

John Knox

A Short Biography of the founder of the
Presbyterian Church



By Steve Prodanich

Adult Ministries

First Presbyterian Church of La Grange

150 S. Ashland Ave, La Grange, IL 60525

Overview

- John Knox's Early Years
- Geneva
- Reformation in Scotland
- John Knox and Queen Mary
- Legacy

John Knox Early Years



John Knox Early Years

- John Knox Lived (~1510 – 1572)
 - Born as a peasant on farm near the sea which was under constant threat from French sea invaders
 - Bright student
 - His father spent money to educate him so that the family may prosper behind his son
- Martin Luther 1517
 - October 31 posted his 95 theses
 - Began Reformation and it's Reformed Theology



John Knox Early Years

- Educated into the Roman Catholic Priesthood
 - Doorway to Political and economic advancement for the family
 - Never got a degree because it was too expensive
 - He was troubled by the condition of the Church
 - Church was fully politicalized
 - Clergy was not concerned with spiritual welfare of flock
 - Clergy was only concerned with political and economic interests

John Knox Early Years

Patrick Hamilton:

- He had a prestigious teaching post at St. Andrews
 - Very popular professor
 - Privately read Martin Luther's writings on the reformation
 - Had his students over for informal discussions about Luther and the reformation, which he was strongly in favor
 - Cardinal Beaton sent "spy students" to listen at his home



John Knox Early Years

- 1528 Hamilton was dragged out of bed and burned at the stake without a trial in the middle of the night by Cardinal Beaton's men
- Travesty of Justice for a very popular professor hit hard for John Knox and rest of Scotland
 - **“the wreak of Master Hamilton's burning has infected as many as it blew up on” - John Knox**
 - Knox wrote this while working as a notary and tutor for a private protestant house

The English Bible 1536

- William Tyndale had secretly translated the New Testament into English
 - Burned at the stake by Catholic authorities
- A few months later Henry VIII split from the Catholic Church
 - He had the English Bible Sanctioned for all Churches in England
 - The Bible had become widely available in English



John Knox Early Years

- 1538 James V marries Mary Guise
 - French Catholic
 - Strengthens the French Catholic hold on Scotland



- 1542 Henry the 8th wants James V to renounce the Pope and join his reformation
- James V refuses his uncle and they go to war where James dies from illness 5 days after his daughter Mary Queen of Scots is born.

John Knox Early Years

- Mary Queen of Scots 1542
 - Who would handle regency for an infant Queen?
 - Protestant nobles or Catholic Clergy
 - Minor civil conflict for regency & Protestants won out
 - 1543 English Prince Edward 6th (4yrs old) engaged to Mary Queen of Scots (1 yr old)
 - Cardinal Beaton kidnaps Mary to avoid marriage
 - War of “Rough Wooing” 1547-1550 between England and Scotland.
 - King Henry VIII went to war for a marriage that would ally England to Scotland and prevent the French from using Scotland in the future.

John Knox Early Years

- Knox did not record when or how his thinking turned to Protestant
- Two key formative influences
 - Patrick Hamilton executed when Knox a student
 - George Wishart was a reformer who had fled Scotland in 1538 to escape punishment for heresy.
 - Preached against the veneration of the Virgin Mary.
 - He then took refuge in Germany and Switzerland.
 - Returned to Scotland in 1543 after King James V dies

John Knox Early Years

George Wishart spent 3 years preaching reformed theology traveling throughout Scotland

- Knox served as his body guard during this time



John Knox Early Years

- Wishart is arrested by Cardinal Beaton's hired hands because of his preaching
 - Wishart was put on trial & executed
 - Cardinal Beaton was the Prosecutor
 - 2 Protestant Scottish Nobles broke into St. Andrews and killed Cardinal Beaton in his bed
 - Kind enough to wait for his mistress to leave
 - Protestants took over St. Andrews



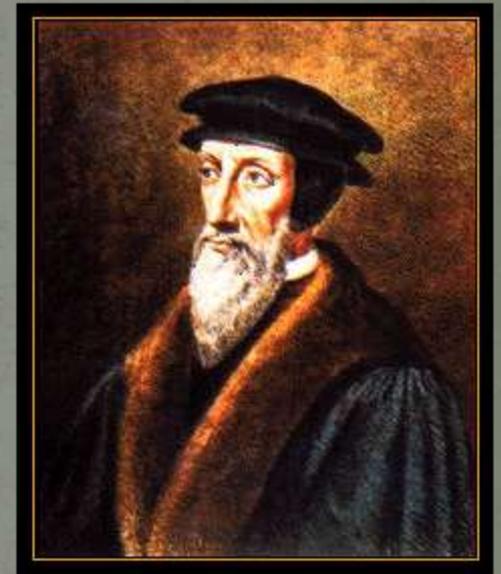
John Knox in French Galley

- Mary Guise Mother of the Queen sent notice of the happenings at St. Andrews to French officials.
- French fleet came and overtook St. Andrews and threw John Knox and others into the galley of a ship
 - He was a galley slave for 19 months
 - Most did not survive

John Knox in French Galley

“my days pass away like smoke, my bones burn like a furnace, my heart is stricken and withers like grass, I am too wasted to eat my bread, because of my loud groaning my bones cling to my skin”

Knox said to recite as he was rowing in the French galley



John Knox

John Knox Released

- King Henry VIII died 1547
- King Edward age 10, board of regents Mainly Protestant
- Knox released in prisoner exchange
 - Protestants were released by payment from well connected and wealthy English families.
 - Knox was famous and they sought his release
 - Emaciated Knox recovered and became court preacher in England for 3 years

Knox to Geneva



John Knox in Geneva

- Mary Tudor became Queen of England in 1553.
 - Edward died as a teenager.
 - Mary (Catholic) “Bloody Mary”
 - Launches massive persecution of protestants
- Knox fled to Geneva in 1554
 - Did not meet Calvin
 - He was in complicated moment due to the trial and death of Servetus
 - Knox worked with Calvin’s associates.
 - They worked on many concerns with Knox on how to reform a country to Protestantism, not just a city.



John Knox in Geneva

- 1556 went back to Scotland for a few months, worked to transform nobles to Protestant ideas.
 - Returned to Geneva due to political climate
- 1557 finally developed a close relationship with Calvin
 - “Geneva is the most perfect school of Christ on earth since the days of the apostles”

The Reformation in Scotland



John Knox preaching with fiery emotional appeals from the pulpit

John Knox

- 1558 Mary Queen of Scots marries Francis II
 - heir to the throne of France
- Knox publishes his “First Blast of the Trumpet” against the monstrous regimen of women.
 - Knox’s experience with female rulers was very negative and believe women should not run countries.
 - Targeted “Bloody Mary” and “Mary Queen of Scots”



John Knox

- Within Weeks of the publication of his “First Blast” the Queen “Bloody Mary” dies.
- 1559 Protestant Queen Elizabeth ascends to the throne in England
 - Knox’s publication appears to be a political mistake.
 - Knox admitted “My First Blast has blown from me all my friends from England”



John Knox

- Queen Elizabeth resents Knox's "First Blast"
 - Knox returns to Scotland in 1559 as a famous preacher
 - Elizabeth became one of Knox's strongest allies in putting down Catholic influences in Scotland.
- Scottish Civil War 1559
 - Knox preaching to huge crowds much improved, less fire and brimstone and more protestant idealism
 - "the voice of that one man is able in one hour put more life into us than 500 trumpets continually blustering in our ears" - Thomas Randolph, Ambassador to England

John Knox 1559

- 1559 Mary Guise outlaws reformation preaching
- Civil War broke out at this point
 - English and French at odds
 - Queen Elizabeth back's Protestants
 - France backed the Catholic cause and sent military hardware to Scotland.
- Protestant Nobles: “Lord’s of the Congregation” deposed Mary Guise October 24th 1559

1560 June-July

- Mary Queen Scots and Francis II become teenage rulers of France and Scotland
 - Mary Guise dies in June 10th
 - King Henry of France dies July 10th
 - 1560 Huguenot (Protestant) Uprising in France



John Knox 1560 August

- Scottish Parliament met to settle religious issues.
 - Passed three acts:
 - Ended the jurisdiction of the Pope in Scotland
 - Condemned all doctrine contrary to the reformed faith
 - Forbade the celebration of Mass in Scotland.
 - Scots Confession approved by Parliament
 - Written by Knox (five other ministers were involved)

Book of Discipline 1560

- Parliament gave Knox and the other ministers the task of organizing the newly reformed church (the Kirk).
- The *Book of Discipline* for Scotland
 - **Outlines a representative government for Scotland.**
 - Checks and balances of offices and authority
 - The ruler was bound by law
 - Kings and Queens no longer above the law by divine right
 - **Universal education**
 - Voice of the people (educated and bound by the word of God because they could read the Bible) is the voice of God
 - **Included a National system for charity**
 - **Derived from Calvin's views but took them much further**

December 1560

- Knox's wife (Margery) dies, leaving him to care for his children ages 2 and 3
- French King Francis II dies (as a teenager)
 - Mary, still just a teenager, pressured to leave the high culture in France to save Scotland for the Catholic Church
 - Lost her title when Francis II died

January 1561

Parliament considers a democratically run Kirk (Church)

- All contents within the Book of Discipline
- Each congregation was free to choose or reject its own pastor, but once he was chosen he could not be fired.
- Each parish was to be self-supporting, as far as possible.
- The bishops were replaced by ten to twelve "superintendents".
- Certain areas of law were placed under ecclesiastical authority.
- Parliament rejects the plan for the Kirk as too radical
 - seeds of destruction of the noble class, which all of parliament belonged

Knox and Queen Mary 1561



- Mary Queen of Scots returns to Scotland
 - She charmed Nobles with elegant parties
 - Took a very accommodating view of Protestantism
 - Perhaps looking to England where she might become Queen, if Queen Elizabeth died.
 - Even though Mass was outlawed, Mary could privately host Mass for locals because she was still above the law. (Book of Discipline was rejected)

Knox and Queen Mary 1561-1564

- Knox protested from his pulpit with thunderous sermons against Mass at Queen Mary's Residence
- Mary summoned Knox (5 times in all).
 - Accused him of inciting a rebellion
 - Mary questioned Knox whether subjects had a right to resist their ruler
 - Knox replied that if monarchs exceeded their lawful limits, they should be resisted, even by force



Knox and Queen Mary 1561-1564

- Mary attempts to marry Don Carlos prince of Spain.
 - Knox preached against the union as a threat to the Scottish commonwealth.
 - Knox successfully turned public opinion against the marriage and it never happened.
- While Mary was away for the summer.
 - A mob forcefully interrupted the private Mass in her castle
 - The priest's life threatened during altercation
- Knox publically defends the action as not a treasonable act because Mass was illegal
 - Nobody was prosecuted for the incident.



Knox and Queen Mary 1564-1565

- Mary tried to arrange a wedding with Lord Darnley, her cousin.
 - He was English nobility & Catholic
- Knox preached against the marriage and was arrested, as an attack on her rule.
 - Queen Elizabeth in England was also furious with proposed wedding, seen as maneuvering for her crown.
- Knox defended himself successfully and let go
- Mary and Lord Darnley were married.



Knox and Queen Mary 1566

- March 1566, Mary's secretary, David Rizzio, who was aligned Lord Darnley, was murdered.
- Knox left Edinburgh for one year to the district of Kyle in southwest Scotland
 - completed the major part of his *magnum opus*, *History of the Reformation in Scotland*.

Knox and Queen Mary 1567

- Protestant nobles divided over what to do with Mary.
 - Lord Darnley had been murdered and the Queen almost immediately married the chief suspect, the Earl of Bothwell, who was only recently acquitted for lack of evidence (like the OJ Simson trial?).
- With a public uprising, Mary had been forced to abdicate her crown
 - She was imprisoned and she eventually escaped to England, where she lived in exile and protected by Elizabeth
 - Mary was executed in 1587 for conspiring to assassinate Queen Elizabeth

John Knox Late Years



Knox 1567-1568

- King James VI (son of Mary and Lord Darnley)
- July 1567, Knox preached James VI's coronation .
 - Sermon about Constitutional Monarchy bound by law
 - After the coronation, Knox thundered against Mary in his sermons, even to the point of calling for her death.
 - New infant King would become King of England and Scotland
 - Revered for translation of the King James Bible
- Lord Moray had become the regent of King James VI.
- Knox's close friends, Lord Argyll and William Kirkcaldy, stood by Mary and her authority as Queen.
- Fighting broke out concerning the rightful ruler
 - Mary or Lord Moray

John Knox 1570-1572

- The fighting in Scotland continued as a civil war.
 - Lord Moray was assassinated 1570.
 - His successor Earl of Lennox, also a victim of violence.
- April 1571, the controller of Edinburgh Castle, Kirkcaldy of Grange, ordered all enemies of the Queen to leave the city.
 - Knox could stay, as he was a fellow galley-slave with Kirkcaldy, but only if he remained captive in the castle.
- Knox chose to leave for St Andrews.
 - He continued to preach, spoke to students, and worked on his *History of the Reformation in Scotland*.
- July 1572, after a truce, John Knox returned to Edinburgh.
 - exceedingly feeble with faint voice, he continued to preach

John Knox dies 1572

- August 1572 Knox gave his last sermon
 - On the St. Bartholomew massacre in France
 - A Catholic Mob attacked Huguenots during a royal wedding
- November 23rd 1572 John Knox dies
 - Knox's death was barely noticed at the time.
 - Funeral was attended by the nobles of Scotland
 - No major politician or diplomat mentioned his death in their letters that survive.

The Legacy of John Knox



John Knox Legacy

- It was thanks to Knox that the Presbyterian polity was established
 - Presbyterian Church's Founder
 - Took Scotland from the semi-barbarian wilderness to the enlightenment of the modern world
 - Knox said to be more Calvinistic than Calvin himself
- His philosophy had a great impact on the English Puritans
- Taught it a duty to oppose unjust government in order to bring about moral and spiritual change

American Revolution

- Ambrose Serle, secretary to British General Howe in New York City, wrote to the British Secretary of State in 1776 telling him that the American Revolution was ultimately a *religious war*.
- He boldly asserted that the revolution could not be sustained in America if it were not for the Presbyterian ministers who bred it.
- He claimed that the war was fueled by the Presbyterians' desire to establish their religion as the official church of the new American government.

American Revolution

- King George III declared the American Revolution was a Presbyterian Revolution
 - The important fact that King George III and his deputies on both sides of the Atlantic alleged that the colonial rebellion was a religious endeavor is no longer widely publicized
 - Today we focus on Socio-Economic (taxation) and completely discount the religious relevance in colonizes founded by Protestant Puritans
 - Religious justification for the American Revolt was found in Knox
 - Against Divine Right to Rule (King above the Law)

John Knox Legacy

- Knox outlined much of what we have today in both the United States and Parliamentary Government.
 - Rulers bound by law, the Rule of Law
 - Separation of powers in offices
 - adopted by James Madison
 - Universal education giving voice to the people
 - National systems for charity

Allowed Preachers to Speak to Power

Scottish Preacher to King James VI (James I England)

- Sir yea are God's silly vassal; there are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland: there is King James, the head of the commonwealth: and there is Christ Jesus, the king of the Church, whose subject James VI is, and of whose kingdom is not a king, nor a lord, nor a head, but a member. - Andrew Melville (1545 -1622)

John Knox's Legacy

- Established Scotland's Reformed Church
 - Was able to reject the Roman Catholic papacy without leaving the church subject to a monarch
 - Founder of the Presbyterian Church
- Inventor of the Modern Polity found in the United States and Parliamentary Europe
- Opened the Christian window to speak truth to power
 - As did Christ, a right belonging to all Christians.

Appreciation?

If you feel it in your heart to help promote more informational projects like this.

- Please donate to the...

First Presbyterian Church of La Grange.

- Located at 150 S. Ashland Avenue
in La Grange, IL 60525
Ph: 708.354.0771

Come join us this Sunday:

9:30 Traditional Worship Service, 10:30 Adult Education,
11:15 Contemporary Worship Service

Inviting you to a more meaningful and purposeful life in Christ.