

CHAPTER THREE

THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION (III)

— THE SCOTTISH MOVEMENT —

“Just as the German Reformation was largely the work of a single individual, Martin Luther, so the Scottish Reformation was the achievement of one man of heroic will and tireless energy: John Knox. Like Luther, Knox left an indelible mark on his national culture. Uncompromising, dogmatic, and driven, John Knox was a prolific writer and a preacher of truly terrifying power....a Protestant firebrand.”¹

❖ ARTHUR HERMAN

It was J. H. Merle d’Aubigie, the famed historian, who wrote, “The fire of the Reformation, which had just kindled on the Continent, began to throw out sparks on all sides.”² In other words, the brushfire of the Reformation that first ignited Germany soon spread like wildfire to both France and Switzerland. Its flames quickly leaped the English Channel, and Reformation fires engulfed the British Isles. Scotland and England were, suddenly, ablaze with the truth. Once lit, the Reformation simply could not be contained. This powerful movement spread to the outermost regions of Europe, especially to Scotland, where the doctrines of grace—also known as the five points of Calvinism—were carefully articulated and taught. What Luther, Calvin, and the Huguenots had begun in their own lands was now burning brightly abroad.

That said, certain questions beg to be asked: What truths, specifically, were fueling the fire of the Reformation? What doctrines were fanning these flames? What explosive theology was stoking this blaze?

¹ Arthur Herman, *How the Scots Invented the Modern World* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2001), 13.

² J. H. Merle d’Aubigie, *History of the Reformation in Europe*, Vol. 6, (London:Longmans, 1875), 14.

THE FIVE SOLAS OF THE REFORMATION

The lightning from heaven that struck dry kindling, which ignited the Reformation, proved to be the five theses known as the five *solas*. These were “the doctrines that shook the world.”³ The Latin word *sola* means “only” and was attached to five other key Latin words—*sola Scripture*, *sola fide*, *sola gratia*, *solus Christus*, *solus Deo gloria*. The Reformation was fundamentally about salvation that is based upon Scripture *alone*, by grace *alone*, through faith *alone*, in Christ *alone*, for the glory of God *alone*. Together, these five *solas* stood as *one* creed, *one* statement of truth, that captured and contained the core truths of the Reformed faith.⁴

- ***Sola Scriptura***. This first truth means “by Scripture alone,” and was known as the “formal principle” of the Reformation. This foundational statement established that the ultimate authority of the church is “formed” by Scripture. It is from the Bible *alone* that believers derive their theology. Not from church tradition. Not from ecclesiastical councils. We believe what we believe because we find it in the Bible. The church is to be the pillar and the support of the truth, and that is found in the Bible alone.
- ***Solus Christus***. This strategic phrase means “by Christ alone.” Salvation was accomplished exclusively by Christ *alone* through His death to save sinners. Christ *alone* is the Savior of sinners. Not Christ *and* the church. Christ *alone* is the object of the sinner’s faith. This *sola* establishes the *exclusivity* of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Christ *alone* saves.
- ***Sola Fide***. This pivotal truth stood at the center of the Reformation. The Reformers referred to it as the “material principle,” because it involves the very “matter,” or heart, of what any person must do to be saved. Salvation, the Reformers contended, was applied to sinful man by repentant faith *alone*. No amount of human goodness whatsoever could merit eternal life. Faith *alone* saves.
- ***Sola Gratia***. This core principle means “by grace alone,” and expressed the truth that the unmerited favor of God in salvation is granted freely as a gift to undeserving sinners. Salvation is not a reward for the righteous, but a gift for the guilty. Sinners have no claim upon God. God owes them nothing but judgment for their sins. If He saves any, it is in spite of them, not because of them. Grace is given to those who *cannot* earn it. Grace

³ James Montgomery Boice, *Whatever Happened to the Gospel of Grace?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 63.

⁴ For a fuller discussion of the five *solas*, read *Whatever Happened to the Gospel of Grace?: Rediscovering the Doctrines That Shook the World* by James Boice, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), *The Case for Traditional Protestantism, The Solas of the Reformation*, by Terry L. Johnson (Carlisle, PA/Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2004), and *After Darkness, Light*, R. C. Sproul, Jr., editor, (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2003).

alone saves—and for the Reformers, this meant *sovereign* grace, electing grace.

- ***Soli Deo Gloria.*** This final truth means “to the glory of God alone.” All things in life and the church are to be done exclusively for the glory of God, most especially in the salvation of lost sinners. Only a salvation that is by grace *alone* through faith *alone* in Christ *alone* based upon the Scripture *alone* can bring glory to God *alone*. The entire enterprise of salvation is designed by God to create redeemed worshipers who will give honor to Him, who *alone* is worthy to be praised. This is the highest purpose in all that God does. It is to promote His own glory.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE REFORMERS AND ROME

The entire crux of the Reformation was, very simply, the vast difference between “alone” versus “and.” Where the Protestants placed *sola* (“alone”), Roman Catholic theology placed *et* (“and”). That is, for the Reformers, salvation was based upon Scripture *alone*. It was by grace *alone* through faith *alone* in Christ *alone*. But for the Catholic church, salvation was based upon Scripture *and* their tradition. Salvation was according to the Scripture *and* what the pope pontificated. Salvation was through faith *and* human works. It was in divine grace *and* the Virgin Mary, and relics, and indulgences, etc. It was in Christ *and* the church. Rome taught that both God *and* man played a contributing role in the accomplishment of salvation. Thus, Catholicism attributed salvation to the glory of God *and* the praise of man.

This was the chief difference between the Protestant Reformers and the Roman Catholics. Where Rome placed an *et* (“and”), the Reformers put a *sola* (“only”).⁵ The Reformation removed the *and* that had crept into the church over the centuries, and replaced it with *alone*. Thus, less was more in the Reformation. This movement brought the church back to the simplicity, purity, and exclusivity of the gospel of grace.

THE NEW REFORMATION WHICH MUST COME

In this present hour, we long to see God bring again a new Reformation to the church. May God use this study to establish a new commitment to these non-negotiable truths among God’s people. May the wind of God’s Spirit blow through His church, and reform and restore His work again. And may God do so to put His glory on display once again throughout the preaching, teaching, and receiving of His Word. Let us continue now to trace the Reformation to two more strategic lands—to Scotland and the Netherlands.

SCOTTISH REFORMATION

⁵ For a further discussion of the difference between the Protestant Reformation and the Roman Catholic Church, see *The Reformation's Conflict with Rome* by Robert L. Reymond (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 2001).

As the Reformation was establishing a beachhead on the European continent, it soon spread across the English Channel to Scotland. Several factors led to this expansion, the most notable being: (1) William Tyndale translated the New Testament into English at Worms, Germany (1525) and they were brought to Scotland by merchants, (2.) Martin Luther's writings were translated into English and being circulated in Scotland, especially his *Babylonian Captivity* with its criticism of the abuses of the Catholic churches, and (3) three fearless preachers, Patrick Hamilton, George Wishart, and John Knox. It is to these three powerful figures that we now turn our attention.

PATRICK HAMILTON

The first voice to be lifted up in Scotland to begin the Reformation there was that of a young man named Patrick Hamilton (c. 1503-1528). He was of royal lineage, a member of the great Hamilton family, one of Scotland's most powerful aristocratic houses. Under James III, the house of Hamilton had taken "the highest position in Scotland."⁶ Yet God had a yet higher position for him to assume in His kingdom. He was to become a preacher, a reformer and a martyr for the gospel of Christ.

1. Hamilton was born in Scotland (ca. 1503) and at the young of age fourteen traveled abroad for his education, enrolling at the University of Paris (1517). It was at this *same* time, the *very* same year, 1517, that Luther posted his Ninety-Five Theses. There he heard the heated debates on the views between the Reformers, i.e., justification by faith, and the Roman religion of Christ *and* human works.
2. Once in Europe, Hamilton eventually traveled to Wittenberg, Germany where he met Luther, attended church, heard hymns sung by fervent worshipers, and most of all, heard the great Reformer preach.
3. Hamilton then traveled to Marburg, Germany where he met with William Tyndale, the translator of the first English New Testament to be printed (1525).
4. With his native Scotland heavy upon his heart, Hamilton returned home as a twenty-three year old, burdened to preach the true gospel, a salvation by grace *alone* through faith *alone* in Christ *alone* (1527). He proclaimed throughout his native land the good news of Christ:

Christ bare our sins on His back and bought us with His blood.⁷

5. Hamilton was soon summoned by the Catholic Archbishop James Beaton to St. Andrews, where he was arrested, confined in a dungeon at the castle, charged with numerous heresies, convicted, and condemned. The life-threatening charges brought against him at his trial was that he preached:

⁶ D'Aubigue, *History of the Reformation in Europe*, Vol. 6, 12.

⁷ J. H. Merle d'Aubigue, *History of the Reformation in Europe*, Vol. 6 (London: Longmans, 1875), 50.

The corruption of sin remains in a child after baptism....[and] a man is not justified by works, but by faith alone.⁸

6. A mere twenty-four years old, Hamilton was burned at the stake for his Reformation (biblical) convictions. (1528). While attached to the stake, the fire was slow in burning, and his agonies were prolonged. In the end, he cried out:

O God, how long shall darkness cover this realm, how long wilt thou permit the tyranny of men to triumph?...Lord Jesus! Receive my spirit.⁹

7. The curiosity of the people was now aroused as to what Hamilton had taught that required such a drastic death. This only caused the gospel to spread quietly, yet successfully. Especially did the truth penetrate the middle class merchants who were rising to wealth.

GEORGE WISHART

It was not until fifteen years after the martyrdom of Hamilton (1528) that the next great preacher was to be heard in Scotland—George Wishart (ca. 1513-1546). This noted man would be the direct link to John Knox, who would establish the Protestant church in Scotland.

1. Wishart first distinguished himself as a man of remarkable scholarship at the University of Cambridge, where he embraced the Protestant faith.
2. Wishart made a trip to Switzerland, where he met with Calvin and the Reformers. This proved to solidify his thinking and deepened his resolve. As a pupil of Calvin, he also learned the value of expository preaching.
3. Returning to Scotland, Wishart was a powerful force in the pulpit. At Montrose, Dundee, Ayrshire, Haddington, he expounded the book of Romans, in a verse-by-verse style, preaching God's way of salvation for undeserving sinners exclusively through the sole work of Jesus Christ.
4. This preaching created such a stir that Wishart was barred from preaching in certain Scottish churches. He withdrew to the outdoors to preach, attracting large crowds. He surmised:

Brother, Christ Jesus is as powerful in the fields as in the kirk (church), and I find that He Himself oftener preached in the desert,

⁸ As quoted by Ian Murray in *A Scottish Christian Heritage* (Carlisle, PA/Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2006), 7.

⁹ D'Aubigue, *History of the Reformation in Europe*, Vol. 6, 69.

at the seaside, and other places judged profane, than He did in the temple of Jerusalem.¹⁰

5. A young John Knox came under the influence of Wishart's powerful preaching. Wishart became the young Scot's mentor and strong example and influence that would shape his ministry the rest of his days. Blaikie writes:

[T]heir meeting was like that of David and Jonathan, the soul of Knox was knit with the soul of Wishart, and he loved him as his own soul. Though his study of Augustine and other fathers had already taught Knox much of the doctrines of grace, it seems to have been through Wishart's preaching that the spark came that kindled his knowledge into a living flame.¹¹

6. As the times became more provocative, the threats upon Wishart's life increased. Knox became his bodyguard, ready to defend his mentor to death.

Knox loved and honoured him as his spiritual father; accompanied him in his tour in East Lothian, carrying a two-handed sword to defend him, and would have been with him when he was apprehended at the House of Ormiston.¹²

7. The dangers became too great. Wishart was soon arrested. When Knox attempted to defend him, his mentor insisted that he go back to Longniddry. Wishart said:

Return to your bairns (children, or pupils) and God bless you. One is enough for a sacrifice.¹³

8. Wishart died as did Hamilton earlier—in the same place, by the *same* way, by virtually the *same* hands. He was burned at the stake at St. Andrews by the nephew of the same Archbishop, who had earlier martyred Hamilton, David Beaton (March 1, 1546). Wishart's last words were these:

I beseech Thee Father of heaven! To forgive them that have any ignorance or else have of any evil mind forged any lies upon me: I forgive them with all my heart. I beseech Christ to forgive them

¹⁰ William G. Blaikie *The Preachers of Scotland: From the Sixth to the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2001), 50-1.

¹¹ Blaikie, *The Preachers of Scotland*, 54.

¹² *Ibid*, 54.

¹³ As quoted by David Campbell in *Travel with John Knox: In the footsteps of Scotland's great Reformer* (Leominster, England: Day One Publications, 2003), 14.

that have condemned me to death this day ignorantly.¹⁴

9. With Wishart martyred, the gospel torch was now passed to the young man who had only weeks earlier met Wishart and been greatly impacted by him, John Knox.¹⁵

JOHN KNOX

The one man most responsible to bring the Reformation to Scotland was John Knox (1513-1572), a courageous preacher of God's Word. "What Luther was to Germany, and Calvin to Geneva, John Knox was to be to Scotland."¹⁶ In its place, Knox helped establish a church in Scotland that was reformed in theology and in church government.

1. Knox was born in Haddington, Scotland, and educated at the University of Glasgow, where he was an ardent student.
2. Like Martin Luther, Knox was ordained a priest in the Catholic church, having been taught Romish dogma (1536).
3. He became a tutor in East Lothian to two gentry (untitled aristocratic) families, both known for their Protestant sympathies and protection of George Wishart.
4. George Wishart began a preaching tour in southern Scotland, the Lothians area. At that time, he met and in a relatively short time, strongly influenced Knox to the Reformed faith (December 1545-March 1, 1546).
5. Wishart was soon arrested and burned at the stake as a heretic (March 1546), thus leaving the prophet's mantle to fall to Knox, though it would be another ten years before Knox would fully step into this role. William G. Blaikie writes:

The chief result of this murder was to substitute John Knox for George Wishart, as the man of light and leading for the country.... If the life of Wishart had been spared, if he had been able to take the part of the leader of the Reformation, it is quite likely that we should have had a gentler type of religion than that with which Knox became identified. But Wishart might have been unable to cope with the difficulties of the situation. Wishart was to Knox as Stephen had been to Paul.¹⁷

¹⁴ D'Aubigne, *History of the Reformation in Europe*, Vol. 6, 244.

¹⁵ Blaikie, *The Preachers of Scotland*, 54.

¹⁶ N. R. Needham, *2000 Years of Christ's Power: Part Three: Renaissance and Reformation* (London, England: Grace Publications, 2004), 409.

¹⁷ Blaikie, *The Preachers of Scotland*, 52-3.

6. A Protestant rebellion in St. Andrews followed the martyrdom of Wishart. Knox was set apart by the Reformers as their pastor and preacher. He preached through the Gospel of John there to many in the castle at St. Andrews (1546).
7. St. Andrews came under siege by a French fleet and the Protestants were bombed into submission. Knox was captured and consigned to being a galley slave on a French battleship for the next nineteen dreadful months of intense suffering (1547-8). While on board, repeated efforts were made to bring him back into Roman Catholicism. On one occasion, a statue of Mary was given to him to be kissed, which he immediately threw overboard saying:

Trouble me not; such an idol is accursed and therefore I will not touch it...Let her save herself; she is light enough; let her learn to swim.¹⁸

8. At the instigation of the English government, Knox was released (1549) and being unsafe for him to return to the pro-Catholic rule of Scotland, went to England, now under a strong Protestant government with King Edward VI for the first time.
9. Knox, became a pastor in Berwick, England and Newcastle (1551). He so distinguished himself that he was appointed one of six Royal Chaplains to the young Edward VI, King of England. This launched him into itinerant preaching and evangelism to pursue the Reformation of the English church.
10. Unexpectedly, Edward VI at the age of sixteen died (July 6, 1553) and his sister the Roman Catholic Mary Tudor was proclaimed queen of England (July 19, 1553). Mary Tudor put an end to the Protestantism of her brother and came to be known as "Bloody Mary" for putting to death so many Protestants, almost 300 in all. Knox was forced to flee to the continent of Europe (1553). His departure troubled him:

Albeit that I have in the beginning of this battle appeared to play the feint-hearted and feeble soldier (the cause I remit to God), yet my prayer is, that I may be restored to the battle again.¹⁹

11. Knox first pastored the English congregation of Protestant refugees in Frankfurt, Germany. He then went to Geneva where he pastored the

¹⁸ S. M. Houghton, *Sketches From Church History, History* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1980, 2001), 125-126.

¹⁹ Murray, *A Scottish Christian Heritage*, 12.

English refugees. Moreover, he studied under John Calvin and found Calvin's church in Geneva to be:

The most perfect school of Christ that ever was in the earth since the days of the apostles. In other places, I confess Christ to be truly preached, but manners and religion so truly reformed, I have not yet seen in any other place.²⁰

12. While in exile in Geneva, Knox wrote his *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, denouncing three tyrant queens, Mary of Guise in Scotland, Mary Tudor in England, and Mary of Medici in France—all three of whom were suppressing the Reformation (1558).²¹ The opening sentence with which Knox began this tract is:

To promote a woman to bear rule, superiority, dominion, or empire above any realm, nation or city is repugnant to nature, contumely to God, a thing most contrarious to His revealed will and approved ordinance, and finally it is the subversion of good order, or all equity and justice.²²

13. When Mary Tudor—"Bloody Mary"—died (June 1559), Knox was summoned back to Scotland after an absence of twelve years (1547-1559). Knox returned, a fiery prophet, to become minister of Edinburgh, which he continued until his death (1559-72). With zeal for God's glory, he pled with Him:

Give me Scotland or I die.²³

14. During Knox's absence from Scotland, a ban had been issued against owning or reading Tyndale's New Testament. The English Bible had been ordered to be a closed book. Nevertheless, the truth triumphed. Upon his return, Knox discovered the following:

Their tyranny notwithstanding, the knowledge of God did wonderously increase within this realm, partly by reading, partly

²⁰ Houghton, *Sketches From Church History*, History, 126.

²¹ Needham explains, "By 'regiment,' Knox meant 'government,' and by 'monstrous' he meant 'unnatural.'" *2000 Years of Christ's Power*, Vol. III, 411. "Monstrous Regiment" means "unnatural government." Heinze, *Reform and Conflict*, 454.

²² John Knox, "The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women," in *Christian History* 46 (1995): 20.

²³ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Matthew 1-7* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1985), 113.

by brotherly conference, which in those dangerous days was used to the comfort of many.²⁴

15. The Scottish Parliament met (1560) and Knox's influence prevailed. It voted to end the rule of the pope over the Scottish church. The Mass was declared to be illegal, all statutes against heretics were repealed, the Scottish Confession of Faith—drafted by Knox and five other leading Reformers—was accepted. Roman Catholic teaching and practice was forbidden. One observer noted of Knox:

Others snipped at the branches of Popery; but he strikes at the roots, to destroy the whole.²⁵

16. But *another* Mary—Mary of Guise—was made the Regent of Scotland. She was married to the French king, Francis II, and living in France. Mary of Guise refused to ratify the legislation of the Scottish Parliament. When her husband, the king of France, died, she returned to her native Scotland as sovereign. She was now Mary Queen of Scots, she was not only very bright, articulate, and persuasive, but she was also very Catholic.

17. With her presence now in Edinburgh, the leading nobles of the Protestant cause suddenly defected. They even defended her “divine right” as the Queen of Scotland to have Mass in the royal palace of Holyrood in Edinburgh. But Knox declared the idolatry of the Mass for what it was:

The permission of that odious idol, the Mass, by such as have professed themselves enemies to the same, does hourly threaten a sudden plague.²⁶

18. Mary Queen of Scots considered Knox to be “the most dangerous man in the country.” From his pulpit, only blocks from the royal palace, Knox openly condemned her, at St. Giles Church the Mass, and her proposed marriage to Don Carlos, son of Philip II of Spain, “justly fearing for the future of Protestantism in Scotland.”²⁷

19. Mary Queen of Scots was enraged. She summoned Knox into the palace, demanding that he give an account of himself. “What are *you* within this Commonwealth?” she chided. But the Scottish Reformer preached boldly to her. In four famous encounters, Knox strongly denounced the Mass,

²⁴John Knox, *Works of John Knox*, Vol. 4, edited by David Laing, (Edinburgh: Bannayne Society, 1846-1864), 240.

²⁵Herman, *How the Scots Invented the Modern World*, 13.

²⁶Laing, *Works of John Knox*, Vol. 6, 130.

²⁷David Campbell, *Travel with John Knox*, 98.

reducing her to “hysterical tears.” He also rebuked the other unbiblical doctrines of the Roman Church. Knox thundered:

I have learned plainly and boldly to call wickedness by its own terms, a fig a fig, and a spade a spade....One Mass is more fearful to me than if 10,000 armed enemies were landed in any part of the realm.²⁸

20. For this, Knox was put on trial by Mary and tried for treason. But the Reformer was acquitted.
21. Under political pressure, Mary Queen of Scots was deposed from her throne. Her infant son, James VI—later to become King James I of England, the same of the King James Version of the Bible (1567)—was appointed the king of Scotland. John Knox preached his coronation service, and Mary fled to England.
22. But James VI was not old enough to rule. Until then the Earl of Moray became Regent of Scotland, ruling until the young King was of age. The Earl was a friend of Knox and, thus, made it safe for Protestantism.
23. A party in Scotland remained intent in working on Mary’s restoration to the throne. The Earl was assassinated by pro-Mary forces (1570), and civil war broke out. Tensions became so great that Knox was forced to withdraw to St. Andrews to preach.
24. Knox returned to Edinburgh for his last days. Upon his death bed he read Calvin’s sermons on the book of Ephesians, under which he had sat in earlier days. He then asked his wife to read to him John 17 “where I first cast my anchor.”
25. Knox died in Edinburgh (November 24, 1572), the founding architect of the Presbyterian Church as the national church of Scotland. As he was buried in Edinburgh, the Regent of Scotland spoke these long remembered words:

There lies one who feared no man nor flattered any flesh.²⁹

26. His chief, most famous work, the *History of the Reformation of Religion Within the Realm of Scotland*, was published posthumously (1587).

²⁸ As quoted by S. M. Houghton, *Sketches From Church History* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1980, 2001), 128.

²⁹ Needham, *2000 Years of Christ’s Power*, Vol. III, 426.

SPURGEON: “KNOX’S GOSPEL IS MY GOSPEL”

If we are to see a new Reformation in our day, we must come back to the same, old message that once shook Scotland so long ago. It is not *new methods* that we need, but the *old message*. It is not *new trends* that need to be imported into the church, but *old truths*. The church is always in search of a *new methodology*, when what is needed is an *old theology*. Let us come back to the five *solas* of the Reformation. Let us return to the doctrines of grace. Only then will we see a new Reformation in our day.

During the days of the ministry of Charles H. Spurgeon, he witnessed the decline of the church all about him. The church had turned to entertainment and theatre to revive its work and increase its vitality. Spurgeon saw it for what it was. It was the futile attempt of the church to do God’s work the world’s way, and such will never know the blessing and power of God. God’s work must be done God’s way for God’s glory if it is to have God’s favor. Rather than capitulate to the trendy methods of the hour, Charles Spurgeon remained faithful to the *old truths* of Scripture to the *old message* of the Word, to the *old theology* of the Reformation, and it was wonderfully blessed by God. Without equivocation, Spurgeon announced:

The old truth that Calvin preached, that Augustine preached, that Paul preached, is the truth that I must preach today, or else be false to my conscience and my God. I cannot shape the truth; I know of no such thing as paring off the rough edges of a doctrine. John Knox’s gospel is my gospel. That which thundered through Scotland must thunder through England again.³⁰

Soli Deo Gloria.

³⁰ Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Doctrines of Grace* (Pasadena, TX: Pilgrim Publications, 1981), 1.