THE SCOTTISH REFORMATION


Prayer
Scripture: Psalm 40
Hymn: 18 "Be Not Dismayed Whate'er Betide"

THE SCOTTISH REFORMATION BETWEEN KNOX'S DEPARTURE FROM SCOTLAND IN 1556 AND HIS FINAL RETURN IN 1559:

During the interval between Knox's departure from Scotland in July, 1556, and his final return in May, 1559, the Reformation party grew in numbers and became more self-reliant and aggressive. The Regent became more hostile and the hierarchy resumed a policy of persecution. The alliance with France, although sealed by the prospective marriage of Mary Stuart and the Dauphin, Francis, declined in popularity.

The Protestant nobles, in March, 1557, sent a letter to Knox urging him to return to Scotland. When Knox arrived in Dieppe he found waiting for him a letter from the nobles urging him not to come because the time was not right. Knox sent the nobles a letter condemning the bishops of Scotland and urging the nobles that responsibility for the Reformation rested on their shoulders. Knox's letter proved a salutary stimulus to the wavering nobles. On December 3, 1557, at a meeting in Edinburgh, they drew up the first Scottish "Covenant" or "Common Band," forming a league for common action and mutual defence. They had already formed Congregations by absenting themselves from the mass and by meeting for communion using the Reformed ritual, and by holding meetings for study of the Word and mutual edification. In the covenant they pledged with all diligence to apply their whole power, substance and their very lives to maintain, set forward, and establish the most blessed Word of God and His congregation. They pledged themselves to labor to provide for the congregation faithful ministers who would truly minister Christ's Gospel and Sacraments. They would nourish and defend with all their power and even to the sacrificing of their lives, the congregation against Satan and all wicked powers. The covenant was signed by a large number of nobles and gentry, including the Earls of Argyle, Glencoir, and Lorton, Lord Lorne, and Erskine of Dun. The subscribers came to be known as "The Lords of the Congregation."

In the spring of 1558 the Lords of the congregation drew up a petition addressed to the Regent, Mary the Guise, which was delivered to her by the aged Sir James Sandilands of Calder. The petition called for the government to sanction the reading of the Word of God in the common tongue, the reading of the English Prayer Book every Sunday in parish churches, sermons and Bible readings and discussions in private homes, freedom in interpreting the Word of God, baptism and communion in both kinds in the language of the people and according to the plain institution of the Saviour. The petition demanded that the wicked, slanderous, and detestable lives of prelates and ecclesiastics be reformed. Should the clerics charge the nobles with wanting to lay hands on their wealth, then the dispute should be judged by the Word of God, the teachings of the church fathers, and the laws of Justinian. Should these three be against the reformers they promised to submit to correction.

The Regent appeared conciliatory, promising to consider the reforms, and promising that they would be taken up in the next Parliament.
The Regent did not want to provoke further disturbance in Scotland that might hinder the approaching marriage. After the marriage she could count on French help in crushing the nobles. Her goal was to present to France a peaceful and obedient Scotland.

While the Lords of the Congregation were working to establish their covenant the Regent was concentrating on consumating the marriage alliance. In December, 1557, the Scottish Estates sent eight commissioners to France to make final arrangements for the marriage. The treaty of marriage was signed April 19, 1558. The contract included an agreement that the Dauphin would bear the title, "King of Scotland." Mary Tudor had secretly promised the French to present Scotland to France. Mary the Guise had apparently accomplished her purpose: her son-in-law and daughter would be king and queen of France and Scotland and Scotland would be Roman Catholic.

Relations between the Regent and the Scots began to cool. Her French soldiers had their share in alienating the Scots by their arrogance and immoral behavior. The Regent and Primate Hamilton moved to suppress Protestantism. The first martyr under the new policy was an aged priest of eighty-two years, Walter Milne (Myln). He had studied and travelled in Germany where he learned Reformation opinions. Under Cardinal Beaton he had become parish minister of Luan in Forfarshire. When his views became known, to escape a trial, he abandoned his appointment and lived in privacy. He continued to preach Reformation doctrine secretly. He was finally discovered at Sysart, in Fife, by two priests employed by the Primate Hamilton, as inquisitors. He was brought to trial at St. Andrews in April, 1558, before a large gathering of bishops, abbots, and theologians. Among his judges were the Bishops of Moray and Caithness. He was charged and condemned for the heresies of denial of the seven sacraments, of denying transubstantiation, of denying clerical celibacy by marrying. He appeared very feeble but when he was asked to recant his opinions, his voice rang strong and clear throughout the church, "I will not recant the truth, for I am corn and not chaff; and I will not be blown away with the wind." He was condemned to be burned. He was burned at the stake on April 28, two days after the royal wedding. His last words were, "I am fourscore and two years old, and cannot live long but a hundred better shall rise out of the ashes of my bones. I trust to God I shall be the hindmost that shall suffer for this cause." He was the last to be burned by the Romans in Scotland.

The burning of Milne was a great blunder. Instead of terrifying the Protestants into submission it aroused great resentment and open defiance. The people began piling up stones to commemorate the death of the martyr. The authorities foolishly decreed excommunication for anyone who added a stone. The people ignored the order and continued building the pile. The authorities tried removing the stones at night but this only increased the hatred of the people. In anger the people began drawing up and circulating their own manifestoes calling on the people to sign that they would support and protect the preachers from suffering the fate of Walter Milne. The people began smashing statues and knocking out church windows. In Edinburgh an angry mob siezed the image of Saint Giles and threw it into the North Lock, paying no heed to the priest who was threatening them with eternal damnation.

In July the authorities retaliated by summoning the preachers for trial. Harlaw, Douglas and Methuen were ordered by the Regent to appear in Edinburgh on July 18. They answered the summons accompanied by armed bands of supporters. The Regent in an attempt to avoid an open showdown ordered the armed supporters to the border to fight the
English. Some of the gentry with steel helmets moved to the front. Their leader was James Chalmers of Gadgirth in Ayrshire. He charged the Primate with a fresh outbreak of oppression and declared that they would no longer tolerate such.

In September at the annual commemoration of St. Giles an image of the saint was being carried in solemn procession along High Street in Edinburgh. Some of the spectators began to cry, "Down with the idol." They seized the image and hurled him down, breaking off his head. The crowd roared and the priests and friars fled.

The situation in Scotland was further inflamed by two works of Knox that arrived in Scotland. On July 14, 1558, just a few days prior to the citation of the preachers, Knox published in Geneva for circulation in Scotland his "Appelation to the Nobility and the Estates of Scotland." It was his answer to the bishops of Scotland who had condemned him in 1556. The real occasion was the martyrdom of Milne whose story had reached Geneva. Knox condemned the bishops and called on the civil government to protect those unjustly persecuted by the church. It was an appeal to Protestant leaders who were members of Parliament to support the Lord's cause against a corrupt church.

The second work of Knox that circulated in Scotland in the late summer and early fall of 1558 was his "Letter to the Commonalty of Scotland." If the nobility failed to act, then the common people had a responsibility to God. Knox set forth his doctrine of popular sovereignty and the right of the people to rebel if the prince violated justice. Godly men must uphold God's law if the princes framed laws against it. No woman should rule--Deborah was a divine exception. Godly men should remove the Queen mother and execute those who defended her. Oaths to her were not binding. The queen had no right to confer sovereignty on her husband. Rulers were duty bound to follow Christ. True pastors should replace the Roman wolves. The poorest of the people had the right to demand such a reform. He advised the people to withhold their tithes to force reformation. Tyranny called for revolution and holy war. The people had a covenant with God and it required that they establish God's law in the land. The tract sounded theocratic but its result in Scotland was the growth of democracy. Knox was preacher and not dictator. It was a call for the growing intelligent middle class to awaken and think and take action.

In November, 1558, the Lords of the Congregation drew up and laid before the Estates, a proposal to be placed before the next Parliament. It was a demand that Parliament suspend the right of churchmen to proceed against heretics. The ecclesiastical courts should be replaced by civil courts. Churchmen would no longer be judges but merely accusers in the civil courts. The petition was submitted to the Regent, Mary the Guise. She pleaded with the nobles to put off submitting their petition to Parliament, promising to give support to the nobles in correcting abuses. The Reform leaders, when it was clear that she was not going to act for reforms, on November 29 submitted to the Estates a strong manifesto entitled "Protestation" against tyranny and crimes against the true religion. They called for freedom of religion. They stated that they would not be responsible for violent acts by extremists and warned that their passive resistance might turn into violent conflict if needed reformation did not take place.

The common people were growing impatient. One of them nailed to the gates of all the friaries papers demanding that their wealth be transferred to the poor by the next Whitsunday or they would be destroyed.
The bishops blamed the preachers with the troubles unsettled Scotland and summoned the preachers to trial on Candlemas at St. Andrews. The Regent restrained their action.

The death of Mary Tudor and the accession of Elizabeth in November, 1558, heightened the crisis in Scotland. The Regent saw clearly that if she were to stamp out Protestantism in Scotland and preserve the country for Catholicism she had to act before the Protestant Queen in England could aid the Scottish Reformers. She dropped the appearance of friendly toleration and in open alliance with the hierarchy and with increased support from France moved to suppress the Reformation in Scotland. In the spring of 1559 the Privy Council issued an order forbidding preaching by unauthorized persons. Vacant benefices that had belonged to her deceased bastard stepson were conferred on her brother in France, the Cardinal of Lorraine. Death was decreed for all who defied the Lenten fast. An attempt to arrest Methuen as the leader of the Reforming preachers failed. On Holy Thursday a proclamation was issued excommunicating him and other leaders and excommunication was announced for any receiving the sacraments at their hands. When the preachers ignored the proclamation and continued their unauthorized ministrations, Harlaw, Willock, Christison, and Methuen were summoned to appear at Stirling on May 10 to answer for their rebellious conduct.

France, Spain, and the Empire were negotiating a treaty whose goal would be the crushing of Protestantism in Europe. The persecution of the Huguenots in France was to be resumed. Mary the Guise with French help was to crush Protestantism in Scotland as a prelude to deposing "illegitimate" Elizabeth in England. Mary Stuart would replace Elizabeth. The King and Queen of France would be also King and Queen of England and Scotland. The end result would be the triumph of Roman Catholicism.

THE FINAL RETURN OF KNOX TO SCOTLAND:

When Mary Tudor died and Elizabeth became queen in England the Protestant refugees on the continent began streaming back to England. Knox found himself without a congregation. The Scots were begging him to return. In January, 1559, after Geneva had bestowed various honors upon him, including the freedom of the city—an honor not bestowed on Calvin until almost a year later, Knox left Geneva for the last time. He left his family in Geneva until he could ascertain personally whether they would be safe in Scotland. Knox had sent messengers to Queen Elizabeth requesting permission to pass through England. When he arrived at Dieppe he learned that Elizabeth, still smarting from his The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women, had refused him passage and his messengers had narrowly escaped being imprisoned. Cox, his old Frankfort enemy had poisoned Elizabeth's mind against him. Knox in a letter threatened that a second Blast would be more sharp. England had refused him because it had already refused Christ Jesus. He declared he had been a friend to England and had remedied evils England herself could not have remedied. He sent a request for a passport to Cecil but the temper of the letter was not calculated to succeed. It was a tactless sermon telling Cecil to tell his queen to humble herself before God and threatening that if the passport was not forth coming he would tell the world.

Knox sailed from Dieppe on April 22 and arrived safely in Edinburgh on May 2, two days before the Feast of the Ascension, and eight days before the Reformed preachers were supposed to appear at
Stirling. Knox knew he was in the midst of a great battle. He was informed of the crisis. A large company of Reformers had gathered at Dundee to support the preachers. Knox resolved to stand by his fellow preachers.

A week before the preachers were to appear at Stirling, while the bishops were at table in the Dominican friary, a messenger rushed in with the report that John Knox was in Edinburgh. He had arrived the previous day. The bishops were filled with consternation. It had been three years since his last visit to Edinburgh and the storm had never subsided.

On Thursday, May 4, the Feast of the Ascension, Knox proceeded to Dundee, where over 5,000 Protestants had gathered to support the preachers. They were unarmed for the most part and unorganized. Erskine of Dun, one of the wisest of the barons was sent to the Regent to inform her that the marchers intended no harm to the authorities but that they intended to protect the preachers. Erskine hoped to persuade her to withdraw the citation. The preachers and their escort proceeded to Perth, about half way on the road to Stirling from Dundee. Perth was a walled city and ideal for a siege. There they would wait for news from Erskine.

The Regent was alarmed at the prompt action of the Protestants. She temporized requesting Erskine to stay the multitude and promising to take better action without expressly promising to postpone the summons. Erskine understood her promise to mean that if the Reformers refrained from advancing to Stirling she would not take further action against the preachers. On Saturday, May 6, Knox was proclaimed an outlaw. When the preachers did not appear at Stirling on May 10 they were proclaimed outlaws, heretics and rebels, and were to be brought to trial. The Regent working with the hierarchy and the French Government began raising a considerable army to crush the Protestants.

On May 11, after he had received news of the outlawry, Knox preached a powerful sermon against idolatry in the Church of St. John the Baptist in Perth. Before the crowd had left the church a priest arose and began to celebrate the mass at the high altar hoping to win the people back to the Roman way. A lad shouted to him phrases from Knox's sermon. The priest struck the lad sharply on the ear. The lad threw a stone at the priest. It missed the priest but hit an image and broke it. The crowd sided with the lad and began tearing down the images. Word spread quickly and people who had left the church rushed in and within a short time the church was gutted. The mob made its way to the monasteries gathering all the idlers of Perth who relished a row. The Franciscan, Dominican and Calthusian monasteries were stripped. Only the walls were left standing. The gentry did not take part but they did nothing to restrain the mob. The magistrates and preachers made a feeble effort to restrain the mob but with no effect. Knox preached to the prior of the Carthusians that he should forsake idolatry and live according to the revealed will of God. Knox's sermon was blamed with the inflaming of the mob. He denied responsibility for the violence and destruction but did not condemn it. Idolatry had to be destroyed. Knox would neither own nor condemn the "rascal multitude." The town council of Perth prohibited the celebration of Mass on pain of death.

The Regent began mustering the nobles on her side and summoned levies from Stirlingshire, Lothian, and Clydesdale. Lord James Stewart and the Earl of Argyle, who had remained in the Regent's camp, began negotiating with both sides for a truce. The Protestants were to withdraw their armed forces from Perth. The Regent's forces would enter to keep peace. No French soldiers would be garrisoned in the
city. The Protestants were to have freedom of worship. Knox stayed in the city to instruct "the young and rude in Christ." As a guarantee of the terms of the truce Argyle and Lord James Stewart promised to join the Protestants if the Regent failed to keep the truce. Knox preached a sermon to the departing Protestant troops. Knox, waiting for the regent to break the truce, sent manifestoes to the Regent, to the French soldiers, and to the nobles. To the Regent he affirmed that the Reformers were loyal to the Scottish throne. Suspecting that some of the French soldiers were Huguenots, he appealed to them not to help the papists persecute those upholding God's truth. To the nobles he made a strong appeal for them to forsake idolatry. Those persecuting God's children should be treated as common murderers. Israel should execute the idolatrous Canaanites.

The Regent's troops began their march on Perth on Monday, May 22. Knox sent urgent appeals to the scattered Protestants. Glencairn and others who had not been at Perth mustered a force of 2,500 and were soon in Glasgow. The Regent's forces, commanded by Châtelherault, (the former Regent Arran) entered Perth. The soldiers let off their muskets to frighten the Protestants. A shot accidentally killed a child at a window. The Regent appointed a new town council. The town was garrisoned with Scottish soldiers on the French pay roll. Argyll and Lord James Stewart felt the Regent had broken the truce and on Wednesday, May 31, adopted the Protestant cause, riding to St. Andrews where the Protestants were regrouping.

The Protestant leaders gathered at St. Andrews on June 3. Knox had been called and was scheduled to preach on Sunday. The Archbishop declared that if Knox entered the pulpit a dozen muskets would fire and every one would hit him right on his nose. Knox declared that he would leave the custody of his body to God. He declared, "God is my witness that I never preached Christ Jesus in contempt of any man." On Sunday he did preach in St. Andrews fulfilling the prophecy he had made as a galley slave. He preached on Jesus driving the money-changers out of the temple. The sermon so roused the people that they stripped church and monasteries of idolatry and piled up the loot on the sight of the burning of Milne the year before, and had a great bonfire.

The Primate fled to the Regent whose troops under D'Oyssel and Châtelherault were marching on St. Andrews and had reached Falkland. Argyll and Lord James Stewart met them with a cavalry force of 100 horse at Cupar, ten miles from St. Andrews. During the night more than 3,000 Protestants arrived to reinforce the cavalry. Knox declared that it appeared men rained from the clouds. The Regent, hoping for reinforcements from France, had her agents arrange an 8 day truce and ordered a retreat towards Edinburgh.

The Protestants took and sacked Lindores Abbey near St. Andrews. They defeated the garrison and retook Perth. They captured Scone and destroyed all relics of idolatry. On June 30, Argyll, Lord James Stewart, Buthven, Rothes, and Glencairn rode into Edinburgh with a force of 6,000. The Regent's forces were at Dunbar, southeast of the capital. The Provost of Edinburgh fled. Knox began to preach in St. Giles, the premier church of the capital. Mobs sacked churches and monasteries, leaving only the naked walls.

The Regent gained reinforcements from France and continued to treat the Protestants as rebels. Knox and his friends were negotiating with England for aid. The Protestants had trouble holding their forces together. By the middle of July only 1500 of the 6,000 remained in Edinburgh. The Regent, encouraged by Lord Erskine, Governor of
Edinburgh Castle, had her troops march from Dunbar to Edinburgh. Leith that had promised to support the Protestants surrendered to the Regent's forces. The Lords of the congregation took a stand on Calton Hill in Edinburgh. A truce was arranged on July 24 to last until the meeting of Parliament on January 10. The Protestant army agreed to evacuate the capital on condition that Protestant worship would not be molested. The Regent promised Parliament would take up the whole religious question.

Knox sailed to Holy Island off the English coast for a secret meeting with the Governor of Berwick at the end of July. The governor was acting for Cecil to arrange help from England for Scotland. Knox found that the Regent's spies kept her informed of his movements. The first help was confiscated by her forces. Knox's life was in danger and he fled back to Scotland. England had promised help.

The Regent was fortifying Leith. A thousand French troops arrived. A few days later 800 more came. The Lords of the congregation declared she had broken the truce. Châtelherault came over to the Protestants. The Protestants, seven or eight thousand strong, re-entered Edinburgh on October 16, and ordered the Regent to send the Frenchmen back. She replied that princes gave orders to subjects, not subjects to princes.

The Protestant leaders met in Tolbooth in Edinburgh on October 21 with Knox present. On October 24 they formally deposed Mary the Guise from the Regency on the grounds of sacrificing Scotland to France. A week later Maitland of Lethington left the Regent and rejoined the Protestants.

On November 5 the Regent's troops defeated the Protestants at Holyrood. She had received fresh troops from France. The outlook was gloomy for the Protestants.

In those dark days Knox found great comfort in the arrival of his wife and children who had reached Scotland in September 1559.

From October, 1559, when the Protestants marched into Edinburgh and deposed the Regent until Easter of the following year, from day to day the outcome of the struggle was impossible to predict. Many say only disaster for the Reformation. Knox preached with granite determination to keep up the spirits of the Protestants. Maitland of Lethington, who had been the Regent's own secretary, but who had joined the Protestants took over the administrative work of the congregation and Knox devoted himself to preaching. Maitland also took over the negotiations with the English. The Regent's spies seized English money sent to the Protestants. There was mutiny among the Protestant troops. On November 5 some five hundred Protestant soldiers attacked the Leith garrison and were defeated. They fled back to Edinburgh, deserting their artillery. Casualties were heavy. The French were able to cut off a food convoy. The mob turned against the Protestant soldiers and shouted mocking insults. Knox the next day in Stirling preached on Psalm 80 on "Our Enemies Laugh." God was sending them adversity to test their sincerity. Criticisms of Knox as too extreme began to grow. He retired to St. Andrews to pray and study.

Early in January, 1960, the Regent's forces invaded Fife and were aiming at St. Andrews. Arran, Kirkcaldy and Lord James Stewart fought valiantly. For three weeks there was daily fighting. The weather was stormy. D'Ysssel and the Regent's forces were confident until on January 24 English sails were sighted. At the sight of the English sails only an hour away the Regent's forces fled toward Stirling. Châtelherault on January 25 wrote a cringing letter to France promising loyalty and
begging forgiveness. Later he switched back to the Protestants.

By the middle of February the Lords of the congregation sent
Lord James Stewart with Ruthven and Balnaves to Berwick to negotiate
for more English help. On February 27 they signed a bond of mutual
defense against the French.

On April 1, Mary the Guise, lay dying of dropsy. She had been
deserted by all her nobles except Seton and Bothwell. During April
there was heavy fighting around Edinburgh. The dying Regent advised
a peace treaty with both French and English withdrawing from Scotland.
On June 10 she died. Within a week a truce was signed. Cecil arrived
from London on July 6 to conclude a peace treaty. The Treaty of
Edinburgh was signed on July 6 and proclaimed on July 8. On July 15
the French forces sailed away from Scotland and the English marched
homeward. Knox preached a National Thanksgiving Service at St.
Giles on July 19, 1660. After the service the question in all minds
was, "What will be the religious settlement?"