

John Knox
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He has been called "The Thundering Scot." He preached hundreds of sermons, only two have ever been published.

My teacher more than 60 years ago said, "There is no monument to this man, Scotland is his monument." In the middle of the 20th century, there was erected finally a monument to this man behind the church where he had ministered for so many years. About life-sized, facing a parking lot, paved over with macadam, a Scottish development by Mr. Mac Adam, which is covering the area where John Knox is buried. If you ask the attendant, "Where is his grave?" he will point you to the right rear wheel of a vehicle in a lined parking space behind the church. At that spot is a very small marker flush with the ground with the initials I.K. Johannes Knox, 1572. Thus passes glory. Thus passes glory.

He was born around 1510 to a regular, ordinary, common, upright family in Scotland. His name is John Knox. I want to ask you to accept for a few moments the assumption I am John Knox and I want to tell you the story of my life.

A common ordinary man. Sent by his parents to St. Andrew's University to become a priest. Not a monk. In Scotland in those days, monasticism was known for its wickedness and its base morality and it was said if the debaucheries and the wickedness done behind these walls could be noised abroad, the people would burn them more quickly.

To become a priest. St. Andrew's University. Andrew, by tradition, was the disciple who brought the Gospel to Scotland and this was the main university. I witnessed the burning of a 25 year old young man, Patrick Hamilton his name, who had attended Wittenberg University, went to learn under Martin Luther, came back fired up with the faith, eager to communicate the Gospel in a land that was priest-ridden, and the Cardinal Bishop who was the practical ruler of the land, uncrowned but practical ruler, had him burned. It was said that every line of his sermon was another faggot for the flames. The Cardinal luxuriated on a couch in an upper window overlooking the square around the castle. He had guns trained on the square lest the people interfere. He enjoyed the spectacle, the burning of this young man. The nobility gathered around were heard to say, "Ere long, Cardinal, another sight shall be seen from that window." And in fact, some weeks later, the Cardinal's body was dangling by a cord from that very window as the nobility had risen up, stormed the Bishop's palace, took it over. I, then, was tutoring young boys. A

graduate. A young priest. I was invited, I was summoned by the nobility to be their chaplain in this castle. Reluctantly but without much ability to resist, I joined them.

Before long, a French naval invasion came to rescue the Cardinal's palace from these invaders of whom I was now one. I must describe for you the French connection. France and England had been at war for over 100 years not many years before this, and there was no love lost between the two. On the throne of Scotland at this time, strangely, was a young teenage girl who was the daughter of the king who died virtually at her birth. He had married a French noblewoman in delicious reaction to England's effort to win the friendship of France, which had occurred in the previous generation. One of Henry VIII's sisters, Margaret Tudor, was married by arrangement and all such royal marriages were by arrangement, to the family of the throne of France, hoping thereby to win friendship. The next generation of French resented that effort, so that king married a French princess instead. Consequently, there was on the throne now technically a child whose mother was a French princess who disdained the backwardness of the Scots that she did not want her daughter to grow up being one, though she was, and when weaned, the child was sent to France to be reared in French graces and French style and fashion, and as it turned out, French morals as well. So her mother remained in Scotland as the Regent, the one ruling on behalf of the queen. She was a French princess, I say, and this was resented by the Scots.

Well, the Scots invited the French to come and free the castle and we were deceptively captured, promised release, and then the promise was broken. All the inhabitants became galley slaves on a French ship. For 19 months in the heat of one summer and the cold of two winters, we were chained to the oarlocks rowing when the wind was not filling the sails. Nobility and an ordained priest as virtual slaves on a French ship.

On one occasion, they brought to us prisoners a painted image, a wooden image of the Virgin Mary and required us each to kiss her. We had chained hands. The area of our freedom was limited. When it came to me, I took it and with one full of effort, lunged and threw her overboard into the sea and said, "Let Our Lady swim. She is more to swim than to be kissed." They did not require of us that again.

Eventually through the intervention of the king, the boy king of England, the godly young king tutored by Thomas Cranmer, a born again young man, Edward VI, through his intervention we were freed and I, in somewhat in a sense of gratitude, I went near the border of England and Scotland at the town of Berwick and there pastored a church. I had by this time embraced the Reformation truths that Patrick Hamilton and George Wishart and others had preached, having carried to my little country from Germany where it had begun, and Switzerland, the Gospel truth that the Reformation was proclaiming. But then soon the boy king died, Edward VI, in his late teens. Tubercular, weak of body, but strong of soul, he has given a notable and deeply genuine personal confession of faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. He passed off the scene and his sister, Mary Tudor, Bloody Mary, well-known for infamous persecution of believers, came to the throne and godly people of leadership were divided between Marion martyrs and Marion exiles. I chose to be an exile lest I become a martyr.

Went to the continent and there first to Frankfurt on the Main. Frankfurt. Pastored some English refugees there and then before long, hearing so much of what John Calvin was doing in Geneva, I made my way there and that was to be a very profitable experience of two or three years. In Geneva, I saw the operation of the effort to translate scriptural truth into a civic social environment and was much impressed. Calvin had recognized in the Scripture four ordinary church offices, two extraordinary such offices. Extraordinary were prophets and evangelists. Ordinary officers were pastors, teachers, elders, deacons. In those days, though we have come in modern times somewhat to hyphenate the first two and speak of a pastor-teacher, the teacher was the Bible teacher. He was not the exhorter or the applicator, in a sense, as was the pastor, but he taught the Scriptures.

Daily in Geneva in a side chapel, there is today in Geneva a reconstructed chapel just alongside the former cathedral which was eventually Calvin's pulpit with all the trappings of Rome removed, but this little chapel has a lectern and seats for an audience and people came sometimes daily, or as often as they could, to hear the teaching of the Scriptures, the content of the Scriptures and they learned it. I became for about two years the teacher, the Bible teacher there in Geneva. Learned much, I say, and had opportunity to teach much as well.

Then back to Scotland. In my absence and shortly upon my return, there had developed by the Scottish nobility an effort to establish a national Presbyterian Church. In those days, nothing of your separation of church and state. There was to be one official religious arrangement and the Scottish nobility, having been so depressed by papacy for so many centuries, embraced the Reformation, had established by law, by the Scottish Parliament established a national Presbyterian Church. It was to be the law of the land. That was not strange in those days as it would seem to be for you in yours, because all such countries had an official religion and in the Western world of Europe, there was only one and that was Rome. So the Mass of Rome, the Roman Mass, the blasphemous Mass, the idolatrous Mass, was outlawed in Scotland.

Now, Mary Guise, the Regent, died about the time her daughter in France, the real ruler of Scotland, became a widow at age 18. She had married a son of the king of France. Her husband was Francis II. If no child were born to that union, and none was, Scotland would become a property of France. The Scottish people did not like this, were relieved to have been freed from that possibility with the death of this young king. At about the time the mother of the queen died in Scotland, the husband of the real queen in France died, so now an 18 year old widow comes to a country she does not know and to a language she does not know, to a religion she does not know, and she proceeds to oppose all.

There is a private chapel in the royal palace. The royal palace is at one end of the Holy Mile. At the other end is the Castle of Edinburgh. The Royal Mile, it's called. High Street because it's high above a ravine which today is connected with a modern bridge to the lower city, the modern city of Edinburgh. At two ends of this High Street, I say, one end the castle, the palace at the other, the impregnable castle. It's on a high bluff and it's

impossible to surprise attack it. In the royal chapel, the queen has her priest, her private priest perform a Mass. This is against the law of the land. I'm preaching in St. Giles Church about midway between the castle and the palace on the High Street. My pulpit faces the palace. In my sermon, and I was described as giving fiery sermons, I started meekly as I announced my text, I warmed to the text and pretty soon was flailing the desk. They called it a Thundering Scot. Sometimes they had to replace the wooden facing of the pulpit desk, by report. I denounced from my pulpit facing the palace, the action of the queen. I did not denounce the queen, I denounced the action of the queen.

The next day, I was summoned to the palace. A royal summons is not ignored. I came respectfully and heard this exerciser of all the weapons in the feminine arsenal employ first flattery. "I perceive," she said, "my subjects will obey you rather than me." I replied, "Madam, it is more important that both obey God." "What have you to do with my religion? Religion is a personal thing. My conscience tells me my religion is right." "Conscience, Madam, demandeth knowledge and of right knowledge I fear thou hast none." "Who are you in my kingdom?" "A loyal subject born within this realm and a profitable one withal. Madam, I should be back at my study." "You shall not long be at your study." As it turned out, I was to be longer in my study than she on the throne. Parliament opposed the queen. The pulpit of St. Giles opposed the queen. Eventually the queen was deposed.

She had marrying on her mind. This further created antipathy with her subjects. She married a cousin upon coming to Edinburgh, Lord Darnley. She hired an Italian male secretary, David Rizzio, with whom she was more than passingly enamored. Her husband, Henry, came upon them in dalliance together and enraged, dragged David Rizzio into the hall and he was murdered. The queen was enraged that her husband had been the instrument of the death of her lover and arranged for a nobleman to take her husband on a hunting trip where they stayed in a lodge which mysteriously burned down and killed the husband of the queen. Then the queen married the murderer who had arranged the death of the queen's husband, the Earl of Bothwell.

Eventually the Earl of Bothwell died and the news was that she, Mary Queen of Scots, was considering marrying Don Pedro of Spain, which would guarantee further the continued dominance of Rome in Scotland. This was too much for the Scottish nobility who declared the queen deposed. "Now you can't fire me, but I'm not going to resign." A brief resistance was put up, temporarily successful, eventually failed, and I preached at the coronation of the boy king, almost two years old, James, James VI, who was to grow up to be king of both England and Scotland, and to have his name attached to your King James Version of the Scriptures. As his mother had been queen at her birth, now her son, this boy, was king too soon after his birth, about 1 ½ years old, but my years of preaching were drawing to an end.

My wife and I had two sons. My first wife and I had two sons, both of whom died in young manhood at Cambridge University. There was another marriage in my home, a marriage of May and October is what it was called. She was 18, I was 50. I was October. People smiled and arched eyebrows but the Lord provided a peaceful and blessed home

and three daughters, all of whom subsequently were to marry godly preachers, one of whom was later imprisoned in England for refusing to adopt Episcopacy, and his wife, my daughter, went to the royal presence and requested that he be allowed to come to his own country, at least there to die at home, and the king said, "Yes, he may if he will agree to adopt Episcopacy," and she, bless her soul, took the corners of her apron, held it forth and said, "I would rather have his head here." And she left. That was my daughter.

I installed my successor at St. Giles Cathedral. Leaning on the arm of a friend and my staff, walked the distance to my house on the Royal Mile. The streets were lined with my people and the street was blessed with a heavenly light, the light of a people's love. I went into my home never again upright to leave it. Had preached for the last time on the crucifixion. Declined during the week. By Friday, I thought it was Sunday and I was wanting to preach on the resurrection to follow the week before on the crucifixion. I asked my dear wife to read to me the 15th of 1 Corinthians. About 6 o'clock, the family retired to another room for evening prayers. They then returned and asked if I had heard them. I replied, "I have heard a heavenly sound." At about 10 o'clock, I asked my dear wife to read to me where I first cast my anchor, the 17th chapter of John, the priestly prayer of our Lord, and a little before 11, just after my secretary and friend, a male secretary, asked if I had any sign that I continued in the faith I had preached, I raised three fingers and said, "It is well with my body, with my soul, and with my spirit." And just before 11 o'clock, that bark on which I had sailed, raised anchor and sailed for the last time.

Short of stature. Broad of shoulder. Strong of voice. Fiery of method. I was laid to rest and the Regent for the boy king, the Earl of Moray, declared over my grave, "Here lies one who neither feared nor flattered any flesh, and thou he hath oft been troubled with pistol and dagger, yet at last he hath come to honor and peace."

Only a man. God uses men and women. He has, he is, and he shall. God be praised.