

**“Maintaining the unity of the Church
or defending orthodoxy at the expense of a split
which cannot be healed”**

Role of John Knox

by Stef Schagen

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Dr. Thomas J. Marinello
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‘Unity in major matters, diversity in minor matters, love in all matters’.¹ This famous saying of Maldenius applies to the dilemma presented in the question of this paper. Major matters of the faith were at stake. In a day and age where the Church had wandered away from the Truth as the Pope had declared himself “vicar of Christ on earth”, even “God upon earth”² and the clergy didn’t care about the flock and lived in sin, a Reformation was needed that would bring the people back to Christ, the Church’s true Cornerstone (Eph.2:20).³ Scottish Reformer John Knox stated: "The kirk (church) ought to do nothing but in faith, and ought not to go before, but is bound to follow, the voice of the *true* Pastor."⁴ The Bishop of Rome, ‘*primus omnium episcoporum*’⁵, had elevated himself from first *among* all, to one *above* all, to whom submission was necessary to ‘belong to the Church and thus attain salvation’⁶ Major matters of the faith were at stake indeed, as true orthodoxy is defined by sound doctrine and faith and practice flowing from it.⁷ *Christ* is the Way to God (John 14:6), not the Church. *God* is the authority of the Church (Col.1:18), through His Word, not the Pope.

Martin Luther was the man of the hour, whom the Lord used to usher it in. On 31 October 1517 Martin Luther posted his 95 theses on the door of Castle Church in Wittenberg.⁸ The Reformation began and spread throughout Europe. But because Church and State were

¹ Maldenius, written source unknown/not found

² Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol.3, Ch.5 under § 63. Leo the Great. A.D. 440–461.

³ All Scripture verses taken from the NIV translation, The NIV Study Bible, Zondervan Corp., 1985

⁴ “Selected Writings of John Knox: Public Epistles, Treatises, and Expositions to the Year 1559”, under ‘John Knox’

⁵ Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol.3, Ch.5 under § 63. Leo the Great. A.D. 440–461.

⁶ Papal Bull ‘Unam Sanctum’, 18 November 1302, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/b8-unam.html>

⁷ Edward Moore, St.Elias School of Orthodox Theology, “Defining Orthodoxy: Is it Possible?”, p.1, 2

⁸ Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol.VII, Ch.3, § 32. The Ninety-five Theses. Oct. 31, 1517.

one, Protestantism only flourished in nation-states that accepted it and limited the Pope's control, like in Scotland...

Whereas Martin Luther (1483-1546) was the prophetic voice of the Reformation in Germany, John Knox was 'first and leading figure' of the Reformation in Scotland⁹ (1514-1572¹⁰). John Knox was both man, statesman and churchman¹¹. Theodore Beza in his '*Icones, Portraits of Reformers of Religion, etc.*' counted Knox among the 'men illustrious in the Reformation of Religion and Restoration of Learning'.¹² Under the influence of John Knox Scotland was reformed socially and spiritually with combined efforts of the Scottish nobles, "the Lords of the Congregation" politically. French dominion was minimized in his time through the efforts of the nobles in his land at the Treaty of Edinburgh and Scotland turned Protestant under Queen Elizabeth I of England's protection at the Treaty of Berwick in 1560.¹³ But, most important of all, the Scottish were to return to 'the Light of Christ's Evangel, ... after that horrible and universal defection from the Truth, which has come by the means of the Roman Anti-Christ'¹⁴, ... 'all that bear the Beast's Mark'¹⁵. One might conclude without a doubt: John Knox's influence in Scotland cannot be ignored. One might conclude as well: he had a clear view of some and expressed it in no uncertain terms. John Knox was a fearless man. His gravestone declares what several accounts of him say: "Here lyeth a man who in his life never feared the face of man, who hath been often

⁹ Critical and miscellaneous essays: early kings of Norway, and essays on the portraits of John Knox / by Th. Carlyle. - London, 1893, Vol.VII, p.101, adopted from Theodore Beza's *Icones*

¹⁰ Birthdate uncertain, possibly 1505, or 1513.

¹¹ History of The Reformation in Scotland, John Knox, The Banner of Truth Trust, Preface p. XIII

¹² *Icones*, Theodore Beza, 'middle of the book', quoted by Th.Carlyle in *Critical... essays*, p.101

¹³ History of the Ref. in Scotland, Historical Summary and p.214, 224

¹⁴ History of the Ref. in Scotland, Book I, Introduction

¹⁵ History of the Ref. in Scotland, p.19

threatened with dagger, but yet hath ended his dayes in peace and honour." ¹⁶ Known as "The Thundering Scott" for his fiery rage against the Roman Catholic faith of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots ¹⁷, whom he accused of idolatry for participating in the Mass, ¹⁸ he described himself as "a watchman blowing the trumpet ¹⁹, of which his treatise against Mary of Guise, mother of Mary Queen of Scots, regent of Scotland, and Mary Tudor Queen of England as well as *all* women in authority, "*The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*", was the first of three blasts indeed. He was opposed against all women in authority:

‘I am assured that GOD hath revealed unto some in this our age, that it is more than a monster in nature that a Woman shall reign and have empire above Man. ... ‘
‘To promote a woman to beare rule, superioritie, dominion or empire aboue any realme, nation, or citie, is repugnant to nature, contumelie to God, a thing most contrarious to his reueled will and approued ordinance, and finallie it is the subuersion of good order, of all equitie and iustice’ ...²⁰

Knox was born only three years before the Reformation had it's opening statement through Luther's 95 theses. He was deeply influenced by the teachings of John Calvin (1509-1564) and his tutor, the amiable reformer George Wishart,²¹ whom he followed as a true

¹⁶ The Bible Museum, Inc., owner: Dr. Craig H. Lampe website: www.greatsite.com, owner: John L. Jeffcoat III

¹⁷ 'The Thundering Scott', Geddes MacGegor, MacMillan&Co, 1958, among other titles; The Columbia Encyclopedia, 6th Edition, 2001-2007, 2002, Columbia University Press, John Knox, under "Years in Exile".

¹⁸ From "Selected Writings of John Knox: Public Epistles, Treatises, and Expositions to the Year 1559", under 'Knox's Call to the Ministry and First Public Debate', no.V.

¹⁹ John Knox, The Reformation in Scotland, The Banner of Truth Trust, Backcover, Psalm 127:1

²⁰ The Project Gutenberg EBook of The First Blast of The Trumpet...', The English Scholar's Library No.2, 1558, edited by Edward Arber, F.S.A. 15 August 1878, sections 'Preface' and 'The First Blast to Awake Women Degenerate'

²¹ The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001-07. John Knox.

disciple and was willing to guard with his own life and two-edged sword.²² Knox had no desire for the pulpit nor wanted to follow in his footsteps to be the new Scottish leader after Wishart was burned on the stake (1 March 1546): "He would not run where God had not called him", but was put under severe pressure to the task in 1547.²³ Aged 42, Knox delivered his first sermon with Protestant thought at St. Andrews' Castle in that year, freely expressing his Articles, calling the Pope the Anti-Christ and preaching against unbiblical Roman Catholic practices out of Daniel 7:24-25.²⁴

Knox was a fervent defender of the Protestant faith through his many writings, sermons, polemics with the Anabaptists on obedience²⁵ and 4 interviews with Mary Queen of Scots.²⁶ He can be seen as the "Father of the (English) Puritan Movement",²⁷ due to his view that the ecclesiology of the Church's faith and practice is to be based *on Scripture alone* and his insistence on the necessity of the Church in his day *to be completely purified* of man-made religion.²⁸ He was a founding leader of the Scottish 'Covenanter Movement', based on his view that the Church in hot pursuit of Christ is united through *covenants*²⁹, and his view on His *Mystical Body*³⁰. He is regarded as the founder of Scottish Presbyterianism which became the official state religion at the time of his death, in 1572, and in turn became the

²² "Selected Writings ... ' under Notes, 8.

²³ John Knox, The Years of Preparation, An Overview of Scottish Presbyterianism - Part Two, L.Anthony Curto, 5th par.

²⁴ Hist.of the Reformation in Scotland, p.75-77.

²⁵ John Knox, Ch.15, p.286 and on.

²⁶ Hist.of the Reformation in Scotland, p.276, 302, 316, 328.

²⁷ As from Thomas Carlyle, Heroes en Hero Worshippers, *taken from* John Knox, The Years of Prep., end of Part Two

²⁸ John Knox, The Years of Preparation, An Overview of Scottish Presbyterianism - Part Two, under "A Call to Frankfurt", L.Anthony Curto, end of Part Two / adapted from Thomas Carlyle, "Heroes and Hero Worshippers"

²⁹ John Knox, The Years of Preparation, end of Part Two

³⁰ History of the Reformation in Scotland, p.76

father of American Presbyterianism early in the seventeenth century.³¹ Deeply influenced by John Calvin during his exile in France and Germany when fleeing for the Marion Persecution under Mary Tudor, Queen of England (1553-1558)³², Knox on return influenced England as a 'minister of the crown' in Berwick and Newcastle³³. He was the religious leader at the First meeting of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1560, when the Confession of Faith was re-instated and the power of the Pope in his country annihilated.³⁴

Knox wrote his first theological work, a treatise on justification by faith, called '*An Epistle to the Congregation of the Castle of St. Andrews: with a Brief Summary of Balnaves on Justification by Faith*',³⁵ as a slave of the French from the galley Nostre Dame where he was bound in chains under 'tortuous labor'.³⁶ During his pastorate in Berwick he helped compose 'The Book of Common Prayer' and 'The Articles of the Church of England',³⁷ which became leading manuals for the Scottish Protestant Church as well. The 'Order of Geneva' known as 'Knox's liturgy' or 'Book of Common Order' (1552, rev.1564) was adopted by the Scottish reformers in 1562 and became the first manual of 'the ancient service of word and sacrament'.³⁸

Knox tried to have as much influence as possible. His 4 interviews with the Roman Catholic Mary Queen of Scots (1561-1563) frequently led her to tears, as Knox not only blatantly criticized her partaking in the mass, her dancing, balls and parties, but her intended

³¹ Columbia Encyclopedia, 6th Edition, 2001-2007, Columbia University Press, John Knox.

³² ²⁷ The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. 2001-07. John Knox.

³⁴ History of the Ref. in Scotland, Book III, Ch.4, p.227-229

³⁵ Reformation and Renaissance in Scotland, The Cambridge History of English and American Literature in 18 Volumes (1907-21), John Knox Volume III. Renaissance and Reformation.

³⁶ Center for Reformed Theology and Apol., John Knox, The Years of Preparation, under The Nostre Dame.

³⁷ John Knox, The Years of Preparation, under Further Lessons in England.

³⁸ Encyclopedia Britannica.

marriage with Lord Darnley, a Roman Catholic as well³⁹. Knox was against this marriage. A marriage with a Roman Catholic, he realised, would damage the Protestant cause in Scotland.
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But influential as he was, Knox's views were hotly debated. His first blast on the trumpet against women in authority was greatly opposed.⁴¹ Knox was viewed upon as pulling out the root of Roman Catholicism and destroying the whole tree, while others that were burned at the stake like 'proto-martyr' Patrick Hamilton⁴² were seen as only cutting off its branches.⁴³

Knox's advocating and justifying political revolution as a means to further the cause of Protestantism, if necessary by taking up arms, was a subject of hot debate. It made John Ridley declared Knox 'one of the most ruthless and successful revolutionary leaders in history':

'He was more ruthless, at least in theory, than any revolutionary of more recent times. Dictators have killed their opponents whenever they considered that this was expedient. Revolutionary mobs have killed oppressors out of a desire for vengeance and justice. But Knox and his Puritans are the only modern revolutionaries who proclaimed that it was sinful not to kill their enemies.'⁴⁴

More than a voice of the Reformation, John Knox became the father of Scottish Presbyterianism. The year 1560 is marked as the official year of the Scottish Reformation.⁴⁵

³⁹ Hist.of the Ref., p.332

⁴⁰ John Knox, by John Ridley, p.426

⁴¹ John Knox, Ridley, p.525

⁴² Critical and Misc. Essays, p.105.

⁴³ Hist.of the Ref., Knox, p.75

⁴⁴ John Knox, John Ridley, New York: Oxford University Press, 1968, Conclusion, p.527

⁴⁵ Hist.of Ref. in Scotland, p.XXIII

The Church of Scotland honours him as the Great Reformer.⁴⁶

Faith comes from revelation: hearing the Word of God (Rom.10:17). "Worship is to be solely regulated by the Word of God", Knox declared in his sermon to defend his Order Of Service for the new Scottish Church.⁴⁷ Orthodoxy is having *correct belief* about God and how He saves.⁴⁸ *Wrong* doctrine leads to error in faith and practice.⁴⁹ Orthodoxy, therefore, is based on the Word of God, sound doctrine (1Tim.1:10). "It is not enough that man invents a ceremony and then gives it a signification according to his pleasure. Rather, we must "have the word of God for assurance." ... "Unless you are able to prove that God has commanded your ceremonies," Knox told the Papists, "his former commandment will damn both you and them."⁵⁰

Sound doctrine is, therefore, a major matter. Without sound doctrine the people will be misled (Titus 2:1). Without knowledge (of Gods Law) the people perish (Hosea 4:6). Then, without preachers in the pulpit, faith will not return (Rom.10:13, 14). And as faith is the roadway to salvation (Rom.5:1), orthodoxy, 'right belief' given to us by God through Scripture⁵¹, is necessary. Return to the Bible, *sola scriptura*, and the apostolic faith of the first century, was therefore the essence of what initiated the Reformation. If there is no unity in this major matter, then what is this unity about?

⁴⁶ John Knox, Ridley, Conclusion, p.526

⁴⁷ John Knox, The Years of Preparation, An Overview of Scottish Presbyterianism - Part Two, under "A Call to Frankfurt", L.Anthony Curto

⁴⁸ Edward Moore, St.Elias School of Orthodox Theology, "Defining Orthodoxy: Is it Possible?", p.1

⁴⁹ Tertullian, "The Prescription against Heretics", by Rev.Peter Holmes, New Advent (Fathers Chapter 28)

⁵⁰ "Selected Writings of John Knox: Public Epistles, Treatises, and Expositions to the Year 1559", under 'Editor's Note'.

⁵¹ Catholic Encyclopedia, www.newadvent.org, "Encyclopedia", Orthodoxy

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