THE SCOTTISH REFORMATION

THE EARLY YEARS OF THE ESTABLISHED SCOTTISH PROTESTANT CHURCH:
JOHN KNOX AND MARY QUEEN OF THE SCOTS

Prayer
Scripture: I Timothy 3:1-16
Hymn: 504 "The Church's One Foundation"

Following the National Thanksgiving Service at St. Giles's in Edinburgh on July 19, 1560, John Knox began a series of sermons on the prophecies of Haggai setting forth the national duty of rebuilding the house of God. When Parliament met on August 1, 1560, the major consideration was the religious settlement.

Under the Treaty of Edinburgh the old ecclesiastical hierarchy was guaranteed protection. There were thirteen Roman dioceses in Scotland. Four were officially vacant. One had as its bishop a layman, Lord Robert Stuart, one of the late King James's bastards, who in 1559 had come over to the Protestant side with his brother, Lord James Stewart. Two of the consecrated bishops, Hamilton of Argyll and Adam Bothwell of Orkney, had been converted to the Reformed religion. Hepburn of Moray was on the point of conversion. Of the remaining five, Beaton of Glasgow had fled to Paris with the French troops and did not return. From the viewpoint of Romanists nine of the thirteen dioceses were vacant. Of the four nonvacant bishoprics, Dunblane was filled by Chisholm, a repulsive old bishop with a large family of bastards for whom he had well provided with church benefices; Aberdeen was filled by the even more notorious Gordon. Crichton of Dunkeld was a respectable bishop but of mediocre ability. The Primate, Archbishop Hamilton of St. Andrews, another royal bastard, was hated for his cruelty and cunning.

On Knox's side there were little more than a dozen recognized and effective Reformed preachers to serve the whole nation. The majority of the people were Catholic but also the majority in varying degrees sympathized with the Reformation. The Protestant congregations were few and lacked cohesion.

The Parliament that met on August 1, 1560 was of questionable validity since the Sovereign was not present nor was represented by a commissioner. An unusually large number attended the Parliament--men came who before this had rarely used their right to attend. The Parliament was strongly Protestant, although some of the clergy and laymen who opposed the Reformation attended. Under Knox's influence a strong supplication was presented to the Parliament to settle the religious question. The supplication set forth in some detail the erroneous doctrines of Rome, the unfounded pretensions of the papacy, the idolatry of the sacraments, the immorality, greed, and cruelty of the clergy, and set forth an appeal for Parliament to remedy the intolerable burden on the church of God in the realm. A resolution was made that those who objected to the Roman doctrine should present a detailed statement of their own belief. A committee of six ministers--all named John--were appointed to draw up the statement of doctrine: Knox, Row, and Willock from the ardent Reformers; Wynram, Spottiswoode, and Douglas from the moderates. Knox prepared the first draft and Wynram with aid from Lethington softened some of the harsher expressions. The work was completed in four days and submitted to Parliament. This confession, which consisted of twenty-five articles, came to be known as "The Confession of Faith Professed and Believed by the Protestants within the Realm of Scotland"--commonly shortened to "The Confession
of Faith." It was presented and voted on article by article, with the Reformed ministers standing on their feet ready to defend each article but they were not needed. The Primate and Bishops Crichton of Dunkeld and Chisholm of Dunblane objected that they had not had sufficient time to examine the document; they made no further objection. Five temporal lords stated they were opposed to the document declaring, "We will believe as our fathers believed." The majority overwhelmingly approved the confession with great and evident delight. Knox wrote that "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth was willingly accepted, without alteration of any one sentence." An English Ambassador, Randolph, who was present, wrote to Cecil, "I never heard matters of so great importance neither sooner dispatched nor with better will agreed to." Lord Lindsay, the oldest peer of the realm, rejoiced "that it hath pleased God to let me see this day." The Earl Marischal declared that seeing the "pillars of the Pope's Church here present speak nothing to the contrary of the doctrine proposed, I cannot but hold it to be the very truth of God." The silence of the Romanists helped some waverers and time-servers to make up their minds to join the Protestants.

A week later in one day Parliament passed three important acts: first, all jurisdiction and authority of the pope was totally abolished in Scotland, and anyone who solicited any title or privilege from him would suffer exile and civil disablement. Second, all doctrine and practice contrary to the principles of the Reformed faith were condemned and all former Acts of Parliament inconsistent with the Confession were annulled. Third, celebration of the Mass was forbidden in Scotland, under penalty of confiscation of goods for the first offence, exile for the second, and death for the third. The extreme penalty was not enforced a single time during the life of Knox. Primate Hamilton was executed in 1571, after being allowed to enjoy for eleven years his ecclesiastical revenues only slightly diminished, for complicity in the assassination of the Regent Moray. Four priests were condemned in 1569 for a mass at Dunblane but were whipped and exiled instead of being executed. Two priests were hanged in 1573 and 1574 respectively for saying mass.

The Confession of Faith was the guiding symbol of the Church of Scotland during the first stormy century of its existence. It was displaced by the Westminster Confession in 1647. It has been praised as one of the most sympathetic, warm, and human of the creeds. It began

Long have we thirsted, dear Brethren, to have notified to the World the Sum of that Doctrine which we profess, and for which we have sustained Infamy and Danger; But such has been the Rage of Satan against us, and against Christ Jesus his eternal Truth lately now again born amongst us, that to this day no Time has been granted unto us to clear our Consciences as most gladlie we would have done.

The titles of the twenty-five articles give a good picture of the faith of the Scots--some are striking in their wording:
I. Of God. II. Of the Creation of Man. III. Of Original Sin. IV. Of the Revelation of the Promise. V. Of the Continuance, Increase, and Preservation of the Church. VI. Of the Incarnation of Christ Jesus. VII. Why It Behooved the Mediator to be Very God and Very Man.
VIII. Of Election. IX. Of Christ's Death, Passion, and Burial. X. Of the Resurrection. XI. Of the Ascension. XII. Of Faith in the Holy Ghost. XIII. Of the Cause of Good Works. IV. What Works are Reputed
Good before God. XV. Of the Perfection of the Law, and the Imperfection of Man. XVI. Of the Church. XVII. Of the Immortality of the Soul. XVIII. Of the Notes by which the True Church is discerned from the False, and Who Shall be Judge of the Doctrine. XIX. Of the Authority of the Scriptures. XX. Of General Councils, of their Power, Authority, and Cause of their Convention. XXI. Of the Sacraments. XXII. Of the Right Administration of the Sacraments. XXIII. To Whom the Sacraments Appertain. XXIV. Of the Civil Magistrate. XXV. Of the Gifts Freely Given to the Church.

In the Confession Election is treated as a means of grace and evidence of the power of God. The true church can be distinguished from the false by the true preaching of the Word of God, the right administration of the sacraments, and ecclesiastical discipline rightly administered. The authority of Scripture comes from God and does not depend on man nor angels; the Church knows the Scriptures to be true because the true church always heareth and obeyeth the voice of her own spouse and pastor. Though strong against Roman error the Confession did not use extreme anti-papal invectives such as "anti-Christ", "man of sin," and "son of perdition" that appear in some of the creeds.

These Scottish Reformers did not claim infallibility. In their preface they invited any man who found one of their articles repugnant to God's Holy Word to admonish them in writing and they promised that if they could not satisfy him from the mouth of God from Holy Scriptures, they would reform what was amiss. They sent a copy of the Confession to Cecil inviting the English minister to suggest any change that should be made—they wanted to keep in step with their English allies.

Before the Parliament dissolved it instructed the same committee that had drawn up the Confession to prepare a detailed program for organizing the Church of Scotland. The Lords of the Congregation had suggested to Knox in April, 1560, that he should work on such a plan. A draft had been submitted to The Council of the Congregation in May, 1560. It was translated into Latin and submitted to Calvin, Beza, Bullinger and other Swiss Reformers before it was presented to the meeting of Parliament in January 1561.

A TIME OF DEEP TROUBLE FOR JOHN KNOX:

As Knox worked on the plan for organizing the Church of Scotland he was overwhelmed with great troubles. He learned that the Scottish nobles were greedily enriching their own estates by seizing the property of churches and monasteries. He learned that the Council of Trent and the Catholic powers on the Continent were planning to crush Protestantism by armed force. He worked feverishly for he knew there was no time to waste. The king and queen in France rejected the acts of the Scottish Parliament.

Then in December, 1560, his wife, Marjorie, died, leaving him with two small boys; Nathaniel was three and a half and Eleazer only two. It was a bitter loss. She had been a great comfort to him in the stormy battles. Outwardly he seemed cold, but inwardly he had a deep affection for his wife and had come to lean upon her for advice and comfort. She had been a constant help. She was strong where he was weak and supplied balance. She knew how to bring out the best in him. His mother-in-law, Mrs. Bowes, would help with the boys but her own melancholy was a great strain.

December brought other troubles. Francis II died suddenly of an ear infection, leaving Mary Queen of the Scots a widow at the age of eighteen. The young widow was returning to Scotland. The church must be organized before she landed in Scotland.
KNOX'S BOOK OF DISCIPLINE:
Parliament met on January 15, 1561, with the principal piece of business the examination of the Book of Discipline prepared by Knox and the ministers. Knox's admirers consider the Book of Discipline his masterpiece. He had put heart and soul into its preparation. It was his dream and vision of the Church of Scotland. He kept one eye on the disorders of the past and the other on the future as it could be in a reborn nation. In spite of all the disappointments he had experienced from his followers he called for the very best in them. The motif of a disciplined, orderly church stood out. The influence of Calvin and the Huguenots was unmistakable. Knox wanted a church organized on democratic lines. On the congregational level there would be the church or kirch-session. For the larger district made up of several congregations there would be the synod. For the nation there would be the general assembly. Five classes of office bearers were recognized. Each congregation should have a minister, elders, and deacons. Each congregation would have the right of freely choosing its own minister. He was no mere employee of the congregation. The congregation could choose him but could not discharge him. It was obligated to reverence him as the servant and ambassador of Christ, obeying his commands, if Scriptural, as if God himself were speaking. Once elected by the people the minister would be submitted to the superintendent of the district and the other ministers of the district for their approval. There was to be no laying on of hands lest these might suggest the bestowal of ecclesiastical authority or supernatural gifts. It was the duty of the minister to preach the Word and to administer the sacraments. The elders were also chosen by the people. They were to be men of the best knowledge of God's Word and of cleanest life. Their function was to exercise discipline and supervision of the church, working with the minister. They were also to oversee the doctrine, diligence, and behavior of the minister, to admonish him when necessary, and to bring flagrant cases of delinquency before the superintendent and ministers of the district. The deacons were selected by the congregation to receive and administer the congregational income, to collect and distribute alms, and to assist the minister and elders in judging the church. Elders and deacons were elected for one year at a time lest they presume on the liberty of the church. The superintendents (ten or twelve in number) were to oversee the districts until they were completely organized. It was their duty to see that the Word was preached throughout the realm, to plant and erect churches, to provide ministers, and travel about the districts to make sure of good order. Once the congregations were all established there would be no need for the superintendents. The superintendent was not a superior of the ministers; they took part in his admission and he was subject to their admonition. The superintendent was under the jurisdiction of the General Assembly; he received no special consecration. Because of the lack of ministers another temporary office, the Reader, was provided. The better qualified Readers were called Exhorters. They read the Book of Common Prayers and the Scriptures in congregations without ministers. Exhorters could deliver addresses to the congregation. Other readers only read the Book of Common Prayers and the Scriptures to the congregation and conducted classes for children.

Ecclesiastical discipline was a major concern of the Book of Discipline. For secret or little known offences if the offender promised amendment and fulfilled his promise, private admonition was
considered sufficient. Open and flagrant offences required a public confession before the congregation. After a manifestation of tokens of repentance the church would receive the offender back into full fellowship. Those who would not repent were to be excommunicated by the church. All except members of his family were prohibited from any intercourse with him except what was necessary to bring him to repentance. The excommunicated were not to be considered hopeless. Some offences such as blasphemy, idolatry, perjury, murder, adultery were considered beyond the sphere of the church's discipline; such cases were to be turned over to the civil sword for punishment. Excommunication was a function of the congregation and not merely of the minister and the elders. The minister was to try to move the sinner to repentance. The elders were to assist in this effort. The congregation had the final responsibility for discipline.

Knox in the Book of Discipline assumed that the entire patrimony of the ancient church would be available for the Church of Scotland. The minister was to be paid a fair salary, sufficient to care for the needs of his family. His family should receive a pension in case of his death. Readers were to be paid a smaller salary. Each congregation was to be self-supporting. The needy who were unable to care for themselves were to be provided for by the congregation but able-bodied beggars were to be compelled to work for a living.

One of the most ambitious features of the Book of Discipline was the provision for education. It called for "virtuous education and godly up-bringing of the youth of this realm." In every parish there was to be not only a church but also a school at which both secular and religious instruction would be given. Attendance would be compulsory for all children for at least four years. The elementary schools would be supported by the parish which was obligated to pay the teachers. Those who were able would pay for the education of their children. The children of the poor would be educated free of charge. The larger towns were to provide secondary schools for the most promising boys from the parish schools. These secondary schools, called Academies or Colleges, were to prepare the most promising boys for the universities which would prepare them for the Church, the law, or for medicine. Scotland had three universities: St. Andrews, Glasgow, and Aberdeen. Knox called for strengthening and improving the universities.

The First General Assembly of the Church met in Magdalen Chapel in the Cowgate of Edinburgh on December 20, 1560. Forty-two ministers and commissioners of particular congregations met. They gave their approval to the Book of Discipline—the next Assembly in May, 1561, twice referred to the Book of Discipline as the ecclesiastical authority. The Assembly sanctioned the appointment of those best qualified to be ministers and readers. The Assembly adjourned until January 15, 1561, when the Book of Discipline was to be submitted to Parliament. After this first meeting the General Assembly would be held twice a year and sometimes more often.

One of Knox's bitter disappointments was the failure of Parliament to give its approval to the Book of Discipline. Too many of the nobles had already laid greedy hands on the wealth of the church and others had designs on much of the remaining holdings of the church. Some nobles subscribed to the Book. Many scoffed at it as Knox's impractical imaginings or dreamings. They criticized the educational system as too expensive. Knox wrote of their corrupt affections. He asked how men who professed godliness could turn deaf ears to the threatenings of God against their thefts. He marveled at their lack of remorse of
conscience and declared their belly had no ears.

Some questioned Knox's plan for organization and expressed a preference for an episcopal system such as that of the English church. This opened the door for debate between those who favored Knox and those who still leaned toward Rome and those who wanted the episcopal system of England. Queen Mary refused to approve the Book of Discipline. Only after Mary was deposed in 1567 would the acts of the Parliament be legally placed in the Statute Book of Scotland.

Another question raised about the Book of Discipline concerned the roles of church and state in discipline. Some wanted Parliament to have a large measure of control over the church. Naturally the Queen wanted to control the church.

Failing to gain support from the government there was only one thing for Knox and the preachers to do. They would have to build the church by preaching. The very poverty of the church would result in a fierce jealousy for its independence from governmental control. It gained a rugged strength from the struggle.

THE BOOK OF COMMON ORDER:

Knox provided a third book for the church. The Book of Common Order, sometimes called Knox's Liturgy, was a directory for public worship and the services of the church. Bound with it was the metrical version of the Psalms. It provided forms for prayer and praise. It left to the minister considerable freedom to modify and supplement. It did not contain a lectionary but urged reading the Bible without skipping. It did not have congregational responses. It contained some human hymns in addition to the Psalms—one was "Veni Creator." There was no prayer for the sanctification of the elements in Holy Communion to avoid all appearance of transubstantiation. There was a section on marriage which was to be "in open face and public" with Sunday morning before the sermon as the most convenient time. Prayer at funerals was discouraged to guard against prayers for the dead. Church festivals and commemoration of saints was condemned as having no basis in Scripture and because of the abuses and superstitions connected with such holidays.

KNOX'S HISTORY OF THE REFORMATION IN SCOTLAND

Knox found some relief from his disappointment over the rejection of the Book of Discipline in working on his History of the Reformation which he had started at least by October, 1559, when he mentioned the project in a letter. He had completed one book by the end of September, 1560. He devoted a lot of time to it during the autumn of 1560, while waiting for the Book of Discipline to be revised by the Swiss Reformers. Working on the History gave him some relief from the grief over the loss of his wife.

THE ARRIVAL OF MARY IN SCOTLAND:

On August 19, 1561 a cannon in Leith announced the arrival of Mary, Queen of Scots in the Firth of Forth. Knox considered her a greater threat to the Church of Scotland than a whole army of Frenchmen.