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## Contributors & Correspondents

**JOHN KNOX: THE WORK HE GOT TO DO, AND HOW HE DID IT.**

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*I hate (vain) thoughts, but Thy law do I love.—Psalm 119. 113.*

Three hundred years ago, 24th of this November, in his house at the foot of the High Street of Edinburgh, died John Knox, according to Beza, the apostle of Scotland. He was, as he said at one time to Queen Mary, "neither earl, lord, nor baron in the commonwealth, yet did God make him a profitable murtherer of the same!" Let us look across the three centuries between this and then, and endeavour to get some true idea of the work God gave him to do, and how he did it.

### I. The work Knox got to do.

When the new settler enters the Canadian woods, to make there a home for himself and family, he first *knocks down* and makes clear his spot, and then he greets his hit, where he and his find shelter when the storms rage, and the wolves howl without. The Scotch Reformers of the sixteenth century thus understood their work. A power that *seduced* as firmly established in the land as its everlasting hills must be overturned, overturned, overturned, overturned ere they could erect in peace and safety their temple of primitive and apostolic fashion. In no other country in Europe was the Romish Church so completely master of the situation as in poor Scotland at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The population was not over 1,000,000, but there were in the land 240 monasteries, full of monks, whose learning and industry were low, but whose morals were still lower. The secular clergy were a step higher, at least in learning, but all they knew of the Scriptures was what was contained in their missals. The bishops must have been superlatively idle and useless, seeing that only one instance is known of a bishop having preached from the oration of the Scottish Episcopacy down to the day of the Reformation. The only preachers were the begging monks, and the burden of their discourses consisted of the praise of saints, working childish miracles, fighting with visible fiends, and the praise of holy water—and the sign of the Cross. The reading of the Bible was forbidden under pains and penalties. Alas for poor Scotland! The people asked for bread, and the Church of Rome gave them a stone; for a fish, and they gave them a serpent. Instead of the Bible, they had "profane and old wives' fables;" instead of the one Mediator they had the Virgin and Saints; instead of Christ's righteousness, they had the righteousness of rights and ceremonies. This Upas tree with its deadly shade had covered the land, and had stuck its roots into its very heart, and the people took shelter under it, other shelter there being none. But it must be cut down. This is work that demands nerve and brain, faith and fortitude.

But are the poor people to be left without shelter under the storm that beat on men in this dark and sorrowful life of theirs. This is what Voltaire and his fellow-workers decreed for France when they laid their keen, merciless axes to the root of the Romish tree in their land. But the Scotch Reformers understood God and man, time and eternity better, and on the ruins of Rome they resolved, under God, that something better should grow up in Scotland. Another church must be built where this old one stood. But after what model? It is to be like the church of which century? The "church of the future" of those Northern Reformers is not, it seems, to be built of any of the old material that lies thick on the ground, but new stones must be quarried and a new foundation sought—that foundation being the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone. "In the worship of God"—this is the programme according to Knox—"and especially in the administration of Sacraments, the rule to be prescribed in the Scriptures is to be observed without addition or diminution, and the Church has no right to devise religious ceremonies and impose significances on them." On the front of the new building we see, then, that these inscriptions are to be written: "We hate thoughts; but Thy law do we love." "Our doctrine is not ours, but His that sent us. To cast down that and build up this; to cast down Babylon born of vain thoughts, and to set up in its ruins a New Jerusalem, born of God's law, to do this twofold business is as sore a task as ever fell on human shoulders. God help the men that were face to face with that work in Scotland three centuries ago.

### II. The way Knox did his work.

There is the work: but where are the workmen? God will find them where He will, and they will find them where He will. His first workman in the great business is the *printing press*, groaning and creaking in obscure streets, and in dingy rooms throwing out his speech to eager listeners over a Continent, Merchants and sailors to the Continent brought to Scotland along with their wares.

Which a purer lustre flings, Than the diamond flash of the jewelled crown, On the lofty brow of kings.

They brought from Europe copies of the Bible, and of the book by which Luther was calling Europe to the battle, and there found readers: for in 1526, there was passed an Act of Parliament prohibiting ships from bringing any books of Luther or of his disciples into Scotland, which had always been done at all the fairs and markets.

Then came God's chosen instruments in spreading His truth among men—"because they are strong, and the Word of God abideth in them, and they have overcome the wicked one." Patrick Hamilton, of noble family, Abbot of Iona, George Wishart, and others, spread abroad the truth no less by their gentle, unselfish ways, and brave bearing at the stake, than by their learning and eloquence. "The new doctrine," Hume says, "amidst all the dangers to which it was exposed, secretly spread itself everywhere, and the minds of men were gradually disposed to a revolution in religion." The hour has come; the hosts are ready for the battle. Where is the leader? God is preparing him.

While Luther, in 1517, was nailing his famous challenge to the door of the Church at Wittenburgh, John Knox was a lad of 12, attending school in Haddington. He who shapes our ends, rough-hew them as we will, began even then to prepare him for his mission by inclining his mind to learning, by sending him to Glasgow university where he came under the liberal influences of John Mair, by bringing him again under the holy influence of George Wishart, but above all by enlightening his mind in the knowledge of Christ, and sending him into the school of affliction to learn that patience and resignation, without which a man can never be a true leader of men in hazardous and holy undertakings.

On the part of our readers, we presume on a certain acquaintance with the leading events in the life of John Knox. Our readers knew, though it may be that they have forgotten, that after his release from nineteen months' labor in the galleys of France, he came to England where he lived and wrought in great harmony with the early English Reformers, and where he was for four years chaplain to Edward VI; and where he was offered a bishopric, but which he refused, because he was not fully satisfied with the government and worship of the English Church. On the ascension of "bloody Mary," he retired to France where he formed an intimate friendship with Calvin, from whom he learned much, although his views on the church were formed before he ever saw this great man. As soon as it was safe he returned to Scotland, infused hope into the counsels of the Protestants, put himself at their head, guided their cause to such issue that in 1560, the first General Assembly of the Scottish Presbyterian Church sat in Edinburgh. But to keep this ground, required many a hard-fought fight with Queen Mary and her courtiers, and from her wrath and wickedness, from her cunning and cruelty, he was for eleven long and weary years of ceaseless conflict "the horseman of Scotland and the chariot thereof." Let us now glance at the manner in which he did the work to which God called him, and for which God had so wisely prepared him.

He undertook the work deliberately. He was 37 years of age before he made public profession of his faith as a Protestant. For four or five years he devoted himself to teaching, and removed with his three pupils for security to the castle of St. Andrew, where he lectured to the boys on the Gospel of St. John in the chapel of the castle each day. The leading man with John Rough, the Protestant chaplain, dropped in to listen to the lectures, and soon discovered that the little man of weak presence but of powerful intellect, and forcible utterance, was fitted for something better than a tutor. They, therefore, asked him "to take the preaching place on him." No. "He would not run where God has not called. If God showed him the path he was willing to work in it, but he would not run urgent." They could no more move him; but they took another plan. Mr. Rough on a certain day preached on the election of ministers and showed from Scripture, the power of a congregation to call any of their number in whom they perceived suitable gifts and graces, for the work; to call, he said, such to the office of the ministry, on which call it was highly dangerous to refuse the call of those who desired instruction. When the sermon was over the preacher turned to Knox, then 42 years of age—and in the name of the congregation called him to the office of the ministry. Then turning to the congregation he said—"Was not this your charge to me?" They answered—"It was and we approve it." Overwhelmed by this solemn and unexpected charge he burst into tears, rose, walked out, shut himself up in his chamber, and "till he appeared in the public place of preaching, no man saw any signs of mirth from him." But having put his hand to the plough he never looked back. And no doubt it was after a comfort to a man who had such views of what constitutes a proper call to the ministry as he had, that he did not rush uncalled to the place of honour, of toil and of danger, but that he was called thereto by those whom he looked upon as the people of God, and having with them the Holy Spirit.

2. He did his work diligently and laboriously. In the galleys when free from work and fever he employed his time in drawing up a confession of faith, and in keeping up a correspondence with the faithful in Scotland. After his release he laboured for Christ in England, in Germany, in Geneva; but his heart and chief work was in his native land. He travelled through the country preaching, and teaching and organizing, and confirming the churches as he went, speaking at times in huts, and barns, and then in castles, and cathedrals, now to a handful of poor men seeking the way of salvation, then assemblies of thousands; now disputing with Romish ecclesiastics who did sometimes venture to meet him; and then charging the bad of the week and the dying. In one of his letters he

says: "There is no precious that will profit difficultly can I steal to hear in 8 days either to satisfy myself or gratify my friends. I have been in continual travel since the day of appointment, and notwithstanding the fears that have vexed me, yet have I travelled through the most part of this realm, where men of all sorts and conditions have the truth.

III. He did his work modestly and humbly. From the time of the Reformer's encounters with Mary and the wicked nobility, one might judge him to be of a morose, overbearing disposition in all the relations of life. At home and among the brethren he was, on the contrary, the meekest and homeliest man of his time. As soon as the General Assembly was constituted he was an humble presbyter like the rest, and was not even its first moderator. He took appointments at his hands, fulfilled them and rendered account to the assembly. He would not take on himself to gather the brethren for any business except he got authority. On one occasion, wishing to leave his flock to visit his two sons, then pursuing their studies in England; he did not leave till the Assembly gave him permission, which it did fixing this condition, "providing always that he return to his realm at Scotland before the 28th of the month of June next ensuing, to continue his former vocation, and no other wages." Though successful beyond most men in the work of the Lord, he is often dissatisfied with himself—looks narrowly into his own heart, and weighs his motives, though he is very far removed from the morose morbid subjectivity of the English Puritans. He laments in one of his letters how deficient he has been in fervency and fidelity; impartiality or diligence. He could not charge himself with flattery, and his rude phrasing had given offence to some, but his conscience would accuse him rather that he had not been sufficiently plain in admonishing offenders. "O Lord," these are his words "be merciful to my great offences and deal not with me according to mine iniquity, but according to the multitude of thy mercies." With his colleagues in the ministry, he was always on the best terms, there being in him no jealousy, nor envy, but exceedingly much of the milk of human kindness, a lamb at home, though truly a lion in the chase.

IV. He did his work thoroughly. Better than most men of his time in England, he understood the true nature of the question at issue between the Reformers and the Church of Rome. That was an imposing pile which Catholic Rome had heaped up in centuries of as determined effort as moved the arm of Imperial Rome, in building up its vast Empire. It would be a pity, many said, to pull down the whole edifice. Let it be cleansed and thus made good, as the church of the future. The preachers that went before Knox in Scotland, not excepting even George Wishart, contented themselves with attacking some of the graver errors of the church, but this little man, with broad forehead and eagle eye, and fervent spirit, gave it as his position that the house was so tainted with leprosy, so rickety and rotten, that it must be raised from the base to the turret, and a new house of different material and different plan, erected in its place. Others like Dollinger, and Hyaentine of our own day, wished some reforms, but Knox, like Gavazzi and Chautauq, proclaimed in clear accents that the Pope is Anti-Christ, and the whole system unscriptural and wicked. This point in his attitude toward his antagonist was noticed when he first began to preach in St. Andrews;—"Others" said one of his hearers, "hewed the branches of Popistry but he struck at the roots thereof." It was even so. Was he right? What light does the attitude of Popery to-day throw on his position. Under the dogma of infallibility, can Popery be reformed? Is there not now a logical as well as a doctrinal and historical necessity that the whole structure must go or none. They were, indeed, sharp eyes that saw what has taken place these centuries, to make plain to some who think themselves sharper than he. The secret of his insight lies in the words—"I hate thoughts; but Thy law do I love." He set small store by human authority or human invention, against the voice of God speaking directly in his word on the question of the Church.

V. He did his work fearlessly. His sore and great battle lay with a dominant church, an immoral court, and a Queen whose character and conduct even Hume is forced against his will to denounce. Poor Mary, who was educated in Paris under these crafty, bloody men, her uncles, the Guises, came to Scotland in her teens, with her head full of foolish notions about the divine right of Kings, with her hand committed to a solemn instrument that leagued her with France in exterminating heresy, with her heart full of hatred against the Reformation, and her mouth full of plausible words, sweeter than honey. In his opposition to her he was, it is true, supported powerfully on various occasions, but not seldom he stood literally alone in this breach, deserted by his friends—"as one whom men had never seen." It is in those circumstances that the heroic element in his character flashes out. He understood the woman with whom he had to deal. His eagle eye roared her, though she never read him nor understood him. "He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man." Even history the of Scotland makes its readers familiar with this "scorn" in Holyrood between the Queen and the Reformer. Knox preaches a sermon. If wicked things are done in the palace, elsewhere he calls them wicked,

for he says it was his habit to speak plain "I call a fig a fig, and a spade a spade." In formation of his discourse is carried to the Queen, of course with exaggerations, and she cries him to appear before her. In imagination we see the man of prayer enter his closet, and there the glitter of earthly crowns pale in the light of the glory of Jesus whose servant he is, and he feels strong, down the narrow street that runs from his house to the palace he goes, greeting the hopes as they cross his path, and smiling on children at their play. He enters the gay palace and is shown into the presence chamber, full of noble ladies and courtiers and counsellors. The lowly Presbyterian, with broad brow, and eagle eye, and flowing beard, stands before the Queen. She always begins the battle, and he calmly listens till she is done. With a politeness that seems quite courtly for years he mingled with the best nobility of England he begins his defence. Sometimes she listens well—at this time till he went over the sermon of the preceding Sabbath. At other times she won't listen at all. She scolds and threatens and weeps. He is dismissed with angry words and told to wait the Queen's pleasure in an adjoining room which he does. As he passes out, "with a reasonable merry countenance, he overheard one of the Popish attendants saying, 'Ho is not afraid.' The merry countenance changes and a cloud comes over it, as the sharp eyes seek the speaker.—'Why should the pleasing face of a gentleman afraid me, I have looked in the faces of many angry men, and yet have not been affrayed above measure.'

The work began so deliberately, and carried on so diligently, so meekly, so thoroughly and so fearlessly, was brought to a successful close, I do not mean to say that there was no more contending after Knox on the part of the Church of Scotland. Melville and Henderson had their battles to fight; but Knox was successful thus far, that he brought the popular heart of Scotland into living contact with the word of God. The electric current issuing from holy men of old, who spoke as they were moved of the Holy Ghost, had been stopped for Scotland. Knox had quokened his country by forming the connection. Different from material foundations, the foundation of the church is a living one, its stones living stones, drawing their life from the foundation. Knox, therefore, was successful thus far that he cleared away the rubbish, and built the stones of his temple, which has since grown to magnificent proportions, on the foundations of the Apostles and Prophets,—Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.

But the fight that for twenty-five years Knox no trace has worn him down. Feeble and sore broken, he is longing to be away to be with Christ, when the massacre of St. Bartholomew startled Edinburgh. They carry him to the pulpit of St. Giles, and there he thundered the vengeance of heaven against the king that did such a nefarious deed, and said that none of his heirs would hold the throne in peace. What says history to this? Where is that dynasty, and what the history said? The city that did such things. He walked home and entered his house, amid the weeping of the people, never to leave it till he was carried to his burial. He laid down the weapons of his warfare as he took them, calmly and confidently. "The day approaches," he joyfully remarks, "and is now before the door for which I have frequently and vehemently laboured; when I shall be released from my great labors, and innumerable sorrows and shall be with Christ." With the same unmoved confidence and quiet self-possession, without rapture or ecstasy,—in which he stood before earthly sovereigns, he stood before "the King of terrors, and the terror of kings." He died in the sixty-seventh year of his age.

Servant of God, well done,  
Cleave from thy lord's employ,  
The battle's over, the victory's won  
Enter thy Master's joy.

## THE UNION COMMITTEE ASKED FOR INFORMATION.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

DEAR SIR.—I fear that my communication shall not be agreeable to some of your readers, but I hope that few of them are such fools, as to think that no one is to write or print a line without consulting them before doing so.

The Union Committee of the Canada Presbyterian Church, and those who joined in their reasons of dissent, at the last General Assembly, state, "that there was found to be entire unanimity among the committees of the negotiating churches, with regard to the Headship of Christ, and its practical applications to the circumstances of the Church in this land." and they seem to think that because they were satisfied with what they heard, we ought to be satisfied without being even told what they heard, and gave them gratification. Some of us at least would like to know, before we go in the proposed union, what is involved in the above quotation; we wish to know the precise points of agreement, and where the Committees differed. They obviously differed on some applications of the principle, at least in certain circumstances, especially that they agreed as to "their application to the circumstances of the church in this land," will the Committee inform us what are the circumstances in which they felt they could not agree in applying the doctrine of the Headship? We know that some years ago the minister of Indiana lands was brought to the Queen's Bench, as an evil doer, at the instance of representatives of one of these churches, for entering the manse, that the whole of that church united to deprive us of all interest in the church property, which, before the disruption we held in common. It refused to separate from the Established Church of Scotland, after it had thoroughly submitted to the civil power. They see it is united to it now, though it has given up the "great fundamental principle which underlies the history of the Scottish Church—the inalienable right of the church to order its spiritual concerns by virtue of a divine commission," and which, in like manner, admits, that all changes in the doctrine and ritual of the church must, in the last resort be determined by the voice of the nation, as expressed in Parliament." The learned, thoughtful, and impartial commentator on the law of creeds, according to the Edinburgh Review, says:—"On the principles of the great judicial decisions of 1843, it is certain, that if Parliament were next year to ordain the Church of Scotland to set up the worship of the Virgin Mary, as to ignore in its confession, the Divinity atonement of Christ, it, and all its ministers and elders, would be legally and morally bound to do it, provided they continued members of the Church." "This was a proposition seriously and solemnly stated, upon a subject on which its writer—if any now in Scotland—had made himself master. A proposition too, which seems to us (The Review) to result directly from the principles of that very volume, whose impartiality has been so universally confessed. It was at all events a proposition which admitted of a direct and categorical admission or denial." Yet neither has been given.

The Church of Scotland and her daughter in this land, hold in name the confession of faith, and there the Headship is taught, and yet the one rests on the basis of the decisions referred to, and the other glories in its connection with it. Now this latter is one of the churches—the church in fact, to which the friends referred to have given a certificate of orthodoxy, for it is the only one whose soundness is questioned among us. The certificate, indeed, is only a modified one. We wish to know what is withheld, or perhaps, rather, what is not given us in it, as well as what is. That church kept by the Church of Scotland in the past, either for love to its principle, or love to self, or to both. We wish to know whence this new love to us, whence this willingness to enter into alliances; there is no more to be gained by keeping up the old connection; has it in the secularisation of the Reserves gained any new light? Is there now any real attachment to our principles? or if not, what are the advantages which they see in separating from the Church of Scotland and joining us?

Besides, some of us would like to know on what footing the united Church is to stand towards the present Established Church of Scotland. Is it intended that we should put it on the same level with those churches with which we are now in alliance; are we to sink our protest, our still unanswered protest against its position, and thus practically admit that our separation was a blunder, and we were "martyrs by mistake," and the whole disruption movement, and the position of the United Presbyterian and Free Churches one prolonged crime, and that those who fought and bled and suffered on Scotia's hills in days by gone were fanatics and criminals, before God as well as before their persecutors, and not those whose conduct would have prevented martyrdom in all ages.

Those whom I represent wish for union, wider unions than any yet attempted. They do not wish to humiliate any one, or to be humiliated; they wish a frank open statement by all parties of their position. We wish to be put right if wrong. We shall be glad to have our scriptures removed, and surely we are entitled to ask, that the attempt be made. We think that our scruples, if they be unreasonable, should be dealt with by our own brethren at least as gently as the feelings of other parties. We do not feel that this has been done in times past. We desire to be loyal to our church, by being so to our King, and are not willing to compromise His honor, or to enter into relations direct or implied, with the present Established Church of Scotland.

I have no wish, Mr. Editor, to offend any one of these remarks, but before I go into the union, I must be satisfied, that I can do so for the honor of God. Hoping that the committee will endeavor to adjust me, I remain,  
"One who does not see eyes."