

## STUDY 10

# ***John Knox — Champion of the Church (c.1512 — 1572)\****

(by Dean J Carter)

*The theology of Scotland begins with the Reformation, and the first of our great theological writers is John Knox himself. No doubt the reformer was more a preacher and a man of action than a student and a thinker; yet he was the latter as well as the former. His clear, strong mind firmly grasped the Calvinistic system, with which it might be said he had both morally and intellectually natural affinities; and he was sufficiently acquainted with its scriptural grounds, with its accepted methods of doctrinal statement, even with its metaphysics, to be the expounder and defender of it. Very far from being the mere iconoclast, he was also the great teacher of his countrymen. The first Confession of Faith, the First Book of Discipline — in its magnificent comprehensiveness, one of the most remarkable compositions of a great time — both of them chiefly the work of Knox . . . give Knox a high place among theologians; and . . . they have been greatly influential in giving direction to the theological thinking of our country.<sup>1</sup>*

TO SOME, JOHN KNOX IS TO BE REVERED AS A GREAT FIGURE IN SCOTLAND'S Church and political life: for others, he is to be reviled as a radical ranter and rebel against the State, and heretic within the Church.<sup>2</sup> Given these clearly divergent, and perhaps irreconcilable differences of opinion, the purpose of our study is quite modest — we will investigate *John Knox's contribution to the reformation of the Church in Scotland*.

### **§1. The Ecclesia Scoticana**

In his lectures on *Scottish Theology since the Reformation in the light of Scottish Church History*, delivered at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia in April 1939, the noted historian John Macleod observed that

**in the centuries that intervened between Bannockburn and the Reformation, Scotland, though it had national freedom, was an ill-governed country. It had a weak central executive, a turbulent aristocracy, a bloated Church, and a down-trodden commonalty. . . .**

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\* I have sought to acknowledge all sources cited through the paper. Where any may have been overlooked, I must apologise: circumstances beyond my control have complicated the preparation and production of this contribution to the Pastors' School handbook. I have employed secondary sources more frequently than intended, over against Knox primary sources. The chapter by Thomas F Torrance in *Scottish Theology* on Knox has provided the overall framework for much of this paper.

<sup>1</sup> James Walker, *Theology and Theologians of Scotland 1560-1750* (Knox Press: 1982 — Rev. Ed.), pages 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> Was Knox the 'arch-destroyer of beauty and joyfulness and the founder of a great intolerance'; or, 'a demagogue whom a grasping nobility employed, in the name of religion, to further their personal and political ends'? See Dickinson, W Croft, in *Fathers of the Kirk*, R. S. Wright, ed. (Oxford: 1960), page 1.

As a nation the Scots served in the old alliance with France as a pawn in the political game of the French kings as they contended with those of England.<sup>3</sup>

Macleod continued his argument by indicating that one key figure led both the Church and nation into and through the Reformation, namely, John Knox. Yet before we focus on the life and contribution of Knox, we ought have some idea of the early history of the Church in Scotland.

The earliest Celtic Christianity had entered Scotland through the ministry of St Columba (c. 521- 597) and his followers (to the Argylls). The first missionary to Scotland had been St Ninian (possibly dated in the 6th century), a British bishop who preached to the Picts and founded a church in Galloway. St Andrews had primacy over other sees when it became metropolitan (1472), even over Glasgow (1492 as second archbishopric). Provincial Councils were held annually (1225+), but then less frequently. Many orders of monks, friars, etc. spread across the country. Celtic monasteries (early period of Irish missions) were then outnumbered by Continental types. By the sixteenth century many were poorly administered.

There had been a number of contributors to theology — outstanding among them were John Dun Scotus and John Major. The influence of early Protestantism can be traced to the English priest James Resby, burned in Perth in 1407 (he followed Wycliffe's theology); a Moravian Hussite missionary Paul Crawar (Kravar) suffered at St Andrews, being burned at the stake on 23 July 1433; and Lollards were hunted down during James' IV reign (1494). Tyndale's New Testament in English reached Scotland in 1526; Wycliffe's New Testament had been translated into Broad Scots in 1520 by Murdock Nisbet (a Scottish Lollard). In 1525 and 1527 the Parliament and Lords of Council had tried to stem the tide of incoming Lutheran works; and in 1528 Patrick Hamilton (1504-1528) was the first martyr of the Scottish Reformation: he was tried and burned at St Andrews. This testimony became the catalyst for others to consider and join the faith.<sup>4</sup> Among them was to be found — John Knox.

## §2. John Knox — from his first to final anchor (John 17).

Knox is known to us mainly in his public actions, and although he was the chief agent in giving a new theology to his country and a new character to its religious life, it is not easy to see his own mind and his own spiritual experience as clearly as we should like. In particular, we are quite without knowledge of the fundamental experience through which the priest of the Church of Rome became an evangelical Christian and a leader of the Reformation. Yet the casual references in the six volumes of his works, and especially certain passages in his familiar correspondence, enable us to understand the kind of Christian he was. We can see how his heart and mind were exercised as he lived the Christian life and fought the fight of faith; we can see also the conceptions of Christianity which bulked largely in his thoughts.<sup>5</sup>

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John Macleod, *Scottish Theology* (Banner of Truth: 1974), page 3. See too the opinion ventured by Barbour,

But what call for reformation? A hierarchy, subjects of a foreign power, ossessed of half the national wealth and of the highest places in the state, living in acknowledged ignorance of the revelation they safeguarded, and in open violation of the vows they had taken; religious foundations, raised to piety and learning, grown as guiltless of letters as of godliness, mothers of indolence and of evil lives; a priesthood, unable to preach, reciters of an unintelligible service, and celebrators of an incredible sacrifice, selling the blessings and the maledictions of heaven to the rich, and tearing the last garment from the poor; houses of God, devoid of the Divine message, echoing only to ribaldry, to traffic, or to crime; a society, the language and manners of whose leading spirits as well as its common members, had become careless of the ordinary rules of morals — such is the burden of Scotland before the Reformation. Barbour, page 64.

McNeill notes that the English kings tried to subject Scotland to 'vassalage', while Scottish leaders sought full autonomy (yet often by alliances with France). There were no clear links with the Papacy during this period. See McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (Oxford: 1973), page 290ff.

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McNeill, *op. cit.*, page 293.

5

James Denney, 'John Knox: His Religious Life and Theological Position' (Den - 10-06), page 1.

John Knox was enrolled (1522) at Glasgow University under John Major (Principal Regent of the University), who taught him Logic, Canon Law and Divinity. He became a competent linguist — in Latin, Hebrew, Greek, French, and Italian. Although he did not complete his studies for the degree, he had learned the rigours and habits of personal study, especially the discipline of reading.

By 1540 he had been ordained, and made papal notary. It is about this time that he was converted. It appears that the two main influences in this were Thomas Gwilliam (a Dominican/Blackfriar priest), and the reading and hearing of the Gospel — particularly the 17th chapter of John's Gospel (he had studied Augustine on the Fourth Gospel, and complemented this with studies on Ephesians 1-2). It became, as he said, the place where he 'cast his first anchor.' By this time he had also become tutor for the sons of two noblemen. As tutor he led his students through the Gospel of John. Now, after twenty years, came the events which plunged him into his ministry of the Gospel.

The first was the appearance of George Wishart, the preacher and teacher. Knox learned more than Greek from him; he became his confidant and bodyguard (armed with a claymore). Further, he became a 'professor of the true evangel' and 'simple soldier of Jesus Christ.'<sup>6</sup> When Wishart was threatened, and eventually executed, Knox returned to tutoring. This led to his being called to the St Andrews Castle for protection.

By the time the castle was overtaken, Knox had strengthened his resolve to stand and speak for the Gospel of Christ. He was ready to argue against the corruption and excesses of the Church of Rome.<sup>7</sup> In taking such a stand, he saw the confirmation of his call to be a preacher (and 'restorer of the Gospel of God in Scotland'). Yet within months he was captured, and became a French naval galley slave. During the nineteen months of imprisonment, Knox found time to revise Henry Balnaves' *Justification by Faith* (Balnaves was a fellow prisoner from St Andrews). This 'French prison, like Bunyan's, became a study; and during the busiest years of his ministry, part of each day was devoted to the desk, although he never wrote a sermon beforehand.'<sup>8</sup>

Following his release (March 1549), Knox became the incumbent of the parish of Berwick (Dio. of Durham). His ministry was marked by a thorough exposition of the Scriptures, and in 1550 he was summoned to Newcastle to defend his views of the Mass (that it was an expression of idolatry, was blasphemous and an abomination; could not be a sacrifice, since Christ's death was once for all act). In 1551 he moved to Newcastle, and was appointed King's Chaplain (to Edward VI). During this period he was offered the Bishopric of Rochester, which he declined (so too, a position in London). He would have had to use the Prayer Book exclusively — he found this an intolerable burden. He had, however, become a confidant of Archbishop Cranmer, and was consulted on Prayer Book revisions.<sup>9</sup>

When King Edward died in 1553, Knox fled to France with his family, eventually arriving in Geneva to consult with Calvin, who referred him on to Pierre Viret (in Lausanne) and Henry Bullinger (Zurich). In July 1554 he published *A Faithful Admonition to the Professors of God's Truth in England* (this denounced Mary and her allies), and by the end of the year accepted a call to Frankfurt. Here the church was divided on the matter of Liturgy: Knox favoured simplicity of form and content (eg. the Lord's Supper: scripture reading, exhortation and exposition, and extended extempore prayer — this

<sup>6</sup> R W Barbour, 'John Knox' in *The Evangelical Succession* Second Series (MacNiven & Wallace: 1883), page 42.

<sup>7</sup> 'For him the one Priest's intercession availed; he accepted for himself the one Priest's sacrifice. With that there was an end to all belief in other sacrifices, whether of one's own merit or of the mass; in other intercessions, whether of virgin, saint, or angel.' Barbour, *op. cit.*, page 43.

<sup>8</sup> Barbour, *op. cit.*, page 46. On average, during his first two years at St. Giles, Edinburgh, he preached five times a week: see Barbour, page 50.

<sup>9</sup> See too, ch. 10 'The Setting of Worship' by James Whyte, for comments about reception of the Lord's Supper, for the Scottish practice of sitting at table, rather than either standing, or kneeling. The background to Knox's view (with the Black Rubric in the BCP: 1552) and the practice at Berwick (1549-1551). He asserted that we sit 'as men placed in quietness and in full possession of our kingdom.' see page 152.

bypasses traditional liturgical niceties). MacLeod goes as far as to suggest that of Knox's time in Frankfurt may be traced the eventual split between moderate (the Conformists) and more thorough English Reformers — so the seed bed for the Puritans (who would include Knox).<sup>10</sup> Hence, the Swiss Reformation made more impact on Scotland, than either Lutheran or Anglican.<sup>11</sup>

Knox returned to Scotland in 1555, and his preaching mission through central Scotland marked the turning point of the Reformation, as he called those in favour of reform to reject the idolatry of the Mass. In May 1556 he was called to appear before the Bishops in Edinburgh. He appeared — with such overwhelming support — and his case was dropped: he went on a further preaching mission. Pressed by the nobility, he wrote to the Regent (Queen Mother Mary of Guise) to convince her to reform the Church. She remained un-persuaded, and again Knox left for Geneva with his family. In the meantime, as trouble was brewing, he urged his friends to meet in house churches; he wrote *A Most Wholesome Counsel how to behave ourselves in the midst of this Wicked Generation*.

After a couple of years in Dieppe in France, he arrived in Geneva, as pastor and city burger. At last he was able, with others, to draft his notion of a 'godly revolution': he wrote the *First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, published in the summer of 1558. He had come to the position of affirming that rebellion may be lawful before both man and God.<sup>12</sup> He was a participant in the drafting of the English version of the Bible (the Genevan Bible); he also utilised the order he had earlier compiled in Frankfurt, and it provided almost the complete text for the Book of Common Order (Church of Scotland).

On his return to Scotland he found that while both he and the reformers wanted reform for the Church ('true religion'), many nobles were more concerned for national status and personal aggrandizement. As McNeill observed of Knox: 'Others . . . cut the branches of the Papacy, but he strikes at the roots.'<sup>13</sup> He sought the support of Elizabeth I of England against the alliance of Scotland (Mary) and the French. After considerable diplomatic efforts, Elizabeth supported the reformers, and signed the Treaty of Berwick (Feb. 1560). On 19th July 1560, Knox led a public thanksgiving service as a sequel to the Treaty of Edinburgh (French and English troops to leave Scotland): the nation was now at liberty. While the Treaty did not include church reform, it cleared the way for same. This was urgent, for episcopacy had all but ceased to function. Arch. John Hamilton (1546-71) had held a series of national councils (1549, 1552, 1559), allegedly to reform abuses, but this led more to exposure of problems than resolution. Critical documents for the Church, as well as the nation, were formulated and approved at this time<sup>14</sup> — the *Scots Confession* and the *(First) Book of Discipline* (See below at 3:1 and Appendices 1 and 2).

While continuing his practical concerns for the nation, and as 'arch-superintendent', Knox spent himself primarily for his congregation in Edinburgh, in matters of the faith. He affirmed that the *locus* for our learning the certainty of faith is trial and tribulation (like that experienced by Christ himself), as we face the world and the wiles of Satan. The *means* for learning is the promise of the Word of God. This pastoral concern may be especially seen in his letters to his somewhat neurotic

<sup>10</sup> MacLeod, *op. cit.*, page 5.

<sup>11</sup> MacLeod, *op. cit.*, page 6.

<sup>12</sup> Croft Dickinson, *op. cit.*, page 8. The three grounds for his argument proposed are: sacraments to be duly ministered, suppression of idolatry, and liberty of native Scots from 'bondage and tyranny of strangers' (ie. French).

<sup>13</sup> McNeill, *op. cit.*, page 295. W Croft Dickinson also comments that while the *Scots Confession* was accepted, the *Board of Discipline* was bypassed. He notes that 'faith . . . was not followed by works', *op. cit.*, page 11. After all, many of the nobles had joined the 'movement' for reasons other than or mixed with that of 'true religion'.

<sup>14</sup> The Reformation Parliament met in August and approved: (i.) jurisdiction of the pope was abolished; (ii.) the celebration of the Mass was forbidden; (iii.) the *Confession* was approved; and (vi.) all doctrine and practice contrary to the *Confession* was condemned.

mother-in-law, Mrs Bowes (she constantly appealed to Knox to reassure her of her salvation). Knox consistently directed her to flee or repair to Christ since ‘the rest and tranquillitie of our conscience standeth in this, that we do imbrace Jesus to be the onlie Savioure of the world.’ (3:348). To this Knox added that two further elements give reassurance: (i.) the presence of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, and (ii.) the troubled conscience is itself an infallible sign of election. Yet Knox tried to make sure that the evidence for our assurance of election is objective, not founded on subjectivism.

On the personal side, Knox was timid, melancholic, and suffered from dyspepsia.<sup>15</sup> ‘If the typical Christian is the martyr, and that is the New Testament view, few have a better right to the title. He had the Cross on his shoulders daily, prepared at any moment to die in the service of Christ.’<sup>16</sup> So, he wrote on suffering from his own experience, knowing both personal danger and deliverance. This was evident to the last, as is seen in his last illness, his ‘open door’ policy, with constant ministry to family, friends and flock to the end. And on his death-bed he looked to Isaiah 53, the Epistle to the Ephesians, and as expected, to the seventeenth chapter of John’s Gospel. ‘So his last anchor is dropt, and plunges, where his first did, into the depths of grace, free, sovereign, divine.’<sup>17</sup>

## §3. The Reformation of the Kirk

### 3.1. Documents of the Scottish Reformation

#### 3.1.1. The Scots Confession

The *Scots Confession* was admittedly provisional, and did not presume to give an infallible articulation of the faith. It was open to revision and rejection (being displaced by the Westminster Confession), where shown to conflict with supreme standard, the Scripture. It was fully approved in 1567 with legal status — under the Apostles’ Creed as subordinate doctrinal norm. Its function was to indicate what beliefs were shared with Reformation Church, and those explicitly rejected. It was accepted by Parliament as a *fait accompli*, rather than as approved following serious debate.<sup>18</sup>

The first ten chapters are non-controversial, embodying the doctrinal tradition of the early Church. The stress on Ethics is unusual. While the ‘Papistical Kirk’ is denounced, the matter of papacy is not mentioned. It reads like an Articles of Faith, being modest in length (8,000 words), and the text is free from close or technical theological argumentation. A Latin translation was published in 1572. Alongside this Confession, the General Assembly also sanctioned the Genevan English Confession, the

<sup>15</sup> Percy A Scholes, *The Puritans and Music* (Oxford Press: 1969); he notes how Knox spoke (with ‘bold candour and conscientious faithfulness’ to Mary Queen of Scots) about the enjoyment of dancing. Scholes cites from the *Dictionary of National Biography* On a Sunday morning towards the end of the same year (1562) Knox preached another violent sermon against the queen and her court, in which he denounced dancing and other vanities. He was sent for by Mary. Murray, Morton, Lethington, and some of the guard were present. According to Knox’s account, he said that he did not utterly condemn dancing provided those who practised it did not neglect their principal vocation, and did not dance for the pleasure they took in the displeasure of God’s people. Mary dismissed him, saying stronger words had been reported, and Knox grumbled at being called away from his book. He left her with a “reasonably merry countenance”.

Knox’s attitude was matched by that of the Puritans in the following century: the comment about Mary’s dancing indicating that the court frivolity went beyond the ‘limits of rational distraction.’ (Two years later Knox had to preach on the subject again, a great rain and frost in January and meteors in February being clear hints from heaven that the dancing and junketing had gone too far.) See pages 64-65.

<sup>16</sup> Denney, *op. cit.*, page 7.

<sup>17</sup> R W Barbour, ‘John Knox’, in *The Evangelical Succession* Second Series (MacNiven & Wallace: 1883), page 84.

<sup>18</sup> *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, (T. & T. Clark: 1993), page 751-2. We should not overlook the fact that in December 1557, Protestant nobles and gentlemen signed a Covenant ‘to maintain, nourish and defend to the death the whole Congregation of Christ and every member thereof’ (Congregation = Church). See Routley, *op. cit.*, page 114.

'orthodox faith and Catholic doctrines' of the Second Helvetic (Swiss) Confession (1566) and the Negative (or King's, or Second: later incorporated into the National Covenant in 1638) Confession of 1581.

Particular features of the Confession which relate to, or provide background to Knox's personal views include Scripture, Election, the Church, and the Sacraments:

### **i. Scripture**

The Scots Confession followed the Continental formulations in affirming the unity of the Scripture: that is, a continuity of Old and New Testaments (so, the Old Testament is applicable to the present day Church). So, they employed the Old Testament as would Christ and the Apostles (who lacked a New Testament): interpretation of the Scripture was dependent upon the Holy Spirit, who had inspired its writers. Since all of the Scripture applied to the present, the Church is required to submit to the Scripture.

### **ii. Election**

This issue is treated between the Incarnation and Passion, indicating a concern with election and predestination — only in so far as linked with clear Biblical texts (Fourth Gospel). Again, the paragraphs on the Church (V, XVI), with the early paragraph (V) between Revelation and Incarnation, to show how Old Israel as elect is preserved in faith to prepare the way for the new Israel. This notion is prominent in Calvinist thought, but here Knox's placement is unique.

Finally, the departed elect are the 'church militant'. The true Kirk is distinguished from the 'filthy synagogue' by three notes of the Church (see. esp. 'discipline').

### **iii. The Church**

'There is scarcely any segment of the circle of Christian truth that has had more abundant heed paid to it in the Theology of Scotland than that which takes to do with the Church of God.'<sup>19</sup> The Confession includes a stress on the unity of the Church: cf. visible and invisible, and continuity through Covenant periods.

In relation to Church 'visible', it gave a particular importance to Church and State relations:

and yet in Scotland it came to hold such a place of control as that it is largely in connection with the application and working out of this doctrine that the most remarkable struggles and discussions of national Church life have taken place. It regards the Church in its visible form as a Kingdom with a King of its own. The King is not a mere absentee monarch nor is He only a figurehead. He is looked upon as the Head of the Church as it is His acknowledged realm.<sup>20</sup>

### **iv. Church and Ministry**

There is no specified form of Church government, apart from that which is conformable with Scripture, and the equality of ministers is affirmed (so, form of Presbyterianism).

### **v. The Sacraments**

The view of the sacraments shows more affinity with Calvin than the Anglican 39 Articles. It acknowledged the fact that the matter of sacraments did divide the Reformers, almost from beginning. The Confession rejects any notion of 'bare and naked signs' (not so much as held by Zwingli, as later Socinians), but is not critical of high sacramental view of Lutherans.

We acknowledge and confess that we now, in the life of the Evangel, have two Sacraments only, instituted by the Lord Jesus, and commanded to be used of all those that will be reputed members of his body, to wit, Baptism and the Supper, or Table of the Lord Jesus, called The Communion of his body and blood. And these sacraments were instituted of God. . . . Thus we utterly damn the vanity of those who affirm Sacraments to be nothing else but naked and bare signs. No, we assuredly believe that by Baptism we are ingrafted

<sup>19</sup>  
<sup>20</sup>

MacLeod, *op. cit.*, page 31.  
MacLeod, *op. cit.*, page 33.

in Christ Jesus to be made partakers of his justice, by the which our sins are covered and remitted; and also, that in the Supper, rightly used, Christ Jesus is so joined to us, that he becomes the very nourishment and food of our souls. [*Scots Confession* xxi. 'Of the Sacraments']

It affirms the alliance between the sacraments of Old and New Covenants (of Circumcision and Passover, with Baptism and Lord's Supper): the sacraments effect union between the people of God and their Head, Christ, by His Spirit. Transubstantiation is rejected as a 'pernicious doctrine'; the doctrine of Ascension is clearly linked with sacraments; worship offered to Christ, not to signs. Women may not baptise; priests from Rome are not ministers of Christ. The Communion Cup is not withheld from the people. Any sacerdotal implications (esp. mediating priesthood) are abhorrent. Finally, sacraments have been instituted for the faithful and their children.

#### vi. Church and State relations

The State is acknowledged as a secular power, as a gift of God, worthy of respect. Magistrates and civil leaders have been authorised to suppress idolatry and purge religion. This view has been copied from Geneva.<sup>21</sup>

### 3.1.2. The (First) Book of Discipline

Work on a 'Book of Reformation' was commissioned on 29 April 1560, and completed on 20 May, 1560: the *Book of Discipline* was a plan for the administration and finance of the new Kirk, and so have the City of God on Earth. The original was revised and expanded later in the year (August to December), and finally included in Knox's manuscript 'History of the Reformation'. Latin copies were prepared to be sent to Calvin, Viret, and Beza in Geneva, and Peter Martyr, Bullinger and others in Zurich for their perusal and approval. It was not lodged with the Reformation Parliament, which did authorize the *Scots Confession*. Rather, after further scrutiny by the General Assembly in December 1560, it was presented for approval to a convention of nobles in Edinburgh (January 1561): the Privy Council, plus further nobles consented to the revised edition, and it became the Kirk's formal programme and priority.

The section on Patrimony (tiends, etc) was not universally accepted by those who already received the benefits of the Kirk's resources — the Crown, nobles and lairds — as well as some ecclesiastics, who stood to lose if changes were too far ranging or effectively implemented. Such changes were seen as too radical in the unstable political situation. However, the General Assembly did attempt to consistently and impartially implement its proposals throughout the 1560s. Certainly the ideals and aspirations expressed were not abandoned, and were expressed in the *Second Book of Discipline*, authorized in 1578.

## 3.2. Knox's Reformed Theology

### 3:2.1. The Doctrine of God

In Knox and his colleagues, a radical shift from medieval thought and praxis (from abstract theology of logically ordered propositions, linked with Greek philosophical framework, to dynamic theology addressed to the nations) is to be observed: the change from the Medieval to Reformation theology (general principle — Covenant of Grace, and particular principle — Christ), especially seen in the contrast between the Reformed and Latin views of God (*Reformed*: Biblical and self-revealed trinitarian affirmation of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and there is no separation between doctrine of One God and the Triune God (cf. Roman orthodoxy of Aquinas; *Latin*: God as Supreme Being and

<sup>21</sup>

Routley, *op. cit.*, page 117.

Cause).<sup>22</sup> Coupled with this is the clear centrality of Jesus Christ, made known to us through the Spirit.

The knowledge of God given through Word written and incarnate. We need God's self-revelation, and the open-ness of faith. God is unique (there is no *genus* called 'god') — so all idolatry is improper.<sup>23</sup>

God is Trinity (this clearly reflects Calvin's treatment in the Institutes): i. as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in being and act; ii. the triune God creates, preserves, governs all creation (so all creation is contingent), and through the incarnation of the Son, discloses and donates adoptive sonship to his creatures; iii. as triune God, that God relates to all creation in terms of personal will, in the light of the salvific act purposed and pursued in Christ;<sup>24</sup> iv. there is the ever-present danger of abstraction and scholasticism as evidenced in later reformed theology (the fixed divine decrees).

The providential intervention of God is especially seen in the covenanted relations with Israel, the unity of the Scriptures, and God's continued and consistent actions to His people in the nations by His Word. God is the Lord and Judge of History: all creation comes under the order and discipline of God by the Word. Here Knox stressed the significance of Resurrection and Ascension, together with Justification (and the resultant implications for the nations, as well as individual believers). So, all history has soteriological and eschatological meaning — now partially seen in the divine judgements being effected and executed among the nations by the Word. God answers prayer for God is faithful to his creation, and his people. Finally, Knox strongly affirms that the God of grace will prevail.

### 3:2.2. Christology

When we turn to Knox's view of the doctrine of Christ — both His person and work, we find the critical questions here are — election, and the form of humanity which the Son assumed. These issues had been raised already in the Confession, especially the personal union of two natures (full Godhead and manhood), rather than scholastic metaphysics. Here is a stress on the vital and intimate linking of person and work of Christ — Incarnation and Atonement — interpreted by means of the threefold offices of the Messiah (king, priest and prophet).

This is further coupled with eschatology, for here is the Last Adam actually present, the promised salvation of God effected in human history.

i. **Incarnation:** this is interpreted by reference to salvation, not speculation. It is seen as integral to salvation, yet not as an isolated act. Through the incarnation the original purpose of creation is realised and recapitulated (as per the theology taught by Irenaeus): salvation is with a view to the new creation, with a new humanity in union with God. Such an incarnation is effected by the Spirit with the Virgin Mary: the eternal Son assumes our fallen human nature, to live as one of humanity, and consecrate our humanity to the Father.

ii. **Election** and the man-hood of Christ: election is interpreted Christologically, with the mystery of personal election only to be observed in the life and ministry of Christ. As such, the doctrine evokes wonder and praise, instead of self-doubt and speculation.

iii. **Election and mediation:** the union between God and man effected in the incarnate Son takes place in his union with *fallen* humanity (this is a strongly held view in Scottish theology: see various treatments of Romans 8:3, where Paul disavows any

<sup>22</sup> T. F. Torrance, 'John Knox and the Scottish Reformation' in *Scottish Theology* (T. & T. Clark: 1996), page 3; and T. F. Torrance, *The School of Faith*, (James Clarke & Co.: 1959), pages xliii-lxxx.

<sup>23</sup> Torrance, 'John Knox', *op. cit.*, page 5.

<sup>24</sup> Torrance, 'John Knox', *op. cit.*, page 7.

inkling or possibility of Docetism). Knox and others sought to avoid the divisive Continental debates on Predestination. Election was therefore subsumed under the section on Christ, and him alone (cf. Calvin in *Institutes*). While he sought to affirm the full freedom of God's grace, later Scottish theology maintained a double predestination concept, which obscured the primacy of grace, and led to personal and pastoral lack of assurance of salvation.

iv. **The significance of both the Godhead** and manhood in Christ: only God can save man — only what happens within humanity actually 'touches us'. In his humanity Christ suffered our sin and disobedience and acted as victim — in his Godhead he triumphed, victor over all evil.

v. **The death of Christ** was a voluntary sacrifice to His father for us. Knox also affirms a full satisfaction for sins (contra. 'limited atonement'), with the vicarious humanity of Christ providing the pledge of our new life. This is coupled with a high view of Christ's high-priestly ministry.<sup>25</sup>

vi. **The resurrection** was regarded by Knox as the 'chief article of our faith' (so Art. X in Confession). He holds to a thorough-going rejection of any forms of Docetism. The resurrection reassures us of the victory of Christ, and confirms us as new creatures.

vii. **The ascension:** the body which was born of the Virgin Mary, has been crucified, dead and buried — has now been raised. The ascension completes the Incarnation; the union of God and man in Christ, taken into the most intimate union and communion with the Father; he has taken possession of his Kingdom (both on heaven and earth); he continues to make priestly intercession for us, as our one Advocate and Mediator; and has sent to us His Spirit as Comforter.

### 3:2:3. Justification

James Denney asserts that in his early theology, Knox shows more affinity with the Lutheran (justification by faith) than Reformed (election) position; yet both aspects complement the other, and both in Christian experience ('he had from the first a thorough appreciation of its truth, and the liberty which it brings.').<sup>26</sup> In his concern for 'Justification', his view restored Christ to his rightful place, for 'Christ had become invisible in the medieval Church, or if not invisible, inaccessible.'<sup>27</sup> For, as Denney argues, Christ had been obscured and displaced by a priesthood, sacraments, ceremonies, and a multitude of religious activities.

T. F. Torrance agrees, stating that for Knox, the issue of justification is neither isolated, nor a principle by itself, for it directs us to Christ. Hence, there is no separate paragraph/article in the Scots Confession. Rather, his sole concern is Christ, who must be central, and our union with God in Christ. There is a further stress on the saving humanity of Christ, our participation in his, and Christ's obedient filiality in and as human. He continues,

in that Life of the worshipping and obedient Son we are made to share and are well-pleasing to the Father as through that participation we are clothed with the Name and holy Life of Christ. In his unity with man the Son lived out a perfect Life on earth in obedience,

<sup>25</sup> Torrance, 'John Knox', *op. cit.*, page 19.

<sup>26</sup> Denney, *op. cit.*, page 1.

<sup>27</sup> Denney, *loc. cit.* Denney notes that Knox held to the Reformed view of Predestination, and that without such a view the 'world became a scene of moral anarchy.' page 2. He continues, with what he considers one of Knox's most profound statements: 'The causes are known to God alone why he suffereth the soldiers to fall in battle whom nevertheless he commendeth to fight.' (Knox. Works Vol. 4:417). This is indicative, continues Denney, of the faith in God, of those living in troubled times, who dimly perceive the purposes of God, in the works of His hands. It avoids the detachment of deism, yet not offering the crassness of naive immanence. Denney suggests that Knox well understood the need for the Church to affirm and live under the Triune God, as confessed in Paragraph I of the *Scots Confession*.

love and worship, and as such died and rose again. Therefore it is in and through our union with him, that all that is his becomes ours. It is only as such, that is in the Name of Christ, that we appear before God, and as such that he regards us — in Christ.<sup>28</sup>

Justification is intimately and vitally linked with the resurrection: Romans 4:25 was one of Knox's favourite texts. The Resurrection and Ascension receive separate paragraphs in the Confession (X, XI), thereby indicating that both are integral to the one work of Atonement.

So Justification is not the mere putting away of sins, in a technical and forensic remission, but the positive donation of derived righteousness of God in Christ. Humanity is raised to a new, a risen and Messianic life. This is based on the mediation and reconciliation effected in and by Christ. This expresses the Advent of the Coming One, denoting Jesus as the Messiah and eschatological second or Last Adam. So, the goal of the Incarnation is the Ascension: as a corollary, the goal of the Ascension is the Parousia.

Further, Knox asserts that the Sacraments speak not of our life, but Christ's in and through us, by union. In such a scheme, there is objective justification, as detailed in the Scots Confession: Christ is Brother, Mediator, Pacificator (Art. IX: he dealt with death). In addition, Knox holds to an active and passive obedience, as with other Reformed treatments, yet also by the Incarnation he assumed and consecrated our (fallen) human nature. Jesus sanctified Himself for us (John 17:18); he further consecrated himself as High Priest (as per Hebrews 2), to effect the union of the sanctifier and those sanctified. This is the completed action of Christ. So, justification, regeneration, and sanctification all flow out of *adoption*.<sup>29</sup> This view has been obscured by the Westminster formularies. There had been a stress in Knox (following Calvin) on Christ, not our faith, nor evidences as focus for assurance:

it was only later in Scottish theology when the anthropocentric questions emerged, questions of conscience and soul-searching, when the eyes of the believer were turned inward upon his own heart rather than outward upon his Lord and Saviour, that the demand for assurance became clamant.<sup>30</sup>

Yet for both Knox and Calvin the priority to grace over law, familial over forensic is to the forefront.

With the coming of the Spirit, at Pentecost, as 'realised eschatology' to point to the Second Advent ('future eschatology'), there is a suspension of the final judgement until that last day. Now the church lives in patience and perseverance, waiting with preaching and prayer; with Jesus Christ as the centre of life and ministry, this fostered good works, with particular concern for the poor and needy of the nation.

While the place of Christ as King and Prophet was prominent in the Reformation (the *Triplex Munus*), this did not eclipse for Knox, and others, that Christ is priest — in worship and their understanding of ministry.

<sup>28</sup> Torrance, 'Justification: Its Radical Nature and Place in Reformed Doctrine and Life' in *Theology and Reconstruction* (SCM: 1965), page 151.

<sup>29</sup> Torrance, 'Justification', *op. cit.*, page 158.

<sup>30</sup> Torrance, 'Justification', *op. cit.* page 160. This was the issue which led to the dismissal of John McLeod Campbell in 1841. See also T. F. Torrance on 'John McLeod Campbell' in *Scottish Theology*, pages 287-317. 'Investigation shows . . . that Scottish theology did not remain true to the spirit and tenor of Calvin's teaching, and that the first traces of diversion and subsequent distortion can be found in Knox himself.' Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology* (The Handsell Press: 1985), page 8. Bell concentrates on the matter of covenant — and its sequel in contract Federalism — and the gradual shift from Christ to the believer for the ground or focus for assurance of justification and faith. Shift marked in work of Robert Rollock, and in seventeenth century Calvin's view eclipsed. The issue came to the fore again in the dismissal of John McLeod Campbell (*The Nature of the Atonement*): See Gary M. Tuttle, *So Rich a Soil: John McLeod Campbell on Christian Atonement* (Handsell Press: 1986); Kenneth R. Ross, *Church and Creed in Scotland* RUTHERFORD STUDIES SERIES ONE: HISTORICAL THEOLOGY Vol. II (Rutherford House Books: 1988); and Ian Hamilton, *The Erosion of Calvinist Orthodoxy*, RUTHERFORD STUDIES SERIES ONE: HISTORICAL THEOLOGY Vol. V (Rutherford House Books: 1990).

### 3:2.3. Scripture

Knox had a Calvinistic view of Scripture, and its use by the Christian. It provided a mirror for his own experiences, and reassured him that he was ‘in the succession of saints.’<sup>31</sup> He had what Denney termed an ‘indiscriminating rigour’ in applying Scripture, seeing both Old Testament precepts and examples as authoritative for his day. He employed this Puritan view of application (Scholastic more than Historical), especially in his stand against idolatry.<sup>32</sup> Hence, Knox could argue that his conflicts with the sovereign and Catholicism matched those of the prophets against the corrupt kings and their forms of idolatry. Idolatry, he defined as anything which is ‘done in Goddes service or honour, without expresse commaundement of his own Word.’ (4: 468)

With such a sweeping definition, Knox was able to sweep away all that was considered offensive by Protestants within Catholicism, especially the Mass. He could also argue that Scotland was a ‘covenant nation’, under the strict obligation to singularly conform to holiness before God.

The nation must be bound by oath to refuse fellowship ‘with ony religioun, except with that whik God hath confirmit be his manifest Word.’ (3:190f.) The covenant with the nation is conditional upon uncompromised obedience to God, for this is the basis for his continued mercy towards the nation. For this to be maintained, civil magistrates are required to eliminate all forms and features of idolatry (whether of commoner or ruler).

Bell claims that due to his ‘peculiar hermeneutic’, whereby he could impose the Old Testament directly or in an unqualified manner on his peers, Knox was led towards Federal theology, as he gave place to notions conflicting with the unconditional grace of God in Christ.<sup>33</sup>

### 3.3 Knox’s Doctrine of the Church

The Church is an ‘article of faith’ and object of faith, not sight: it belongs to salvaton; it has an unbroken succession ranging from creation to the Second Advent; the promise offered to and in Israel being fulfilled and expanded in the life of Christ and the church to the nations. The Church now lives and ministers between the Cross and the Parousia. Under the Old Covenant, Israel was linked to the temple and its cultus: this pointed to the Coming One and His people. The OT temple was replaced by the New Covenant Community: there is freedom from any lineal and local succession.<sup>34</sup>

The Church lives under the Word, as a mystery throughout times of trouble, herself under judgement and grace, nurtured by the Spirit and Sacraments. Christ relates to His Bride-Wife, bonded in a sacred marriage, yet to be consummated.

There are 3 notes of the Church: Word, sacraments, and discipline. The Reformers held the first two, whereas the Scottish Church affirmed the place of ‘discipline’. As Denney remarked of Knox’s view — ‘orthodoxy is nothing, worship is nothing; if Christian character is wanting.’<sup>35</sup> Here is a positive view of discipline, with the Church

<sup>31</sup> Denney, *op. cit.*, page 3.

<sup>32</sup> For the Regulative Principle, see Norman Norman Shepherd, ‘The Biblical Basis for the Regulative Principle of Worship’ in *The Biblical Doctrine of Worship* (Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America: 1974), pages 42-56.

<sup>33</sup> Bell, *op. cit.*, page 43.

<sup>34</sup> Torrance, ‘John Knox’, *op. cit.*, page 28.

<sup>35</sup> Denney, *op. cit.*, page 6. For a popular treatment of the issues relating to this ‘discipline’, see John Kennedy, *Presbyterian Authority and Discipline* (St Andrew Press: 1960): see esp. Ch. IV ‘Discipline and Christian Fellowship, pages 59-78. Along with Calvin, Knox exhorts all to self-examination prior to attendance to the Lord’s Table. Yet this examination ought be complemented by that of the local elders, who undertake to hear confessions from fellow believers. This detracted from the view of the sacraments as ‘converting ordinances’ (the term is not found in either Calvin or Knox, though such a notion is present in their thought), as divinely appointed means of entering union with Christ. (so, Torrance, ‘John Knox,’ *op. cit.*, page 45). Yet Knox held to view of sacraments as unambiguously pointing to the person and work of Christ.

urged to take and deal seriously with its own failures. Knox was no fanatic in accusation or application: he became an ‘arch superintendent’, rather than bishop.

There are also four ‘marks’ of the Church as One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic;

i. *one*: see Art. 16: one God, faith, baptism, so one Kirk (see also John 17).

ii. *holy*: has received remission of sins, the gift of the Spirit of sanctification.

While acknowledging faults and imperfections, the church covered by the imputed righteousness of Christ.

iii. *catholic*: denoting its universality, of all conditions of men and women, tongues and nations; with three special gifts — remission of sins, resurrection of the flesh, and eternal glory.

A further note needs to be made on ‘apostolicity’. The question of apostolicity is generally linked with ‘succession’, of the ministry. However, the Church in Scotland has held that there have been issues far more important than succession. For Knox, the prime concern was not validity of orders, but effective preaching and pastoring. Not, does this man comply with ecclesiastical order, but is he a man of God and Word? Knox called even bishops into question, arguing that the need of the nation was ministers, not priests — his question was, ‘could old priests in orders be accepted as new ministers’?

Early Scottish standards don’t call the Church ‘apostolic’, since it is not a biblical term, certainly not in the Apostles’ creed. Knox believed the Reformation restored the Church to its primitive and apostolic purity, in continuity with first Christians, and was based on Christ, and thought the term gave little confidence or security to the Church.<sup>36</sup> Further, it is the Church that is apostolic, not merely its ministry. He affirmed the ministry of superintendent, over bishop: but whether this would be a temporary measure, or permanent feature was unknown.<sup>37</sup>

### 3:3:1 Church and State relations

For Knox, there are two distinct Kingdoms (contrasted, but not to clash); there was no clear or evident division of life into religion and politics. The Church was an earthly kingdom, as the ‘nation in its religious aspect.’<sup>38</sup>

Holding to a unitary view of Scripture, and the world, Knox saw it as logical to find answers to his questions in the Scriptures.<sup>39</sup> What was true for Old Testament Israel, was so for 16th. century Scottish civil magistrate (citing Psalm 2). Hence his calls

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G D Henderson, *Church and Ministry*, (Hodder & Stoughton: 1951), page 163. See further the views of Gustaf Wingren and P T Forsyth:

(i.) Wingren on Apostolic Succession: see *The Living Word* (Muhlenberg Press: 1960). See pages 96ff. on ‘the commission of the ministry’; Footnote on page 98ff.

Continuity between the holders of office in different ages is, accordingly, due to the fact that the living Christ works all the time. Christ’s words, spoken and heard today, binding together Christ’s resurrection and Christ’s *Parousia* is the link in the chain of events and contains all the continuity that is necessary. The need for an ecclesiastical succession implies doubt about the living Christ: the theological basis for such a succession is that Christ was *once* alive and established a ministry which later was passed on by means of a visible ecclesiastical causal chain — a belief which is essentially akin to belief in a verbally, inspired book handed down to us. pages 98-99.

(ii.) P. T. Forsyth, *The Church and the Sacraments* (Independent Press: 1953), ch. VII ‘The Ministry Sacramental’

Forsyth argued that the true apostolic succession is the evangelical:

The strict successor of the Apostle is the New Testament, as containing the precipitate of their standard preaching. It is not the ministry that is the successor of the Apostolate, but the ministry *plus* the true apostolic legacy of the Bible — the ministry *of the Word*. . . The Apostolic succession is the Evangelical succession. Its continuity lies not in a due devolution but in a common inspiration, a common ministration of God’s grace as mercy. It is (so to say) not a vertical continuity descending in a line, but a solidary, spreading through a mass; not a chain on which the Church is hung, but a nervous system pervading it and, by the Word, continually creating it.. [P T Forsyth, *The Church and the Sacraments*, page 137, 139-40]

37

Henderson, *op. cit.*, page 185.

38

Denney, *op. cit.*, page 4.

39

Denney, *loc. cit.*, page 5.

to the Commonality to reject the idolatry of the Mass, and to apply capital punishment to offenders.

So, Knox sought to effect a Christian Commonwealth for all Scotland, as the Ecclesiastical (Church) and Political (civil) realms cooperate to establish true religion throughout the nation.<sup>40</sup> His view of Scripture in relation to Church and State may be tabulated:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>i. purification of worship<br/>OT Scripture/literalists<br/>Deut. 12:32 as rubric for worship</p> | <p>ii. resist idolatrous rulers.<br/><br/>became basis for resisting and/or<br/>opposing political authority<br/>overthrow political power, so set<br/>up Reformed Faith.</p> |
|--|---|

Such a view led to differences between the Church and State, and within the Church over relations with the State: as MacLeod comments,

the stand made in Scotland against the encroachments of the Crown and on behalf of the exclusive kingly rights of its Head and Lord to appoint the conduct of the government of the Visible Church as His professed kingdom on earth is what more than anything else has accounted for the stormy conflict which lasted so long and was so often renewed in the Church history of the country.<sup>41</sup>

### 3.4 Knox's Doctrine of the Sacraments

The Sacraments warrant a specific article in the Scots Confession (Art. 21): there is a trinitarian framework, and christological pattern. Both sacraments are firstly and foremost acts of God through Christ, and in the Holy Spirit; both 'convey and seal to the believing participant conjunction and union with Christ.'<sup>42</sup>

Baptism effects our being ingrafted into Christ, and the commencement of our life as a covenant community member; in the Lord's Supper believers partake of the person and work, life and ministry of Christ, and continue in the life of the Church. Both complement each other, since both have common content — *Christ Jesus Himself*.

#### 3:4:1 Baptism

For Knox, baptism is the sign of first entrance into people of God; the Father maintains this in his gracious faithfulness, not that of the Church or individual believers. We are commanded within the New Covenant to baptise all those who are children of Christ's members. God is pleased to offer this as the sign of his acceptance, provide tuition and defence for his people, in addition to the promise and gift of the Spirit.<sup>43</sup>

The basis for Knox's view of baptismal initiation of children is provided in *The Book of Common Order* and *John Knox's Liturgy*: two grounds are presented, the free and faithful grace of God the Father as primary (so that the sign of the New Covenant should be applied to children of believers), and the fact that Christ readily admitted children into his presence, declaring them to be recipients of the Kingdom and its attendant blessings (Mark 10; Matt. 19; Luke 18: this being underscored by the apostolic directive in I Cor. 7:14, that children of believers are designated 'holy').

<sup>40</sup> Apart from one exception, all divisions of the Church in Scotland have been on Church-State relations, rather than on formal theological grounds. Hence, all churches have continued to affirm their place within the 'Catholic Church'; similarly, all churches issuing from the divisions have maintained the Presbyterian form of church polity.

<sup>41</sup> MacLeod, *op. cit.*, pages 36-37.

<sup>42</sup> Torrance, 'John Knox', *op. cit.* page 36. So too, see Denney, 'in the New Testament the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are each in its own way a condensation of the most essential truths of the Christian religion.' page 6.

<sup>43</sup> Torrance, 'John Knox', *op. cit.*, page 37.

The sacrament is directly related to Christ's person and work: it signifies our ingrafting into Him, and full participation in all his saving benefits which come on the basis of our union with him. This ingrafting has a duplex action: on the one hand it involves a translation from one state of natural life and inheritance, into a new life and eternal inheritance in Christ, while on the other it indicates that we have been clothed with Christ and his righteousness (justified by His grace).<sup>44</sup>

### 3:4:2 The Lord's Supper/Eucharist

While evidently having a personal fascination or attraction to 'the glistering beauty of ceremonies', Knox felt the strong appeal of the Roman Mass.<sup>45</sup> He countered this with the 'regulative principle' as found in Deut. 12:32 ('Not that which appeareth good in thine eyes shalt thou do to the Lord thy God, but what the Lord thy God hath commanded thee, that shalt thou do: add nothing to it, diminish nothing from it.'): there is no place for abridged or amended additions to worship. Hence all worship must be agreeable to the revealed will of God, and the Word of God.

The Roman Mass gave the Church control over its members, as a temporal repetition of Christ's *timeless* sacrifice, and a means of participating in that eternal sacrifice.<sup>46</sup> Knox countered such notions on three grounds:

- i. the restoration of the sole mediatorship of Jesus Christ, and His unique and once for all atoning sacrifice on the Cross;
- ii. the restoration of the historical perspective of the Lord's Supper, and reformation of the liturgy according to what took place in the Upper Room (cf. Paul's insistence in I Cor. 11: 23); and
- iii. a renewed stress on the whole Christ as the 'substance' of the sacrament: the Christ who was crucified, but also risen, ascended, and will return. Here Knox especially concentrated on the Ascension and Parousia of Christ, which he had stressed as key articles of the faith. In relation to the ascension, Knox conceded a 'distance' between the earthly elements and the ascended Christ, and also affirmed the 'real presence' of Christ by the Spirit. Hence, the directive of the *Sursum Corda* ('lift up your hearts'), where the believers are to rise up in faith to their proper place, the heavenly sanctuary (cf. our life is hid with Christ in God; cf Col. 3:4).

In relation to the Parousia or Advent of Christ, there is an element of judgement, upon the elements employed in the worship, as provisional and temporary, and pointing away from themselves to the Coming Christ and their fulfilment in the new creation. Here is an eschatological note or perspective not seen so readily in other rites.

The 'real presence' and eating and drinking of Christ's Body and Blood, takes place through the Spirit, to be received and known only to faith.<sup>47</sup> Here is a dynamic relation of Word and Spirit, more than mere signs, with the bread and wine *really conveying* through the Spirit what they promise — the Spirit freely conveying and confirming the life of Christ to and in the Church.

Overall Knox overcame the Roman view of sacerdotal priesthood, with the sole High Priesthood of Jesus Christ, as God and man, as mediator and sacrifice. This emancipated the Kirk to engage in eucharist — thanksgiving, praise and prayer — in the name of Christ. The Supper also provides a testimony to the unity we have with and in Christ: it is outwardly expressed in the visible unity of the Church, and the Church as

<sup>44</sup> Torrance, 'John Knox', *op. cit.*, page 38.

<sup>45</sup> Torrance, 'John Knox', *op. cit.*, page 39.

<sup>46</sup> Torrance, *ibid.* See too Denney's comment, 'if the gospel was buried under all the clerical mummery of masses it was buried alive, so to speak, and could work through them still for the healing of simple souls.' *op. cit.*, page 4. The great need of the hungry soul remained — 'the assurance of a present sinbearing love of God' see page 4.

<sup>47</sup> Torrance, 'John Knox', *op. cit.*, page 41.

Communion.<sup>48</sup> The other feature of Knox's view was his insistence that the Church enters into the intercessory prayer ministry of Christ our High Priest (cf. John 17).

Such intercession provided further impetus to Knox's concern for the poor and needy, the care for others clearly enunciated and provided for in the *First Book of Discipline*.<sup>49</sup> For, as Torrance notes, 'it was through union with Christ in his vicarious humanity nourished in sacramental communion that the concern of the Reformed Kirk with human and social care in the lives of people was grounded.'<sup>50</sup>

## Conclusion

Given the evidence from the documents of the Scottish Reformation, namely the *Scot's Confession* and the *(First) Book of Discipline*, and the theology of Knox, can we come to any conclusion or answer to our question — was John Knox the champion of the Reformation Kirk?

M Charles Bell, while allowing for much that is commendable in Knox's theology, and his contribution to the reformation documents, concludes his discussion by alledging that Knox's work is severely compromised by going beyond Calvin in two areas: i. church discipline (as a mark of the Church) is elevated as complement to Word and sacraments (leading on to the distinction between 'evangelical' and 'legal' repentance); and ii. the covenant as a national league or band between God and man, with the nation as obliged by conditional covenant obedience to holiness (and elimination of all idolatry), thereby obscuring the effective and completed work of Christ.<sup>51</sup> To answer such claims is beyond the scope of our paper: however, whether such issues or shifts may be attributed to Knox does not necessarily mean that they did not take place, with disastrous consequences for the Kirk and nation.

What we can affirm with some certainty is that during the life and ministry of Knox,

the emerging Reformed Church in Scotland found the new centre of gravity in the pulpit. The exposition of the Word of God in the Reformed churches created the new communions of Christian people, inspired them to battle for what they saw as a purified worship and a more Scriptural and 'democratic' government of the Church, and was an instrument in the struggle from state control.<sup>52</sup>

What was Knox's legacy to the Kirk and nation? It was a new view and value to Kirk and Nation, to Church and State, with people coming into their own, against the nobles, and ecclesiastical nepotism.<sup>53</sup> John Knox may well be hailed then, as a true 'champion of the Church.' And we may echo W Croft Dickinson's conclusion: John Knox 'gave to the people of Scotland a living Church that did much to form the national character, he gave them a new moral outlook, with a sense of duty on earth which was duty before God, and in them he planted a deep desire for a knowledge of all things both spiritual and temporal.'<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Torrance, 'John Knox', *op. cit.*, page 42,3.

<sup>49</sup> Torrance, 'John Knox', *op. cit.*, page 44.

<sup>50</sup> Torrance, 'John Knox', *op. cit.*, page 45.

<sup>51</sup> Bell, *op. cit.*, page 48.

<sup>52</sup> David Read, 'The Scottish Tradition of Preaching' in Duncan Forrester & Douglas Murray (eds.), *Studies in the History of Worship in Scotland* (T. & T. Clark: 1984), pages 132-3.

<sup>53</sup> It may be claimed that the Reformed Church may also be said to have established the Commons.

<sup>54</sup> Dickinson, *op. cit.*, page 17.

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## Appendices

### A. The Life and Ministry of John Knox.

- 1514? Birth of John Knox at Giffordgate at outer Haddington.
- 1536 Ordained Priest by Bishop of Dunblane.
- 1543 Tutor for sons of Hugh Douglas of Longridy and John Cockburn of Ormiston. Probable conversion: due to influence of Thomas Gwilliam, & reading of John 17.
- 1546 George Wishart (Protestant preacher): burnt at stake on 1 March (in castle of St Andrews).
- 1547 Knox and students to St Andrews castle for safety. By this time had seen and could argue against, the excesses and corruption of the Church of Rome. Challenged to justify his position, he saw this as confirmation of his call to be a preacher. In July the castle captured by the Regent, and Knox and others sent as slaves in French naval galleys.
- 1549 March — released, and licensed to preach and pastor in Berwick, (Diocese of Durham).
- 1550 Summoned to argue his views on Mass in April in Newcastle. He argued that the Mass was expression of idolatry, was blasphemous and abomination — not a sacrifice, since Christ's death was 'once for all act'.
- 1551 Moved to Newcastle, appointed King's Chaplain (Edward VI).
- 1553 6 July — King Edward died, leaving Mary Tudor as Queen.
- 1554 Mary of Guise-Lorraine, Mary Tudor's mother, became Regent of Scotland.  
To Dieppe in France. In March he moved to Geneva to consult with Calvin, and was referred on to Pierre Viret (Lausanne) and Henry Bullinger (Zurich). He returned to France, as English Protestant bishops were being imprisoned. In July: Published *A Faithful Admonition to the Professors of God's Truth in England* (denounced Mary and her allies). In August: returned to Geneva. Then in November: accepted call to Frankfurt, where the Church was divided on issue of Liturgy. Knox was rejected by Church, and expelled from the city.

- 1555 March, determined to head for Scotland, via Geneva. 1555 or 1556 — Married Marjory Bowes in Edinburgh (daughter of Bowes (from the castle in Berwick). His preaching mission through central Scotland marked the turning point of the Reformation in Scotland, as he called those in favour of Reformation to reject the idolatry of the Mass.
- 1556 15 May — to appear before Bishops in Edinburgh. When he appeared, with such large support, the case was dropped. So he went preaching again, for 10 days of unprecedented opportunities. Wrote to Regent (Queen Mother Mary of Guise) on behalf of nobles, to try to convince her to reform the Church.  
Knox left with wife and mother-in-law, to return to Geneva to pastor English speaking Kirk. He wrote that for the future (hopefully only a short term measure) believers should meet as house churches: *A Most Wholesome Counsel how to behave ourselves in the midst of this Wicked Generation*.
- 1557 Spent in Dieppe. Later in 1558 returned to Geneva, as pastor and city burger. Together worked out a 'godly revolution.' Was participant in drafting the English version of the Bible (Genevan Bible). Utilised the order of worship he had earlier compiled in Frankfurt, and provided almost the total text for the *Book of Common Order* (C of Scot).  
Encouraged to return to Scotland, 'where you shall find all faithful that ye left behind you, not only glad to hear your doctrine, but will be ready to jeopard lives and goods in the forward setting of the glory of God.'  
Knox wrote: *First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*. published in summer of 1558. Knox came to position of affirming that rebellion may be lawful before both man and God. Female sovereignty as contrary to both divine and natural law.
- 1559 Set out again for Scotland, encouraged by 'an organized group of influential laymen committed to reform' by a Common Bond and Covenant.
- 1560 Reformation Parliament met in August:  
i. jurisdiction of pope abolished;  
ii. celebration of Mass forbidden,  
iii. *Confession of Faith* approved;  
iv. all doctrine and practice contrary to *Confession* condemned.
- 1564 Married: to 17 year old Margaret Stewart, daughter of Andrew Stewart of Ochiltree. Marjory Bowes died either late November or early December 1560. Knox married again in March 1564. They had three daughters — Martha, Margaret and Elizabeth.
- 1572 24 November, 'he rendered his spirit', as his wife was comforting him with John chapter 17.

## **B. The Scots Confession (1560)**

Chap. I	God
Chap. II	The Creation of Man
Chap. III	Original Sin
Chap. IV	The Revelation of the Promise
Chap. V	The Continuance, Incease and Preservation of the Kirk
Chap. VI	The Incarnation of Christ Jesus
Chap. VII	Why the Mediator had to be True God and True Man
Chap. VIII	Election
Chap. IX	Christ's Death, Passion, and Burial
Chap. X	The Resurrection
Chap. XI	The Ascension
Chap. XII	Faith in the Holy Ghost
Chap. XIII	The Cause of Good Works
Chap. XIV	The Works which are counted good before God
Chap. XV	The Perfection of the Law and the Imperfection of Man
Chap. XVI	The Kirk
Chap. XVII	The Immortality of Souls

Chap. XVIII	The Notes by which the True Kirk shall be determined from the False and who shall be Judge of Doctrine
Chap. XIX	The Authority of the Scriptures
Chap. XX	General Councils, their power, authority, and the cause of their summoning
Chap. XXI	The Sacraments
Chap. XXII	The Right Administration of the Sacraments
Chap. XXIII	To Whom Sacraments appertain
Chap. XXIV	The Civil Magistrate
Chap. XXV	The Gifts freely given to the Kirk

*These acts and articles were read in the face of the Parliament and ratified by the Three Estates, at Edinburgh the 17 day of August the year of God, 1560 years.*

A. C. Cochrane, *Reformed Confessions of the 16th Century* (SCM Press: 19..), pages 166-184.

### **C. The (First) Book of Discipline**

Sect. I — Doctrine (the need for preaching the Gospel, suppression of false teaching); Sect. II — The Sacraments (Baptism and Lord's Supper administered in native tongue: water only for baptism; communion of both kinds, sitting at the Table as 'most convenient'); Sect. III — Abolition of Idolatry (esp. as seen in the Mass, invocation of saints, adoration of images, etc.; the suppression of religious houses); Sect. IV — The Ministry (the congregation had a voice in the selection and call of the minister; examination of candidates; ordination, temporary assistant readers; Sect. V — Provision for the Ministry (stipends, from the Kirk's patrimony, to be administered by deacons; others who engaged in ministry to be recompensed); Sect. VI — Patrimony (tiends, land rent, etc. to radically change the ancient practice of benefices and nepotism, and redistribute the resources in favour of the parishes); additional section included on Superintendants, schools and universities, indicating the Reformers concern for evangelisation and education; Sect. VII — Discipline (cf. ecclesiastical and civil; preachers and princes; with the Kirk's right to excommunicate enunciated); Sect. VIII — Elders and Deacons (with mutual censure and admonition commended); and Sect. IX — Ecclesiastical Administration (ie. local congregation activities, orderly preaching of the Word, administration of sacraments, public prayer, marriages, burials, religious instruction, upkeep of buildings, etc.).