sphere, preaching the blessed evangel, rather than the arduous duties of a superintendent. He never held the opinion that bishops were an unscriptural institution; they could be tolerated. Beza, hearing of the discussions going on in Scotland on church government, wrote to Knox in April of 1572, "But of this, also, my Knox, which is now almost patent to our very eyes, I would remind yourself and the other brethren, that as Bishops brought forth the Papacy, so will false bishops (the relics of Popery) bring in Epicurism into the world. Let those who devise the safety of the church avoid this pestilence, and when in process of time you shall have subdued that plague in Scotland, do not, I pray you, ever admit it again, however it may flatter the pretense of preserving unity."⁷ It is thought that had he lived longer his attitude would have changed and come more in line with the Presbyterian form of church government.

As a theologian Knox was not equal to Calvin, or even Melancthon; he lacked the constructive powers needed to build up a theological system that united all doctrines into a unified whole. Nevertheless, he was a formidable, skillful disputant. His preaching style was unyielding and at times harsh. His language could be rather violent. His five conferences with Queen Mary were characterized by language that was exceedingly blunt and was not designed

4. Brown, vol. I, pp. 250, 251.

5. Reed, p. 317.

6. Reed, p. 16.

7. Brown, vol. II, pp. 278, 279.


to win her over but to show her how wrong she was. On the other hand, he was the gentle father of five children born to him to two wives, the second of which was much younger than he and served as his nurse in his declining years. He was loved by his students and parishioners, and was a good example to them in all godliness. Near the end of his life he was so weak that he had to be helped into the pulpit; once there he became so vigorous that he began to strike the pulpit as to destroy it. His appearance was grave and severe, although he possessed a natural graciousness and dignity. His love for the truth and boldness in declaring it drew believers to his preaching services. He spent much time and meditation on his sermons, either writing them out in full or using copious notes. His harshness in debate and in preaching was defended by his followers for the importance of the issues at stake; they required a plain-spoken prophet rather than a smooth-tongued orator.

The esteem in which Knox was held by the faithful in Scotland was expressed by his servant Richard Ballantyne thus: "Of this manner departeth this man of God, the light of Scotland, the comfort of the Kirke within the same, the mirror

of Godliness, and patron and example to all true ministers, in purity of life, soundness in doctrine, and in boldness in reproof of wickedness, and one that careth not the favor of men (how great soever they were) to reprove their abuses and sins What dexterity in teaching, boldness in reproof, and hatred of wickedness was in him, my ignorant dullness is not able to declare."⁸ He died in October of 1572, full of faith and still ready for the conflict. He died with friends reading to him Isaiah 53 and John 17. He died quietly and in peace. He was buried in the graveyard near the church of St. Giles, where a flat stone still marks his grave.

Knox's importance for the cause of the church and gospel of Christ in Scotland, England, and Europe can hardly be overemphasized. He gave his entire life to the reformation of the church. His religion took full possession of him, as true religion ought. Just before he died he said of himself, "None have I corrupted; none have I defrauded; merchandise have I not made." Just after he died the Earl of Mortoun eulogized him thus: "Here lieth a man who in his life never feared the face of man: who hath been often threatened with

dag and dagger, but yet hath ended his days in peace and honor. For he had God's providence watching over him in a special manner, when his very life was sought."⁹

All Presbyterian and Reformed churches owe a great debt to John Knox, and thankfulness to God for what He wrought through this brave man of the hour. Where can men of his stature be found today in Scotland, England, Europe, and the United States? Where can there be found such holy hatred for Romish superstitions, false doctrine, and wickedness today, as could be found in Knox from the time of his conversion to the last day of his life? May God raise up such men in those places that require them, for the preservation and defense of the truths of the Reformation today! 

8. Samuel Jackson et. al., *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, vol. VI, Funk and Wagnalls Company, New York and London, 1920, p. 265.

9. Brown, vol. II, p. 288.

Other Sources:

The Reformation in Scotland, John Knox, Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 1898.

The Scottish Reformation, Gordon Donaldson, Cambridge University Press, London, 1960.

Rev. Charles J. Terpstra

Predestination According to John Knox

It should come as no surprise to Protestant Christians that, like the other reformers, so too the Scottish reformer John Knox was a predestinarian. That is, he

believed, preached, taught, and wrote about the doctrine of God's sovereign, eternal predestination. Knox held first of all to the general doctrine of predestination, i.e., that God has in His eternal decrees ordained all things that ever are and that come to pass in time and his-

tory. And secondly, Knox held to the doctrine of specific predestination, i.e., that God has eternally chosen some men to everlasting salvation in Christ and has eternally rejected others from being saved, appointing them instead to everlasting condemnation. In other

Rev. Terpstra is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan.

words, Knox believed the classic Reformed truth of double predestination: election and reprobation.

In this Knox was without doubt influenced by his Reformation predecessors and contemporaries, most notably Martin Luther and John Calvin. He knew of their rediscovery of this great truth and took it in through their writings. While in exile from his native Scotland, he spent time in Geneva under Calvin's instruction. There he learned of Calvin's controversies with Castellio and Bolsec over predestination and was taught how to refute the errors of those who denied and attacked it. There he would have read Theodore Beza's summary of Calvin's doctrine of predestination published in 1555. The influence on him was great, as his own writings would later show. As one scholar of Knox put it, Knox was "captivated by the theology of Calvin," including his views on sovereign election and reprobation.¹

Yet the real source of Knox's doctrine was the Scriptures, for it is there that the truth of God's sovereign predestination is set forth. Being a child of God with his eyes opened to the light of the pure gospel by the Spirit of grace, he was led to see in the Bible God's election of His children as the very source and foundation of his own salvation. And, being a Protestant reformer and thus returning to the Scriptures themselves in his work, and being chiefly a preacher of the Word of God, Knox read and rediscovered for himself in the Bible the truth of sovereign, unconditional predestination. "It is unnecessary, therefore, to apologize for the predestinarian strain in Knox's theology. It was his business to expound the Biblical faith, and the Biblical faith is predestinarian from end to end."²

Knox's views on predestination

Knox believed the classic Reformed truth of double predestination: election and reprobation.

are found in several places. The two main sources are *The Scotch Confession of Faith* (1560), the great Reformed creed that arose out of the Protestant period in Scotland under Knox's influence, and his treatise on predestination published in the same year. Another source is his varied personal letters, including a lengthy correspondence with his own mother-in-law, Elizabeth Bowes, concerning election and the assurance of salvation.³

We want to hear Knox on predestination first of all in the *Scotch Confession*. Already in Article I the *Confession* speaks of God's sovereign, providential government of the world according to His eternal appointment (predestination) of all things:

We confess and acknowledge one only God.... Who is eternal, infinite, immeasurable, incomprehensible, omnipotent, invisible.... By Whom we confess and believe all things in heaven and earth, as well visible as invisible, to have been created, to be retained in their being, and to be ruled and guided by His inscrutable providence, to such end, as His eternal wisdom, goodness, and justice has appointed them, to the manifestation of His own glory.⁴

Then, after treating the creation and fall of man, the revelation of God's promise to save His people, and the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the *Confession* takes up the sovereign cause and root of this promised salvation and Savior in Arts. VII and VIII. We quote these at length:

Art. VII. Why It Behoved the Mediator to be Very God and Very Man

We acknowledge and confess, that this most wondrous conjunction betwixt the God-head and the man-head in Christ Jesus, did pro-

ceed from the eternal and immutable decree of God, from which all our salvation springs and depends.

Art. VIII. Of Election

For that same eternal God and Father, Who of mere grace elected us in Christ Jesus His Son, before the foundation of the world was laid, appointed Him to be our Head, our Brother, our Pastor, and great Bishop of our souls. But because that the enmity betwixt the justice of God and our sins was such, that no flesh by itself could or might have attained unto God: it behoved that the Son of God should descend unto us, and take himself a body of our body, flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bones, and so become the Mediator betwixt God and man, giving power to so many as believe in Him, to be the sons of God; as himself does witness, 'I pass up to my Father, and unto your Father, to my God, and unto your God.' By which most holy fraternity, whatsoever we have lost in Adam, is restored unto us again. And for this cause, are we not afraid to call God our Father, not so much because He has created us, which we have in common with the reprobate; as for that He has given to us His only Son, to be our brother, and given unto us grace, to acknowledge and embrace Him for our only Mediator....⁵

And a little further in the *Confession*, in connection with the doctrine of the church, the Scottish Reformed also referred to the truth of God's gracious election of His people:

Art. XVI. Of the Church

1. James S. McEwen, *The Faith of John Knox* (London: Lutherworth, 1961), p. 64.

2. McEwen, p. 69.

3. John Knox, *The Works of John Knox*, David Laing, editor (Edinburgh: Johnstone & Hunter, 1856), III, pp. 331-402.

4. Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1966), 439-40. Note: I have put these quotations into modern English.

5. Schaff, pp. 444, 445.

As we believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so do we most constantly believe that from the beginning there has been, and now is, and to the end of the world shall be, a church, that is to say, a company and multitude of men chosen of God, who rightly worship and embrace Him by true faith in Christ Jesus, Who is the only Head of the same church, which also is the body and spouse of Christ Jesus, which church is catholic, that is, universal, because it contains the elect of all ages, of all realms, nations, and tongues, be they Jews or be they Gentiles....⁶

In the second place we want to hear Knox on predestination from the major treatise he wrote on the doctrine in 1560. It is, in fact, his largest work, comprising the majority of Volume V of his *Works*. It is a polemic against an Anabaptist writer who had attacked Calvin's doctrine of predestination. Knox gave his treatise this full title, "An Answer to a Great Number of Blasphemous Cavillations Written by an Anabaptist, and Adversary to God's Eternal Predestination, and Confuted by John Knox, Minister of God's Word in Scotland, Wherein the Author So Discovereth the Craft and Falsehood of that Sect, that the Godly may be Confirmed in the Truth by the Evident Word of God."⁷ It is not our intention to deal with this treatise in depth or at length. The reader is encouraged to make a study of it himself, if he wishes to pursue Knox's doctrine further. But there are a couple of things we do wish to point out by way of summary with regard to this treatise.

By reading the preface to this work, one will discover first of all that Knox was primarily concerned to defend the truth of God's sovereign grace and therefore the glory of God in the salvation of sinners.

He saw the enemy's attack on predestination as an attack on the truth that God alone saves fallen sinners and is thereby alone glorified in that work. Those who reject the Bible's teaching on double predestination want to give man a contribution to the work of salvation and take some glory for themselves. In this the enemies of free grace are but the instruments of Satan, who, writes Knox, has "now in these last and most corrupted days most furiously raged against that doctrine, which attributeth all praise and glory of our redemption to the eternal love and undeserved grace of God alone."⁸

Secondly, from Knox's preface we learn how necessary he believed the doctrine of predestination to be for the church and Christians. The doctrine of election has sometimes been called the *cor ecclesiae*, i.e., the heart of the church. Knox certainly saw it that way, as is evident from this quote:


But yet I say, that the doctrine of God's eternal predestination is so necessary to the church of God, that, without the same, can faith neither be truly taught, neither surely established; man can never be brought to true humility and knowledge of himself; neither yet can he be ravished in admiration of God's eternal goodness, and so moved to praise him as appertaineth. And therefore we fear not to affirm, that so necessary as it is that true faith be established in our hearts, that we be brought to unfeigned humility, and that we be moved to praise Him for His free graces received; so necessary also is the doctrine of God's eternal predestination.⁹

"Then only is our salvation in assurance, when we find the cause of the same in the bosom and counsel of God."

And thirdly, Knox's introductory comments reveal the pastoral way in which he treated this high and deep doctrine of Scripture. He was concerned that the truth of

sovereign predestination be defended and preached for the sake of the peace and comfort of God's people. With that in mind, Knox taught that God's eternal election of His people in Christ Jesus is the doctrine on which the believer's personal assurance of salvation is founded.

...There is no way more proper to build and establish faith, than when we hear and undoubtedly do believe that our election... consisteth not in ourselves, but in the eternal and immutable good pleasure of God. And that in such firmity that it can not be overthrown, neither by the raging storms of the world, nor by the assaults of satan; neither yet by the wavering and weakness of our own flesh. Then only is our salvation in assurance, when we find the cause of the same in the bosom and counsel of God.¹⁰

Sad to say, Knox's orthodox view of predestination is no longer held by the majority of Reformed churches and professing Protestants. Today, if this truth is not being attacked by the enemies of sovereign grace, it is being largely ignored and forgotten in evangelical circles. Who proclaims and defends with Knox's vigor the truth of sovereign, double predestination in our doctrinally indifferent age?! Yet this is what the church and God's people need, for their hearty assurance of salvation and for their true adoration of God. May Knox's voice yet be heard in churches that stand in the line of the great Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century! 

6. Schaff, p. 458.

7. Knox, *Works*, V, p. 19.

8. Knox, *Works*, V, p. 24.

9. Knox, *Works*, V, p. 25-26.

10. Knox, *Works*, V, p. 26.

John Knox's Covenant Views (I)

Introduction

Those who know anything of the history of the Reformation in Scotland know that the doctrine of the covenant and the practice of covenanting played a significant part in Scottish theology and church history. It is well worth inquiring, therefore, into the views of the covenant held by the father of Scottish Presbyterianism, John Knox, as we hope to do in this brief article.

Determining exactly what Knox taught about the covenant is somewhat difficult in that Knox, at least as far as is discernible from his writings, had no developed or systematic doctrine of the covenant. He writes of the covenant in a number of his works, but always in connection with other matters. Only some tendencies and trends can be identified, therefore. These are nonetheless valuable, since in some cases we can see that the seeds of later developments in Scottish theology are to be found in Knox, and in other cases that Scottish theology turned in a different direction from Knox.

His teachings on the covenant, insofar as they can be gleaned from his writings, are found primarily in his work on baptism,¹ in his monumental treatise on predestination,² and in *A Godly Letter of Warning or Admonition to the Faithful in London, Newcastle, and Berwick*,³ though various statements are found also in his other writings. That these views are found in his

writings on baptism is not surprising. That they are also found in his treatise on predestination is somewhat unexpected and has some important consequences.

Knox's Theology of the Covenant

As we have already noted, Knox never treated the doctrine of the covenant in any kind of systematic fashion, yet several tendencies are immediately discernible in his writings. Such tendencies are found first of all in the words Knox used as synonyms of the word "covenant." Among them are the words "league," "fellowship," "oath," and "band." Surprisingly, the most common is the word "league." That word is, in fact, found more frequently than the word "covenant," and there can be little doubt that the later references to *leagues* and covenants in Scottish church history derive from Knox.

It is somewhat difficult to determine exactly what Knox meant by using the word "league." The word usually has the very precise meaning of formally arranged compact, alliance, or confederacy, especially for defense. The use of the word "league" suggests, therefore, that Knox held to a contractual view of the covenant, seeing the covenant as some sort of formal compact or contract either between God and men or between men themselves. Yet his use in some places of the words "covenant" and "league" as synonymous with "fellowship" indicates, we believe, that Knox by no means thought of the covenant exclusively in terms of a contract. Especially in the greatest

of his writings, his treatise on predestination, and in his work on baptism he seems to hold a more biblical and less contractual view of the covenant, thinking of the covenant more in terms of a bond or fellowship that exists between God and His people.

In several other of his writings there are also examples of this tendency.

But, as before is said, God hath naturally engrafted and planted in man this love of life, tranquillity, and rest, and the most spiritual man oftentimes desireth them, because they are seals and witnesses of the league and fellowship that is between God and his elect. And albeit trouble most commonly doth follow the friends of God, yet is he nothing offended that earnestly we ask our quietness; neither is that our desire any declaration of carnality or of inordinate love that we have to the world, considering that the final cause wherefore we desire to live, is not for enjoying of worldly pleasures, for many times, in the midst of these, we grant and confess, that it is better to be absent from the body. But the chief cause why God's elect do desire life, or to have rest in earth, is for the main-

1. *Answers to Some Questions Concerning Baptism, etc.*, 1556 (Laing, vol. IV, pp. 115-128). All references to Knox's writings are taken from the six-volume David Laing edition of Knox's works (Edinburgh, James Thin, 1895), but the spelling has been modernized.

2. *An Answer to the Cavillations of an Adversary Respecting the Doctrine of Predestination*, 1560 (Laing, vol. V, pp. 7-469).

3. 1553 or 1554 (Laing, vol. III, pp. 157-216).

tenance of God's glory, and that others may see that God takes care over his elect.⁴



This is the league betwixt God and us, that He alone shall be our God, and we shall be his people: He shall communicate with us of his graces and goodness; We shall serve him in body and in spirit: He shall be our safeguard from death and damnation; We shall seek to him, and shall flee from all strange Gods."⁵

In harmony with this tendency to define the covenant in terms of fellowship, Knox speaks of only one covenant, and that an unbreakable covenant. There is no hint in Knox's works of later covenant-of-works theology, with its strong emphasis on two covenants, at least one of them breakable, and both defined in terms of a contract. He insists, too, that the covenant is only between God and the elect, and roots all this in his doctrine of sovereign, double, unconditional predestination.

I doubt not but that the godly reader doth clearly see the mind of the Prophet to be to rebuke the vanity of the Jews, believing that God's counsels, covenant, and love, were subject to such mutability as they themselves were in their counsels, love, and promises. But the prophet maketh so much difference betwixt the one and the other as is betwixt the heaven and the earth; and doth further affirm, that as the dew and rain do not fall and come down in vain, so shall not the word which God speaketh (which is of more excellency than all creatures) lack his effect; but it shall work the will of God, and shall prosper as he hath appointed it, and that because it is God who hath spoken that which was purposed in his eternal and immutable counsel before all times.⁶

Yet, when it comes to his practical applications of the doctrine of the covenant to civil and political life, there appears to be a tension

in Knox's writings, for he speaks of nations, cities, etc. being received into the covenant and of the possibility of their breaking that covenant.

Such is the infinite goodness of God, and that such be also the bright beams of his most just judgments, that whensoever he taketh into his protection, by the covenant of his Word, any realm, nation, province, or city, so that of mercy he becometh to them conductor, teacher, protector, and father; that he never casteth off the same care and fatherly affection, which in his Word he does once pronounce, until they do utterly declare themselves unworthy of his presence.⁷

Passages such as these suggest that the covenant is established in some sense with others besides the elect, and is in fact not immutable and unbreakable. There appears, then, to be a certain tension in Knox's covenant views between the traditional view of the covenant as a contract and a more biblical view of the covenant as a bond or relationship. This tension becomes most evident in a comparison of his work on baptism with his other comments on the duties of the magistrate as they are to be understood in the context of God's covenant with men.

The Covenant and Baptism

In his use of the doctrine of the covenant as part of his apologetic for infant baptism, there is very little that can be criticized. Indeed, Knox has remarkable insights into the relationship between the covenant of God and baptism. As the following quote shows, it was in connection with the covenant that he saw clearly the difference between the two sacraments, something that is not well understood today, even by many Reformed people. The promotion of paedocommunion by many is a good example of this lack of understanding.

As the same quote shows, he also drew from the doctrine of the covenant the reason why baptism ought not be repeated.

Hereof I suppose that it be proved, That Baptism once received suffices in this life, but that the use of the Lord's Table is oftentimes necessary: for the one, to wit, baptism, is the sign of our first entrance; but the other is the declaration of our covenant, that by Christ Jesus we be nourished, maintained, and continued in the league with God our Father. The sign of our first entrance needeth not to be iterate (repeated, R.H.), because the league is constant and sure; but the sign of our nourishment and continuance, by reason of our dullness, infirmity, and oblivion, ought oft to be used.⁸

Likewise, he saw clearly that baptism symbolizes and seals a covenant which is unconditional and unbreakable. His strong views on predestination are the reason for this, for it is impossible to reconcile a general, conditional covenant established with all who are baptized and the doctrine of sovereign double predestination. Thus Knox, writing on baptism, understood it to be not only permanent and unchangeable, but established with the elect only.

4. *An Exposition upon the Sixth Psalm of David*, 1553; vol. III, p. 143.

5. *A Godly Letter of Warning or Admonition to the Faithful in London, Newcastle, and Berwick*; vol. III, pp. 190, 191.

6. *An Answer to a Great Number of Blasphemous Cavillations Written by an Anabaptist, and Adversary to God's Eternal Predestination*; vol. V, pp. 46, 47. This treatise is one of the great writings of the Reformation and deserves reprinting. It compares well with Calvin's similar treatise and with Zanchius' *Absolute Predestination*.

7. *A Brief Exhortation to England, for the Speedy Embracing of the Gospel Hereofore by the Tyranny of Mary Suppressed and Banished*, 1559; vol. V, pp. 503, 504.


8. *Answers to Some Questions Concerning Baptism, etc.*; vol. IV, pp. 124, 125.

Now, evident it is, that the justice of Christ Jesus is permanent and cannot be defiled; that the league of God is of that firmity and assurance, that rather shall the covenant made with the sun and moon, with the day and night, perish and be changed, than that the promise of his mercy made to his elect shall be frustrated and vain. Now, if Christ's justice be inviolable, and the league of God be constant and sure, it is not necessary that the sign, which representeth unto me, and in some manner sealeth in my conscience that I am received in the league with God, and so, clad with Christ's justice, be oftener than once received: for the iteration of it should declare, that before I was a stranger from God, who never

had publicly been received in his household.⁹

We might note here also that Knox correctly saw the Anabaptist position (that rebaptism is permissible or required) as at bottom a denial of grace and of salvation by grace alone. This, too, can be traced to his strong predestinarian views. In his writings on baptism, then, his views of predestination, with his consequent emphasis on *sola gratia*, force him to put aside any inclination to see the covenant as a contract or agreement between God and man, and the tendency of that view towards synergism and free-willism.

Conclusion

Nevertheless, when Knox begins to speak of the covenant in connection with the calling of the civil magistrate and the Christian citizen's relation to the magistrate, this emphasis is largely lost and a somewhat different view of the covenant comes to the fore. His doctrine of the covenant is an important part of his writings on the magistrate and the citizen, but it is here that the idea of the covenant as a "league" takes over and he begins to speak of the covenant more in terms of a contract. This, however, we will look at in a following article. 

9. *Answers to Some Questions Concerning Baptism, etc.*; vol. IV, p. 123.

Rev. Ron Cammenga

The Scotch Confession of 1560 (1)

The History

A unique part both of the heritage and contribution of Scottish Presbyterianism is the Scotch Confession of 1560.¹ The Scotch Confession is the manifesto of the Scottish Reformation. It is the first of the distinctly Presbyterian confessions. Its publication in 1560 predates the earliest of our Dutch Reformed confessions, the Belgic Confession having been written in 1561 and the Heidelberg Catechism in 1563.

Already on December 3, 1557 a number of Protestant nobles meeting at Edinburgh had signed a "covenant" to maintain, nourish, and defend to the death "the whole congregation of Christ, and every

member thereof." By the signing of this covenant, they had thrown off the tyranny of Roman Catholicism and declared Scotland's commitment for the cause of the Reformation.

In August of 1560 the Scottish Parliament commissioned the writing of Scotland's own confession of faith. The work was entrusted to a committee of men, the most notable member of which was John Knox. Since all of the men on the committee were named John — John Winram, John Spottiswoode, John Willock, John Douglas, John Row, and John Knox — the confession they produced has sometimes been referred to as the confession of the six Johns. Although composition of the Scotch Confession was a joint effort, there is little doubt that the main author of the confession was John Knox.

Knox had been at the forefront of the reformatory movement in Scotland. Concerning Knox's im-

pact on the Reformation in Scotland, John Macleod writes:

There was a possibility that the Scottish Reformation might take on a Lutheran or an Anglican complexion. The work and influence of Knox decided that this should not be so (*Scottish Theology*, p. 13).

Knox was decidedly Calvinistic in his convictions, both in doctrine and church government. That Calvinistic commitment is reflected in the Scotch Confession.

1. Works on the history of the Scotch Confession of Faith include Philip Schaff's *The Creeds of Christendom*, Vol. 1, pp. 680ff.; Alexander Stewart's *Creeds and Churches: Studies in Symbolics*, pp. 175ff.; John Macleod's *Scottish Theology*, pp. 14ff.; and T.M. Lindsay's *History of the Reformation*, vol. 2, pp. 302ff. The history presented in this article is drawn largely from these works.

Rev. Cammenga is pastor of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

Knox and his companions labored only four days in composing the new creed of the Scottish churches. Although rather hastily written, it was undoubtedly true that the men came to their task fully prepared. And although the Scotch Confession is uniquely Scottish in flavor, its authors were familiar with and relied on the existing Reformed confessions that had been widely circulated.

With slight changes, the proposed confession was ratified by the Scottish Parliament on August 17, 1560. The Parliament issued the new confession as the “sum of that doctrine which we profess, and for the which we have sustained infamy and danger.” After the adoption of the new confession, Parliament went on to decree that from henceforth the Bishop of Rome had no jurisdiction in the Scottish realm. It annulled all other previous acts of Parliament which were contrary to the new confession. And it forbade the saying, hearing, or being present at the Mass, under penalty of confiscation of goods and imprisonment for the first offense, of banishment for the second, and of death for the third.

After Parliament adopted the confession, the story is told that the oldest member of Parliament, Lord Lindsay, addressed his peers:

I have lived many years; I am the oldest member of this company. Now that it hath pleased God to let me see this day, where so many nobles have approved so worthy a work, I will say with Simeon, *Nunc dimittis* (*History of the Reformation*, vol. 2, p. 304).

The original title of the Scotch Confession was “The Confession of the Faith and Doctrine, Believed and Professed by the Protestants of Scotland.” It was issued to the Scottish people by Parliament as containing “wholesome and sound doctrine, grounded upon the infallible truth of God’s Word.” In short order the new confession was

translated into Latin under the title *Confessio Scoticana*. The Scotch Confession soon laid claim to an honored place among the collection of creeds that were produced by the churches of the Reformation. It remained the symbol of the Church of Scotland during the turbulent years of the first century of its existence. Not until 1645 was it displaced by the Westminster Confession, and then only because the Westminster Confession was a fuller expression of the Reformed faith and was in no parts contrary to the earlier confession.

The Preface

Most modern printings of the Scotch Confession fail to include “The Preface.” That is unfortunate because the preface is both significant and moving. It not only has historical value, but is instructive as well.

The preface opens with a salutation.

The Estates of Scotland, with the inhabitants of the same, profess Christ Jesus and his holy Evangel, to their natural countrymen, and unto all other realms that profess the same Lord Jesus with them, wish Grace, Mercy and Peace from God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, with the Spirit of righteous judgment, for salvation.²

With those words the lords of Scotland not only commended the new confession to the peoples of their beloved Scotland, but also identified themselves with the Reformed church worldwide. The preface indicates their concern for the greater cause of the Reformation that extended beyond the borders of their own country. The framers of the Scotch Confession were not driven by a narrow-minded parochialism. On the contrary, they exhibited a consciousness of the catholicity of the church and demonstrated a concern that Scottish Presbyterians be recognized as a part of the broader Reformation movement.

Following the salutation, the preface goes on:

Long have we thirsted, dear brethren, to have notified to the world the sum of that doctrine which we profess, and for the which we have sustained infamy and danger. But such has been the rage of Satan against us and against Christ Jesus and his eternal verity, now lately again born among us, that to this day no time has been granted unto us to clear our consciences, as most gladly we would have done. For how we have been tossed heretofore, the most part of Europe, as we suppose, does understand.

These words make plain that the Scotch Confession, like the other great Reformed confessions, was not written in an ivory tower by theologians detached from the life and struggles of the members of the church. The confession is intended rather to give expression to the faith which they love and for which they have suffered dearly. They mean to set down in the confession the truths of God’s Word according to which they are committed to live, and for which they are ready if necessary to die.

There is a lesson here for our doctrinally weak and indifferent age. Reformed people today find it fashionable to ignore and belittle their heritage. The confessions of the church of the past are dismissed as outdated relics of antiquity that have no real relevance for the church of today — dry bones and dead dinosaurs. They may have served a purpose in their day, but certainly they are of little value today. Nothing could be further from the truth! It is imperative as never before that Reformed Chris-

2. Quotations from “The Preface” of the *Scotch Confession* are taken from Philip Schaff’s *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 3, pp. 437ff. But since Schaff retains the old spelling and certain grammatical forms, I have taken the liberty to update the spelling and some of the grammar.

tians recall their past, root themselves in the Reformation creeds, and live out of the truths contained in the historic confessions of the Reformed churches.

A noteworthy feature of the preface is not only its reverence for the Word of God as the ultimate authority in the church, but its explicit renunciation of any claim to infallibility of interpretation. The confession is commended to the Reformed church world for its examination, with the promise that if any corrections are needed in its formulations, they will be promptly made.

If one man will note in this our confession one article or sentence repugnant to God's holy Word, that it would please him of his gentleness and for Christian charity's sake, to admonish us of the same in writing. And we upon our honor and fidelity, by God's grace do promise unto him satisfaction from the mouth of God, that is, from his Holy Scriptures, and reformation of that which he shall prove to be amiss.


At the outset, the writers of the Scotch Confession make plain their commitment to the sole authority

of the Holy Scriptures. Everything that follows in the body of the confession is based squarely on the teaching of the Bible. In common with the other great confessions of the Reformed churches, the Scotch Confession makes its appeal to Holy Writ and sets forth its teaching.

The preface closes with these words:

We take God to record in our consciences, that from our hearts we abhor all sects of heresy and all teachers of erroneous doctrine, and that with all humility we embrace the purity of Christ's Gospel, which is the only food of our souls, and therefore so precious unto us, that we are determined to suffer the most extreme of worldly danger, rather than that we will suffer ourselves to be defrauded of the same. For hereof we are most certainly persuaded, and whosoever denies Christ Jesus, or is ashamed of him in the presence of men, shall be denied before the Father and before his holy angels. And therefore by the assistance of the mighty Spirit of the same Lord Jesus Christ, we firmly purpose to abide to the end in the confession of this our faith, the articles of which follow.

Thus was the trumpet blast of the Reformation in Scotland sounded. Under the banner of the new confession the lords of Scotland and the leading reformers have rallied the faithful people of God. With the Scotch Confession at their head, they are determined to march forward into the battle for God's truth and church. Drawn up in some haste by a small number of its ministers, the confession will serve the Scottish church well in the coming decades. Succeeding generations of Scottish Presbyterians will be nurtured under its instruction, and the Reformed church of Scotland will be built upon its solid foundation.

A brief study of the Scotch Confession will be worthwhile. Undoubtedly its contents are not very familiar to most of our readers. In a following article, therefore, it will be my purpose to acquaint our readers with the contents of this early Reformation creed. Such a study of the Scotch Confession will foster an appreciation for the unique features of the Scottish Reformation, but will also underscore the common heritage shared by the Scotch Presbyterians and the Dutch Reformed. 

Rev. Daniel Kleyn

John Knox on Liturgy and Worship

Prior to the Reformation in Scotland, the Roman Catholic Church was so thoroughly corrupt that any true worship of God was well nigh impossible. Men and women bowed to images. Martyrs, apostles, and

virgins were worshiped. Numerous holy days and feasts (often pagan in origin) were constantly being added. The church in Scotland was therefore in dire need of reform, especially in the area of liturgy and worship.

In the time of the church's need, God raised up John Knox to lead the Scottish Reformation. Courageously and boldly he faced

the evils of the Church of Rome. He strove tirelessly to cleanse the church and nation from the corruptions of false worship. Openly he condemned Rome's evil practices. He showed the people what exactly was wrong with Rome's way of worship, and set forth proper, biblical liturgy and worship.

In doing this, Knox made application to worship of one of the

Rev. Kleyn is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Edgerton, Minnesota.

solas of the Reformation — *sola scriptura*. Scripture alone must be the guide for worship. All practices and observances in the church that do not have scriptural authority must be abolished. In applying the principle of *sola scriptura* to worship, Knox was upholding what has since become known as the “Regulative Principle of Worship.”

Knox came to a clear understanding of this principle of worship during his exile in Geneva. Severe persecution of Protestants in Scotland forced him, and many others, to flee. Although occasionally returning to Scotland, Knox was in Geneva for approximately six years, from 1554 through 1559.

While in Geneva, Knox enjoyed much interaction with the reformer John Calvin. This gave him opportunity to discuss with Calvin not only theology but also church polity. He learned much from Calvin and became thoroughly acquainted with Calvin’s views on worship.

In Geneva, Knox also served as pastor of a small congregation of English exiles. Through this he gained, as it were, hands-on experience in the Reformed form of worship that Calvin taught and established in Geneva. And he approved of it. This is evident from a letter he wrote from Geneva to friends in England in which he stated, “... I neither fear nor am ashamed to say [that here] is the most perfect school of Christ that ever was in the earth since the days of the apostles. In other places, I confess Christ to be truly preached; but manners and religion to be so sincerely reformed, I have not yet seen in any other place beside.”¹

Knox adopted Calvin’s views on worship, thoroughly convinced that they were biblical and correct. He understood that man himself may not decide how God is worshiped. God alone may determine that. Therefore any practice or religious ceremony in the church that does not have scriptural warrant must be soundly rejected. Making

reference to Deuteronomy 4:2 and 12:8, Knox put it this way: “Not that thing which appears good in thy eyes shalt thou do to the Lord thy God, but what the Lord thy God has commanded thee; that do thou; add nothing to it; diminish nothing from it.”

The result of Knox’s stay in Geneva was that he returned to Scotland decidedly in favor of doing things as Calvin did them in Geneva. Through writing, debate, and especially preaching, he set about to implement the Reformed principles of liturgy and worship.

Knox was a powerful preacher. “He put more life into his hearers from the pulpit in an hour than six hundred trumpets.”² Even when he was old and had to be assisted to the pulpit, he still became so animated that, according to some, it seemed likely that he would “ding the pulpit in blads” (beat the pulpit to pieces) and fly out of it. Knox understood the centrality and power of preaching. From the pulpit, therefore, he fearlessly condemned the errors of the church of Rome and set forth the biblical way of worship.

An example of this is a sermon he preached in St. Andrews soon after his return from Geneva. Knox’s audience consisted of many influential men, including nobles and priests. Not all were in favor of the Reformation, but this did not deter him. He preached on Jesus’ cleansing of the temple. In the course of his sermon he made direct application to the papacy. He described and condemned, without reservation, the corruptions that the papacy had introduced into the church. The clergy of Rome, he said, were simonists, pardon-mongers, sellers of relics and charms, exorcists, and traffickers in the bodies and souls of men.

The worship of Rome, according to Knox, consisted of countless “papal inventions.” It was devised by man, and thus greatly dishonoring and displeasing to God. Therefore “the wrath and fearful

malediction of God is denounced to fall upon all them that dare attempt to add or diminish anything in his religion.”³

According to Knox, to allow men to determine what may and may not be included in worship opens up the way to idolatry. This was true especially of the mass. In *A Vindication of the Doctrine That the Sacrifice of the Mass Is Idolatry*, Knox states, “All worshiping, honoring, or service invented by the brain of man in the religion of God, without his own express commandment, is idolatry. The Mass is invented by the brain of man, without any commandment of God; therefore it is idolatry,” and “blasphemous to the death and passion of Christ.”⁴

By means of Knox’s insistence on biblically-based worship and his diligent labors in proclaiming this truth, God brought about a reformation in worship in Scotland. The false worship of Rome was abandoned, and true worship of God was restored. The dead idols of Rome were replaced by the lively preaching of the Word. And only those elements of worship which Scripture prescribes were admitted, such as prayer, the reading and preaching of the Scriptures, the singing of Psalms, and the proper administration of the sacraments.

Knox wrote the *Book of Common Order*, often referred to as “Knox’s Liturgy.” This book was approved and adopted by the General Assembly in 1564 and used in Scotland until the Westminster directory for worship appeared in 1645.

Knox’s liturgy was based largely on that of the English congregation he had pastored in

1. Charles Baird, *The Presbyterian Liturgies*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957, p. 97.

2. Philip Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990, vol. I, p. 677.

3. John Knox, *True and False Worship*, Dallas: Presbyterian Heritage Publications, 1994, p. 36.

4. Knox, *True and False Worship*, pp. 22, 23.

Geneva, following the same general order and content. In the preface of this book he states: "We, therefore, ... do present unto you, which desire the increase of God's Glory, and the pure Simplicity of his Word, a Form and Order of a Reformed Church, limited within the Compass of God's Word, which our Savior hath left unto us as only sufficient to govern all our actions by."

With regard to the sacraments, Knox showed that only those sacraments were valid which were instituted by Christ. "That Sacraments be rightly administered, we judge two things requisite: The one, that they be administered by lawful Ministers, whom we affirm to be only they that are appointed to the preaching of the Word. ... The other, that they be administered in such elements, and in such sort, as God has appointed; else, we affirm, that they cease to be right Sacraments of Christ Jesus."⁵

Concerning the reading of Scripture in worship, Knox believed "it most expedient that the Scriptures be read in order, that is, that some one book of the Old and New Testament be begun and orderly read to the end."⁶ He applied this also to the preaching. "Skipping and divagation from place to place of the Scripture, be it in reading, or be it in preaching, we judge not so profitable to edify the Church, as the continual following of one text."⁷ Ministers ought to preach from the Scriptures book by book, and chapter by chap-

ter, in a continuous and orderly fashion.


Form prayers were included in Knox's liturgy. These were intended for use during worship services. Knox made it clear, however, that there must also be room for free prayers. The form prayers were models. One was not strictly obliged to use them. Ministers therefore enjoyed a large measure of freedom in public prayer.

Worship itself became a corporate activity. The Roman Catholic Church had kept the people from being involved in worship. Now, however, Latin was replaced with English so that all could understand. The Scriptures were translated into the common language. All churches had a Bible in English and expounded it regularly so that even those who could not read could profit. The gospel was proclaimed with clarity and simplicity. And the Psalms were set to familiar tunes so the people themselves could express praise and thanks to God.

The *Scotch Confession of Faith* expresses clearly this opinion of Knox with regard to liturgy and worship. Drawn up in 1560 by Knox and five other ministers, Article 20 of this confession declares that "in the church, as in the house of God, it becometh all things to be done decently and in good order: not that we think that one policy, and one order of ceremonies can be appointed for all ages, times, and places; for as ceremonies, such as men have devised, are

but temporal, so may and ought they to be changed, when they rather foster superstition than edify the church using the same."

This article shows that Knox and his Reformed colleagues in Scotland were not in favor of making one particular form of worship binding. The churches were free to change their liturgy. But they may not change it to whatever they wished. They must be governed by the Scriptures. God's Word must direct them. Specifically, liturgy and worship are to be governed by the two principles set forth in I Corinthians 14, namely, that all things must be done "decently and in good order" (v. 40), and that all things must be done "unto edifying" (v. 26).

The church of today would do well to take to heart and to put into practice the biblical views of John Knox with regard to liturgy and worship. For again today many "man-made inventions" are creeping into the worship services of many churches. Knox correctly pointed out that this amounts to idolatry. It must be condemned and abandoned. Only what God commands may be included in worship. May we by the grace of God always maintain and practice biblical worship. 

5. *The Scotch Confession of Faith*, Article 22.

6. John Knox, *The Reformation in Scotland*, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1982, p. 253.

7. Knox, *Reformation in Scotland*.

Rev. Chris Coleborn

Knox and Church Order (1)

Introduction



One of the primary documents of the Scottish Reformation is *The First Book of Discipline*. It is a document for the ordering of the life of

the Reformed Church in Scotland drawn up at the dawn of the Reformation in Scotland. This document, together with *The Book of Common Order*, formed the original Church Order of the Reformed

Rev. Coleborn is a pastor in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia.

Church of Scotland in the days of John Knox. *The First Book of Discipline* was the work of five other Scottish reformers in addition to John Knox. Knox also, with the help of others in Frankfurt, compiled *The Book of Common Order*. These documents and the times in which they were written show us the close connection especially between the Reformed Church of Scotland and that of France and Geneva. This is seen in the close contact and communication between those churches, not only on the ordering of the church, but also on all matters of doctrine, worship, and government.

Historical Background to the First Book of Discipline

The years 1559 and 1560 were dramatic and crucial years of God's mighty work of reformation in Scotland. A great struggle, a spiritual struggle, but with political manifestations, was taking place in this northern land of Europe. The French noblewoman Mary, of the powerful house of Guise, was the regent queen of Scotland. At this time the ducal house of Guise dominated both the French and Scottish courts.

Mary of Guise had previously been married in France. When widowed she married James V of Scotland, who died in 1541. She lost her two sons by James V as infants. James and Mary's only surviving child, Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, was still in her minority. This young woman and heir to the Scottish throne was living in France and married to the dauphin (crown prince) Francis. They were seen as the Queen and King of Scotland, but until Mary came of age a regent reigned in her stead.

There had been strong ties between Scotland and France, not only culturally, but also economically and militarily. They were united against a common enemy, England. For a time Mary of Guise as regent of Scotland practiced a

limited toleration towards those of the Reformed faith in Scotland. This was only as a political tool, however, to woo them and to hamper English influence in Scotland, for Mary Tudor (Bloody Mary) was the tragic but bigoted Roman Catholic queen of England at the time.

Under the influence of powerful spiritual forces, Lowland Scottish society was in a state of flux. The amazing work of the Spirit of God and the force of biblical truth had been, since the 1520s, effecting a change in the hearts and understanding of many of the dominant Lowland Scots' society. (The Reformation came more slowly and later to the Highlanders, where many remained under the sway of a sad mixture of pagan and Romish beliefs and practices until the 1700s.)

Under the blessing of God, and through the means of the preaching and teaching of godly men, the Reformation, this mighty work of God, was dawning in Scotland! The more outstanding preachers and leaders of this reformation were such ministers as John Knox, John Winram, John Spottiswoode, John Willock, John Douglas, John Row, and Christopher Goodman and such elders as the scholar George Buchanan and the Earl of Glencairn. By 1558 the Reformation had become so extensive and deep that the regent dowager queen Mary, in a negative spiritual and political reaction to it, abandoned her conciliatory policies towards the Reformed. It was now no longer necessary for her to show a conciliatory attitude to them to keep a wedge between Scotland and England, for now a different queen, Elizabeth Tudor, a Protestant, had become ruler of England.

With an increasing number of Scots embracing the Reformed faith, and now a majority of the ruling nobles sympathetic to the Reformed faith as well as to a Protestant England, Mary of Guise's power began to seep away — so

much so that in October 1559 Mary was deposed from the regency. She clung to power for a time with the help of French troops, but an English army marched to the aid of the Reformed. Mary's policy of maintaining Roman Catholicism with French arms collapsed, and for the first time the Reformed of the land, in God's providence, had the dominant voice in the church and nation.

It was against this background that the *First Book of Discipline*, the original book of Church Order, was drawn up for the Reformed Church of Scotland.

The First Book of Discipline

In July of 1560 the Parliament was called to meet in Scotland. The queen and king in France, the young Mary Queen of Scots and her husband the dauphin, commissioned it, and it met the following month.

This reforming Parliament requested the Reformed Church to draw up a Confession of Faith, known variously as the *First Scots' Confession*, *Knox's Confession*, or *The Scotch Confession of 1560*. In addition, the Reformed Church was requested also to draw up a Church Order showing how the church should be governed and how discipline should be exercised. Calderwood records, "... consultation was had how a good and godlie policie might be established in the church, which, by the Papists, was altogether defaced. Commission and charge were given ... to draw a plat forme of the church policie, as they had done of the doctrine."¹

The first meeting of the General Assembly of the Reformed Church of Scotland was held in December of 1560. There were only forty delegates, of whom six were ministers. The ministers, Hether-

1. D. Calderwood, *History of the Kirk of Scotland*, vol. II, Wodrow Society, Edinburgh, 1843, p. 41.

ington says, though small in number, were of "great abilities, of deep piety, and of eminent personal worth, fitted and qualified by their Creator for the work which He had given to them to do. ... It was very clearly seen by the reformers, that the power of discipline was essential to the well being of a church, since without it purity could not be maintained, whether among the people or the ministers themselves. They determined, therefore, to draw up a book in which there should be a complete system of ecclesiastical government.... They applied themselves to their task ... looking to Divine direction and authority alone. ... Having arranged the subject under different heads, they divided these among them; and, after they had finished their several parts, they met together and examined them with great attention, spending much time in reading and meditation on the subject, and in earnest prayers for Divine direction."²

The men given this task were the same six ministers who drew up the Confession of Faith. They were John Knox, John Winram, John Spottiswoode, John Willock, John Douglas, and John Row. It tickled the Scots' sense of humor that they all had "John" as their Christian names, and they were popularly called the "six Johns."

The document these worthies drew up was called *The First Book of Discipline* or *The Policy and Discipline of the Church*. After consultation with other Reformed brethren and the Scottish Parliament, further changes were made to the initial production. In its final form there were sixteen chapters. The historian A. M. Renwick says of it, "It is a remarkable document revealing better than anything else the statesmanlike qualities of the leading ministers, and their amazing far-sightedness."³

It was sent to Calvin, Viret, and Beza in Geneva, and to Peter Martyr, Bullinger, and others in Zurich for their considered opinions.

The Book was ready for the scrutiny of the General Assembly by December 1560, and was presented for approval to a convention of nobles and the Privy Council. Sadly, it was never approved officially by the Scottish Parliament, as was the *First Scottish Confession*, for several reasons. One reason was that many of the lords had taken possession of vast territories belonging to the church. *The First Book of Discipline* required that the income from these lands support not only ministers of the gospel, but also the Christian education of the youth of the nation and the care of the poor. The greed of such men overrode their nominal commitment to the cause of Christ. Many of the lords and burgesses, however, signed it in a private capacity and promised to forward its aims by every means in their power. Calderwood says, "Some approved it, and wished it to be ratified by law: other perceaving their carnall libertie to be restrained, and worldlie commiditie to be shmwat impaired thereby, grudged, in so much that the name of the Booke of Discipline became odious unto them. ... Yitt a great part of the nobilitie subscribed the Booke of Discipline...."⁴

Another reason the ungodly were adverse to it was the strict discipline which it appointed to be exercised against vice. To approve it would mean that they were condemned by it. They loved darkness rather than the light of Christ and His good ways.

Though not approved formally by Parliament, *The First Book of Discipline* nevertheless was adopted by the Reformed Church of Scotland as its programme for ordering itself as near as it could after the principles of Christ as its Head and as taught in the Word. In the preface the authors claimed scriptural authority for their proposals and urged the lords of the Parliament to have a care not to sanction anything "which God's plain Word shall not approve."

The Book of Common Order

The Book of Common Order, produced in 1564, was a summary of the laws of the church of Scotland with regard to worship. It was eventually replaced by the Westminster Standards' *Directory of Public Worship*. It provided a common order for worship rather than a liturgy. Its origins were in Frankfurt in 1554. Knox at that time was a refugee there from persecution in Scotland and was a pastor to a group of English Protestants who had fled from the persecution of Queen Mary Tudor (Bloody Mary). He and several other pastors were asked by the magistrates of Frankfurt and the English congregation to draw up an order in the English language that closely followed the French Reformed order of worship. Many of this congregation moved to Geneva, and this order was published there. It was also known as *The Genevan Order*.

After Knox's return to Scotland in 1559, this Order or Directory for worship was used by some of the Reformed congregations. *The First Book of Discipline* refers to it as "the book of our common order." The General Assembly of the Reformed Church of Scotland enjoined its uniform use in "the administration of the sacraments and the solemnisation of marriages and burial of the dead."

The inclusion of a complete metrical Psalter and additional specimens of prayers drawn from both the continental and Scottish sources enlarged the *Book of Common Order*. This work has often been called erroneously *Knox's Liturgy*. It was intended as a guide and as an aid to ministers in conducting services. It was not meant to be slavishly followed. Calder-

2. Hetherington, W. M., *History of the Church of Scotland*, John Johnstone, Edinburgh, 1848, p. 29.

3. Renwick, *The Story of the Scottish Reformation*, IVF, London, 1960, p. 109.

4. Calderwood.

wood and others of that age made it clear it was intended to be a directory, and not ritualist liturgy.

The *Book of Common Order*, in addition to guidelines on the administration of the sacraments, marriage, and Christian burial, also provided directions for fasting, the election of ministers and elders, the exercise of church discipline, and the visitation of the sick.

The order of worship was much the same as followed by the

French Reformed Church. Worship began with the simple call, "Let us worship God," and perhaps the reading of a suitable verse of Scripture. There was then a prayer of confession, followed by the singing of a psalm. Prayer for God's blessing on the preaching of the Word was then offered up, followed by the sermon. After the sermon a general prayer was offered, and "the Belief" or Apostles' Creed was recited. The singing of

another psalm and the minister pronouncing the benediction then concluded the service. It will be noted there is in this order of worship no mention of the reading of the Scriptures. This was because a "reader" read them before the formal worship commenced.

(It remains, still, to detail with the contents, the main subjects, of the *Book of Discipline* and the *Book of Common Order*. This we hope to do in a future article.)

Rev. Kenneth Koole

The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women

A Brief Review

As one might suspect from the title of the above-mentioned treatise, its author was not a twenty-first century preacher. In fact, any present-day preacher having the audacity to write a treatise with such a title might be well advised to do so under the cloak of anonymity lest authorities list him as dangerously subversive, and even haul him in for questioning. Well, it was not such a popular little book in the sixteenth century either.

When Knox published the *First Blast* in 1558 from the safety of the confines of Geneva and sent it north to the realms of England and Scotland, he did so anonymously, with the appended notification that the author intended to publish a second and a third blast as well, at which time he would divulge his identity. Due to various political considerations, the second and third "Blasts" were never written,

though Knox did append in summary form the intended thesis of his "Second Blast" to a later treatise.

As for the cloak of anonymity, the identity of the *First Blast's* author was about as poorly kept a secret as was the identity of Gideon about to fall on the hosts of Midian. ("This is nothing else save 'the blast of Knox!'" cf. Judges 7:14.) Evidently Knox hoped that publishing the treatise anonymously would permit a more objective reading of its contents before some consigned it to the flames.

When Knox wrote the treatise while in Geneva he was already a persona non grata in the British Isles, having been burned in effigy in absentia by his Catholic enemies in Scotland. There was a price on his head for his relentless condemnation of the Roman Catholic Church and its doctrines, and for his bold criticism of those who were permitting Catholicism to re-establish its dominance in the British Isles.

The *First Blast* was heard far

and wide and was widely read, not only in the British Isles but on the Continent as well. It was a treatise so controversial that it aroused criticism from within the Protestant camp itself. No less a figure than John Foxe, of *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* fame, "strongly remonstrated with Knox on the severity of the language and the impropriety of its publication."¹

The *First Blast* was not the fruit of some abstract reflection written to stimulate further discussion on a worthy topic, but was born out of the political reality of the day, which political reality had tremendous implications for the preservation of Protestantism in the British Isles of Knox's day. Two Marys had ascended to the separate thrones of England and Scotland; both were committed to a return of their realms to Catholicism and to the rolling back of Protestantism. In fact, the one, Mary Tudor of England, was married to Philip

Rev. Koole is pastor of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan.

1. Smith/Martin, *John Knox, Apostle of the Scottish Reformation*, p. 33.

II, crown prince of Spain (that most militant of Catholic nations), and the other, young Mary Stewart of Scotland, was about to marry the dauphin (crown prince) of France. France was also Catholic to the core.

It was this political situation, with its chilling prospects for the fledgling Reformation movement, that compelled Knox to confront the question of the right of a woman to ascend to a place of governmental authority and to exercise rule over men. This was the "monstrous regiment" Knox referred to "regiment" referring to being the crowned head of state).

It was Knox's contention that any nation that long tolerated such a "monstrous" (unnatural) arrangement could only come under the judgment of God and become a seedbed of civil chaos and every wickedness.

In simple terms, it was Knox's contention that it is incontrovertible that political rule by women is both odious to the Lord God and contrary to nature itself. This thesis is nicely summarized in the opening paragraph of the main body of the treatise.

To promote a woman to bear rule, superiority, dominion, or empire above any realm, nation, or city, is repugnant to nature; contumely [an insult] to God, a thing most contrary to his revealed will and approved ordinance; and finally, it is the subversion of good order, of all equity and justice.²

When Knox speaks of rule by a woman as being "repugnant to nature," he has two things in mind: first, a woman's human nature as created by God himself, and second, the order of male and female in nature (creation) itself. As for a woman's human nature:

Nature, I say, does paint them forth to be weak, frail, impatient, feeble, and foolish; and experience has declared them to be inconstant, variable, cruel, lacking the

spirit of counsel and regiment.³

Brave, not to say foolhardy, would the man be today who wrote such things. Apart from the cloak of anonymity, who would dare! Not I. But say what you will of Knox, he wrote these things knowing full well that they would be read by queens who would cheerfully put his head on a pike, and he fully intended to disclose who he was, which in time he did.

Of greater weight to Knox's argument was his reference to the order found in nature itself, pointing out how "unnatural" it was to have the females of a species dominating the males (referred to above as "the subversion of good order"). Imagine one doe directing a herd of bucks, or a lioness lording it over a pride of male lions.⁴

Would not such be considered monstrous? If such an arrangement is wholly unnatural in the realm of brute beasts, how can it be considered natural and tolerated in the realm of men?

But while Knox was not adverse to using arguments based on the natural order of things, or quoting amply from the church fathers and even from unbelievers like Aristotle (to prove he was not alone nor the first to assert the unfitness of women to rule; even the wise of the world warned against it), such was not the foundation of his position; he sought to base it on God's Word. And herein lies the burden of Knox's arguments.

Of some force is Knox's argument from the plain scriptural teaching that a woman was not to "lord" it over her husband, but in all things to be submissive (I Cor. 11:8-10); and from Paul's word that he would not suffer a woman "... to usurp authority over a man" (I Tim. 2:12). Knox pointed out that the apostle speaks not simply of exercising authority over *one's own husband*, but over "*a man*," i.e., any man at all. And then comes Knox's telling point: how is it possible that a person (the woman) who is made

subject to *every* man in the church (called to keep silence) and to *one* man in the home yet end up being "preferred to (elevated over — KK) many [men]" in the affairs of state?⁵ With God's approval? Never!

And further, Knox points out, how is it possible that God would deny a woman the lesser parts of authority in church and home, and then deliver over the greatest of all authority, head of state, to the same woman.⁶

As one might expect, Knox also makes reference to the biblical examples of Athaliah, queen of Judah, and to Jezebel, ruler of Israel in all but title. When was the spiritual condition of those nations ever worse than when those two "monsters" ruled, and when was the survival of the faithful more in jeopardy! Considering that one of the queens of Knox's day was known as "Bloody Mary" (that Jezebel!), what could be plainer than the clear parallel to those evil biblical days.⁷

Out of fairness Knox was also forced to deal with the instances of Deborah and Huldah the prophetess. These he dismissed as exceptions, keeping in mind, first, that they were God-fearing matrons who were driving the ungodly out of the land ("... how unlike our mischievous Marys [is] Deborah, under whom strangers were chased out of Israel,"⁸ rather than by marriage bringing strangers in!); and second, Deborah and Huldah were chosen directly by God, and therefore did not *usurp* authority, unlike the Marys who

2. John Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, Presbyterian Heritage Publications, p. 19.

3. Knox, p. 20.

4. Knox, p. 49.

5. Knox, p. 29.

6. Knox, p. 30.

7. Knox, pp. 65, 66.

8. Knox, pp. 65, 66.

were enthroned by the mere choice and whim of ungodly men.

As strong as Knox's words were about the unfitness of women to rule, and their rule being "... a thing most contrary to that order which God has approved in that commonwealth which he did institute and rule by his word,"⁹ the treatise would not have created the outrage it did if Knox had refrained from the next step, namely, calling the nobility to revolt against such queens (though Knox would not call it revolution), removing them from power. But Knox was a man not afraid to embrace the logical conclusions of his own arguments, and so he uttered just such a call. He stated that this was to be the burden of the "Second Blast," in which the calling to depose and execute those who promoted the false religion was extended to apply even to idolatrous kings!¹⁰ But already in his *First Blast* he could not refrain from sounding the note. Addressing the duties of the nobility and the estates, Knox declared

... they ought to call [upon God] for mercy. And, being admonished of their error and damnable fact, in sign and token of true repentance, with common consent they ought to retreat [retract] that which unadvisedly and by ignorance they have pronounced; and ought, without further delay, to remove from authority all such persons as by usurpation, violence, or tyranny, do possess the same. For so did Israel and Judah after they had revolted from David, and Judah alone in the days of Athaliah.¹¹

As R.G. Kyle points out:

Knox's premise, that female rule had subverted both the divine and natural order, did not seem so startling. What alarmed Europe was his conclusion: The Faithful, if afflicted by a female sovereign, "ought to remove from honor and authority that monster in nature," and if any support her they ought to "execute against them the sentence of death."¹²

One can well imagine the stir such words created, and in what light it put the reformers and their followers. Revolutionaries! As much a danger to the crowned heads of state and to good order as ever the Anabaptists were, distancing themselves from such radicals though the Protestant leaders tried.



In assessing Knox's revolutionary tendencies and his stated justification of revolt against God-dishonoring rulers whose rule contradicted God's law, and in determining our own position on this most contemporary of issues, one ought to keep a couple of things in mind.

In the first place, Knox himself backed off from actually insisting on the implementation of his own radical conclusions. No sooner was the *First Blast* published than Bloody Mary died, only to be succeeded by another woman, Elizabeth I. But this female sovereign had Protestant sympathies. Now what, brother John? Bold Knox equivocated.

Soon after her ascension to the throne, Knox wrote Elizabeth a conciliatory letter in which he "... naively urged that Elizabeth not take offense at what he had written, pointing out that the tract had not been meant to apply to her. In fact, he was grateful to God for her reign."¹³ The trouble was that Knox had contended from nature and Scripture that monarchy by any female was an "unnatural and monstrous thing," a usurping of authority, and a thing displeasing to God, and not simply a thing true if the woman were unsympathetic to the Protestant cause! Elizabeth I never forgave Knox for calling into question the basis of her rule.

More telling is the fact that the leading reformers would not give their approval to Knox's treatise. According to R.G. Kyle:

Calvin refused to take any respon-

sibility for the Scottish reformer's views. As he explained to Cecil in 1559, he had not read the book until over a year after its publication and earlier had cautioned Knox against taking too radical a position in regard to female rule.¹⁴

According to R.L. Greaves:

Calvin and Beza reacted by banning the sale in Geneva of Knox's 'First Blast' and of Goodman's 'How Superior Powers Ought to be Obeyed' [a book with the same thesis as Knox's — KK]. In a letter to Bullinger dated September 3, 1566, Beza explained: "As soon as we learned the contents of each, we were much displeased, and their sale was forbidden in consequence...."¹⁵

Those who read John Knox with approval today ought to keep in mind that Knox permitted his doctrine of Christian citizenship to be determined by the social evils and wickedness of his day, understandable as that may be, rather than basing his doctrine solely on the teachings of the apostles, who, while they bore testimony against evil rulers with a boldness matching that of Knox, yet never sounded one note encouraging revolution against God-ordained government. Any blast that does not take into account the clear notes of Romans 13:1-4 and of I Peter 2:13-20 has not been composed by listening to the Spirit of the Lord. ☞

9. Knox, p. 58.

10. Knox, p. 90.

11. Knox, p. 82.

12. R.G. Kyle, *The Mind of John Knox*, p. 12.

13. R.L. Greaves, *Theology & Revolution in the Scottish Reformation*, p. 164.

14. Kyle, p. 269.

15. Greaves, p. 166.

Calvin and Knox's Relationship of Mutual Love and Esteem

In May 1554 John Knox went to Geneva where he met John Calvin face to face for the first time. It is apparent that there had been correspondence between the two prior to this time, as Calvin had recommended Knox to Bullinger at least as early as March of the same year.¹

It was in January 1554 that Knox began this journey to Geneva when he was forced into exile from England. This was due to the ascension to the throne of the devoted Roman Catholic, Mary Tudor, more popularly known as *Bloody Mary* because of the persecution she aimed at Protestants upon her ascension.

After some wanderings, but immediately prior to visiting Geneva, Knox traveled throughout parts of Switzerland.² In a loving pastoral letter to his afflicted brethren in England, Knox writes of this time:

My awne estait is this: since the 28th of Januar, I have travellit through all the congregationis of Helvetia, and hes reasonit with all the Pastouris and many other excellentlie learnit men upon sic matters as now I can not commit to wrytting: gladlie I wold be tounge or be pen utter the same to Godis glory.³

It is obvious from this account that, despite the trying circumstances that had forced him from his beloved Scotland and England,

Knox must have entered Geneva refreshed after having had his spirits raised by godly fellowship among the Reformed in Helvetia. It is in this mood and on this occasion that Knox "first became personally acquainted with the celebrated Calvin, and formed that intimate friendship which subsisted between them till the death of the latter, in 1564."⁴

It is this relationship that we wish to explore, just a little, in this article. The relationship is one which Knox's biographer, M'Crie, summarizes accurately, succinctly, and well when he speaks of the mutual respect of the two reformers and hints at reasons for it. Writes he:

They were nearly of the same age; and there was a striking similarity in their sentiments, and in the prominent features of their character. The Genevan reformer was highly pleased with the piety and talents of Knox, who, in his turn, entertained a greater esteem and deference for Calvin than for any other of the reformers.⁵

But let us examine the truth of this a little more fully.

Strained Relations

While M'Crie's observation is accurate, even the best of friends are not immune to "rocky" periods in their relationships. The same is true of Calvin and Knox. They had a close friendship. It was a close friendship built upon mutual respect. But there were times when they were not well pleased with each other. The most notable

example of this was occasioned by Knox's *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*. This book contains Knox's vigorous views against the rule of women in the civil sphere.

In a letter to William Cecil,⁶ Calvin explains how he sympathized with Knox's position, theologically, but had explained to Knox in a private conversation that "certain women had sometimes been so gifted that the singular blessing of God was conspicuous in them, and made it manifest that they had been raised up by the providence of God"⁷ Moreover, writes Calvin,

... it did not seem proper to me that this question should be mooted, not only because the thing was odious in itself, but because in my judgment it is not permitted to unsettle governments that have been set up by the peculiar providence of God.⁸

1. Cf. Calvin, *Selected Works*, vol. 6, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983, p. 37, note 1.

2. Particularly this occurred in Helvetia, part of modern day western Switzerland, and the region from which the *First and Second Helvetic Confessions of Faith* are named.

3. John Knox, *Works*, vol. 3, Edinburgh: Laing Edition, 1854, p. 235.

4. T. M'Crie, *The Life of John Knox*, Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1976, p. 71.

5. *Ibid.*

6. Cecil was the secretary to Queen Elizabeth I, of England.

7. John Calvin, *Selected Works*, vol. 7, p. 47.

8. *Ibid.*

It is on the basis of this that Calvin then goes on to pass the most severe criticism upon Knox. In the process of explaining why he had been hesitant to criticize the Scottish Reformer earlier he says:

... I had reason to fear, if the affair had been brought to a trial, that for the inconsiderate vanity of one man, an unfortunate crowd of exiles would have been driven not only from this city, but from almost every part of the world, especially as the evil now admitted of no other remedy than the exercise of indulgence.⁹

Strong words indeed! But these were the most severe words that occurred in the relationship of these two reformers, and they were written in an era when strong words were more the accepted norm than they are today.

Knox's Regard for Calvin

There are few letters extant that Knox wrote to Calvin. Nevertheless, we can gain an idea of how Knox regarded the Genevan reformer from a number of sources.

In the first place, Knox had cause to write to Calvin on a number of occasions concerning the problems he was having with the English congregation in Frankfurt.¹⁰ This, in itself, shows the high esteem he had for his fellow reformer. Further, however, the extent of his esteem is seen in that Knox followed the advice of Calvin.¹¹

In the second place, Knox's writings are sprinkled with occasional references to Calvin. Although brief, these references show the high regard he had for the Genevan reformer. An example will serve to illustrate this point. In 1554, Knox wrote *A Godly Letter to the Faithful in London*. In this letter, in commenting on the need to condemn plainly the idolatry of the Roman mass, Knox writes of Calvin: "Heir is to be observit, as that singular instrument of God, Johne Calvin, maist diligently

noteth, that the rest of the Prophetis warkis wes writtin in the Hebrew tounge...."¹²

Also there is the famous pronouncement by Knox concerning Geneva in general but no doubt focused on Calvin in particular. In a letter to his friend Anne Locke he wrote:

... in my hart I wald haif wishit, yea and can not cease to wish, that it wold pleas God to gyd and conduct your self to this place, whair I nether feir nor eschame to say is the maist perfyte schoole of Chryst that ever was in the erth since the dayis of the Apostilllis. In other places I confess Chryst to be trewlie preachit; but maneris and religioun so sinceirly reformat, I have not yit sene in any uther place....¹³

Calvin's Regard for Knox

There is much evidence to show how highly Calvin regarded the Scottish reformer. This comes out in a number of different ways.

First, we can see something of Calvin's love for and esteem of Knox in the letters he wrote to him personally. In one, dated 7th November 1559,¹⁴ the Genevan reformer begins with this respectful greeting: "If I answer your letter, most excellent brother...."¹⁵ He concludes the same letter:

Farewell most excellent sir and our very dear brother. The whole assembly of the pious in our name wish you prosperity; and we pray God that he may govern you all by his Spirit even to the end, sustain you by his power, and shield you with his protection."¹⁶

In another letter, dated 23rd April 1561, Calvin shows his concern for Knox's well-being. Some misunderstanding had occurred between them. Consequently, Calvin is at pains, from the beginning of this letter, to remove any offense Knox may have taken. This he does by giving high praise of Knox's character.¹⁷ The letter concludes with these beautiful words

of exhortation and comfort:

Farewell, distinguished sir and honored brother. May the Lord always stand by you, govern, protect, and sustain you by his power. Your distress for the loss of your wife justly commands my deepest sympathy. Persons of her merit are not often to be met with. But as you have well learned from what source consolation for your sorrow is to be sought, I doubt not but you endure with patience this calamity. You will salute very courteously all your pious brethren. My colleagues beg me to present to you their best respects.¹⁸

This same concern for the welfare of Knox is seen also in Calvin's letters to others.¹⁹ Concern, he shows, but also high esteem for Knox's preaching, doctrine, and dedication. In a letter to the Earl of Arran, Calvin writes:

9. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

10. The problem concerned Knox's desire to reform the worship at Frankfurt. He and Calvin agreed on the principles, but Calvin advised caution nonetheless.

11. Cf. *Selected Works*, vol. 6, pp. 189-191, and especially vol. 7, pp. 183-185.

12. John Knox, *Works*, vol. 3, p. 201. For similar praise cf., e.g., vol. 4, pp. 41 and 161. Also, consult Knox's letter to Calvin, vol. 6, pp. 133-135, where can be seen his great respect for Calvin, and desire for Calvin to advise him, as there is no other's advice which he esteems so highly.

13. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 240.

14. It must be noted that this letter was written after the one to Cecil, in which Calvin expressed his anger at Knox. The letter to Cecil was written in May of the same year. Knox and Calvin had obviously talked this matter out to their mutual satisfaction.

15. *Selected Works*, vol. 7, p. 73.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

17. Cf. *ibid.*, vol. 7, pp. 183-184.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 185.

19. Cf. a letter to Goodman which shows Calvin's sympathy on hearing of the death of Knox's wife (*ibid.*, pp. 185-186).

I praise God, likewise, Monseigneur, for the care and holy desire which you manifest that the pure doctrine of the gospel should be preached in your nation. To which duty I doubt not but our brother, Master Knox, will willingly dedicate his services, as indeed he has already shown.²⁰

And indeed, Calvin's esteem expands to include the writings and scholarship of the Scottish reformer. In "The Epistle Dedicatory" to his *Sermons on Election and Reprobation* he says:

For further satisfaction in this question, I refer all Christians to the Books that are written hereof, and namely to these excellent Sermons: M. Knox hath learnedly answered the objection of the adversaries in a Book printed at


Geneva.²¹

High praise, indeed, from the prince of exegetes, exemplary scholar, and leading reformer. Praise which shows that Calvin and Knox shared a mutual respect and love for each other.

Concluding Remarks

In this brief overview we have seen just a little of the relationship that existed between the leading Scottish and Genevan reformers. They did have their differences. And, at times, these differences led to a degree of anger and the speaking of harsh words. But these two men had a firm conviction of and belief in the fundamental, central issues of the gospel – which, under God, they were instrumental in teaching and preaching. It was this

that cemented their relationship – this love for the full-orbed gospel, and desire to teach and preach it.

We who love the truth of God's Word, as it is found in the fundamental, essential doctrines of the Scriptures, ought to learn from Calvin and Knox. Let us roll up our sleeves and work for the cause of God and His kingdom in these areas of faith that are most firmly believed among us. Let us have a high regard and love for each other, who hold the truth uncompromisingly. Let us, by God's grace, be Knoxes and Calvins in our love and esteem for the truth and for all who hold the truth. 

20. *Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 455.

21. Calvin, *Sermons on Election and Reprobation*, Audubon, New Jersey: Old Paths Publications, 1996, p. xxviii.

Report of Classis West

September 6-8, 2000
at Randolph, Wisconsin

After an enjoyable officebearers' conference on Tuesday, September 5, on the subject of "Understanding the Old Testament," Classis West met in Randolph, Wisconsin from September 6-8 for an extended session of work. Rev. A. Brummel opened classis with a brief exposition on the qualification of an officebearer to be "blameless." Rev. A. denHartog then took the chair as president and presided over the assembly. The agenda was weighty, and the decisions taken were of utmost seriousness. The delegates were required to labor all day and long into the night from Wednesday until classis finally adjourned shortly after midnight Friday night (or early Saturday morning).

Because almost the entire agenda had to be treated in closed session, only generalities can be reported here. The classis received

a report from the special committee it had previously appointed to help a congregation in difficulty. There were also several appeals against decisions of a consistory and the actions of a minister. After careful deliberation classis sustained the consistory in one appeal against it, but in other matters found the consistory and pastor guilty of several errors, and gave "settled and binding" advice as to how these matters must be addressed. Classis also reappointed a special committee to continue laboring with this congregation. In another appeal concerning a discipline matter in another congregation, the classis upheld the consistory in its exercise of Christian discipline.

Although the deliberations were of an extremely serious nature, classis was very united in the decisions taken, and expressed great concern for the care of the churches and for the offices of Christ in the churches.

Classis also granted classical appointments to the Randolph congregation. Because several changes were made to the schedule, I will report the schedule as left with Randolph's elders: Rev. denHartog (Oct. 22, 29); Rev. Kleyn (Nov. 5, 12); Rev. R. Miersma (Nov. 19, 26); Rev. Houck (Dec. 3, 10); Rev. Haak (Dec. 31, Jan. 7); Rev. Eriks (Jan. 14, 21); Rev. Smit (Feb. 4, 11); Rev. Key (Feb. 25, March 4); Rev. Bekkering (March 18, 25).

Rev. S. Key, Stated Clerk of Classis West for the past several years, tendered his resignation due to increased pastoral labors. Rev. Daniel Kleyn will take over the Stated Clerk's position after Pastor Key completes the work connected with the September classis.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of Classis West is March 7, 2001 in Doon, Iowa.

Rev. Steven Key,
Stated Clerk

Denomination Activities

As churches we have much to be thankful for. Without any doubt, one of those blessings is our Theological School. From our very beginning we have been blessed with faithful professors who, in turn, have been instrumental in training our churches' many faithful pastors.

I was reminded, recently, of just how great a gift our seminary is when on September 12 our Seminary Convocation took place at the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI, just a stone's throw away from our seminary. Even though school had been in session for about two weeks already, the Convocation officially served to set the tone for the coming year.

Southwest's sanctuary was comfortably full, but by no means completely full (there would be room for you next year). The Hope Heralds provided the special music; the audience sang a couple of Psalter numbers; and Professor R. Decker, professor of Practical Theology and New Testament Studies at the seminary, addressed the gathering, speaking on II Corinthians 4:6,7, under the theme, "A Priceless Treasure." Prof. Decker looked at those verses and applied their truth to our seminary in four distinct points. First, our seminary has a theological, doctrinal treasure. Second, it teaches its students that every aspect of our worship is a treasure, especially the preaching, since it is the chief means of grace. Third, the seminary teaches the treasure that we have in godly living. Pastors are called to apply the truth of God's Word to the way we live. And finally, these treasures are in earthen vessels. Professors and students

alike are totally dependent on the sanctifying grace of God.

You might also be interested to know that this year there are five full-time students in our seminary, but no first-year students. In his second year: Mr. William Langerak; in their third year: Mr. Rodney Kleyn and Mr. David Overway; in his fourth year: Mr. Angus Stewart, a member of our sister church in Northern Ireland, the Covenant PRC; and Mr. Paul Goh, a special student from our sister churches in Singapore.

Prof. Decker concluded his remarks by reminding us to pray for our seminary. It is, after all, our seminary. He also reminded us that the next few years will be years of change at our seminary. The four professors are getting older, a couple of them looking at retirement. So not only pray for more students, but also pray for more professors.

On the day before the September 6 meeting of Classes West, at the Randolph, WI PRC, an officebearers' conference was held, having for its theme, "Understanding the Old Testament Scriptures." Prof. R. Decker gave the keynote address on the subject, "The Key to the Biblical Understanding of the Old Testament." There were three sectionals, one led by Rev. R. Cammenga on "Preaching Old Testament History: Method and Application"; one led by Rev. W. Bruinsma on "Covenant or Covenants? An Examination of the Historical Development of the Covenant"; and one led by Rev. B. Woudenberg, "The Law and Practical Preaching."

A recent bulletin from our Hudsonville, MI PRC reminded their congregation how important it is to keep up with the work of our churches. The announcement read, "Did you know that Synod 2000 made a decision about life insurance policies as gifts to the

churches, about ministers in the Social Security program, and budgeted \$30,000 for radio broadcasts for 2001? See pages 52 and 65 of the new Acts of Synod and Yearbook. Pick up your copy if you have not yet and be informed about our churches' labors together." Have you picked up and read your copy yet?

Mission Activities

The Foreign Mission Committee and Hull, IA PRC, the calling church to Ghana, have given their approval for the building of a nice permanent structure for the mission in Ghana to worship in. They also approved a plan that would allow Mr. and Mrs. John and Judy Bouma, who have served as missionary helpers to Rev. R. Moore since shortly after his arrival in Ghana, to go home to the USA for a short break and then return until the completion of the building or until April of next year.

Rev. J. Mahtani, our churches' home missionary to the Eastern States, planned to preach in Fayetteville, NC on September 17 for the Fellowship there. While there, he also planned to conduct a mid-week Bible Study on September 20 and meet with members of the group and attempt to make some contacts in the area.

Young Adults' Activities

This fall Prof. H. Hanko, of our seminary, is once again teaching a very popular catechism class for young adults in the West Michigan area at the Hope PRC in Walker, MI. If you are a young adult living in the area we would strongly encourage you to attend. Besides the obvious benefit of the study of God's Word, this class also serves as a way for young adults to meet. This fact was made evident this past August when Prof. Hanko was asked to marry a young couple, both members of our

Mr. Wigger is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

churches, who had met at his class. If it can happen once, it could happen again.

Minister Activities


Rev. Doug Kuiper, pastor of the Byron Center MI PRC, declined

the call he had been considering to serve as the next pastor of our vacant Randolph, WI PRC.

Food For Thought

"Is it easy for people to tell that we are Christians? Are we differ-

ent, do we stand out? Are we, by being what we are, a rebuke to modern society? Above all, are we burdened about it all? Do we grieve for the souls of men hurtling themselves thus to destruction?"

— D.M. Lloyd-Jones 

ANNOUNCEMENTS

LECTURE

Hell: Temporal or Eternal?

Speaker

Rev. G. VanBaren

Place

B.J. Haan Auditorium Dordt College

Sioux Center, IA

Date

October 27, 2000* 7:30 P.M.

Sponsor

Reformed Witness Committee of Doon, Edgerton, and Hull PRC

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 29, 2000, our parents and grandparents,

JIM and BEV LANGERAK,

will celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary. We are thankful that our heavenly Father has granted us such loving and godly parents who have faithfully instructed us in the truths of God's Word. We pray that the Lord will continue to bless them and keep them in His care. So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will shew forth thy praise to all generations (Psalm 79:13).

- ❖ Steve and Brenda Langerak
 - ❖ Mark and Liz Langerak
 - ❖ Scott and Sharla Moelker
 - ❖ Jamie and Mary Langerak
 - ❖ Brad and Esther Langerak
 - ❖ Kelly Langerak
- 10 grandchildren (one in glory)

Grand Rapids, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 28, 2000, our parents and grandparents,

LEONARD and MARCIA HOLSTEGE, will celebrate 40 years of marriage. We rejoice with them, and thank God that He has given them these years together. We re grateful to them, and especially to our Father in heaven, for the love and godly instruction we ve received. We pray for His continued blessing upon them in the years ahead. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following (Psalm 48:13).

- ❖ Jim and Kathi Holsteg
- ❖ Dan, Nate, Lynn, Joe
- ❖ Len and Tammy Holsteg
- ❖ Rick, Samantha, Steven
- ❖ Tom and Fiona Holsteg

Dorr, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council of Hudsonville PRC express their Christian sympathy to Elder Ed Hoekstra in the loss of his mother,

MRS. GEORGE (Greda) HOEKSTRA.

May he and his family find comfort in God's word, Cast thy burdens upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee.* he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved (Psalm 55:22).

Rev. B. Gritters, Pres.

Robert Drnek, Sec y

NOTICE

Rev. Daniel Kleyn is the new Stated Clerk of Classis West.* Any correspondence for Classis West should now be sent to Rev. Kleyn at P.O. Box 403, Edgerton MN* 56128.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Southeast PRC express their Christian sympathy to Bill and Karen Pipe and family in the death of her mother,

GREDA HOEKSTRA.

May the family find comfort in the words of Revelation 22:3-5, And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

Rev. Dale Kuiper, President

Ed Hekstra, Clerk

LECTURE

Sponsored by the Loveland PRC

Evangelism Committee*

October 31, 2000 at

Loveland PR Church, Loveland, CO.*

7:30 P.M.

Rev. Gise VanBaren

will speak on The Covenant and the Instruction of Our Children.* Join us for fellowship and refreshments after.