



December 2007

John Knox and the Role of the Commanality

Janine Van Vliet

University of Pennsylvania, jvvliet@sas.upenn.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.upenn.edu/phr>

Recommended Citation

Van Vliet, Janine (2007) "John Knox and the Role of the Commanality," *Penn History Review*. Vol. 15 : Iss. 1 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://repository.upenn.edu/phr/vol15/iss1/4>

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. <https://repository.upenn.edu/phr/vol15/iss1/4>
For more information, please contact repository@pobox.upenn.edu.

JOHN KNOX AND THE ROLE OF THE COMMONALTY

Janine Van Vliet

Since his death in 1572, the works of Scottish reformer John Knox have been analyzed unceasingly by historians. Historiography has deemed Knox an inflammatory, tactless preacher who is best remembered for his work *The First Blast Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558), in which women are characterized as unfit to rule.¹ To concentrate on the gender issue alone in his *First Blast*, however, is merely to skim the surface of Knox's true intentions. His ideas regarding gender were neither new nor radical; in fact, even his enemies agreed with him. What was unique was Knox's solution to the problem of ungodly, Catholic monarchs. Instead of depending passively on the will of God, he believed that the nobility and commonalty had a responsibility to depose of such rulers. Although he was not alone in his political theories to strip power away from the monarchs, Knox's theory is by far the most radical in its insistence that the commonalty of a nation is to assist the nobility in determining its political and religious proceedings. In examining the works of Knox in the context of his contemporaries', as well as its immediate effects on the Scottish Reformation of 1559-1560, it will become evident that Knox's proposed involvement of the commonalty was unheard of at the time, provoking a visibly reduced role of the monarch and new ideas regarding egalitarianism.

Perhaps a brief introduction to Knox himself is in order. Born in Scotland in 1514, Knox was educated at St. Andrews University and became an ordained priest. From very early on in his career, however, Knox preached vehemently against the Pope and encouraged reform in the church liturgy. Under the Protestant king Edward VI, Knox preached against kneeling during communion and advocated changes to the 1552 Prayer Book. Well known as a Protestant royal chaplain, Knox encountered difficulties with the death of Edward and the accession of his half-sister, Mary Tudor, to the throne in late 1553. Determined to bring her country back to the Catholic Church, Mary encouraged Protestants to go abroad (or reconvert), and at the beginning of 1554 Knox left England for the Continent. During his time abroad, he maintained close connections in both England and Scotland, as

shall be seen in his letters and writings.²

To understand Knox's theories regarding the role of the people, it is helpful first to examine his opinion of the monarchy itself, most clearly expressed in a letter to his faithful congregants in England written shortly after his departure into exile. This *Faythfull Admonition* was written in 1554 to the "professours of Gods truthe in England," to encourage them to stay strong in their faith.³ Here, Knox's ideas concerning the role of kings are provocative. He describes ungodly, or Catholic, rulers as tyrants, "subjecte to obey the Devel, their prince and father" and then goes on to state that "[the devil] worketh in the children of unbeliefe, because he styrreth them to trouble Goddes elect." Knox deemed Catholic monarchs as being influenced by the devil, and therefore unfit to have complete control over the people. They do have a purpose, however, Knox explains in a prayer: "O Lorde! those cruel tyrauntes are loused by thy hande, to punish our former ingratitude, whom, we trust, thou wilt not suffer to prevail forever; but when thou haste corrected us a lyle...then wilt thou breake their jawe-bones."⁴ The tyrannical ruler had a very clear role: he (or she) was sent from God to punish the people for their ingratitude and willful disobedience, in order to correct their behavior and beliefs.

With the *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, Knox continued his argument concerning the ungodly ruler. Published just months before her death in 1558, the *First Blast* was written in reaction to the reign of Mary I, who had been ruling England for four years. In those years, she married Philip II, Catholic king of Spain, and martyred hundreds of Protestants. At the same time, Scotland was being ruled by Mary of Guise, a Catholic regent.⁵ Writing with these women in mind, Knox painted a drastic picture of the "unnaturalness" of women's rule, yet his argument does not end there. In earlier writings, Knox had been willing to acknowledge the involvement of God in the appointment of ungodly monarchs; here, in his *First Blast*, Knox took away all involvement of God in choosing the monarch. He states that, "*in despite* of God (he of his just judgement so geving them over in to a reprobat minde) may a realm, I confesse, exalt up a woman to that monstiferous honor."⁶ Furthermore, not only was she appointed by men and not God, but men's decision itself went expressly against the will of God. By turning her divine calling into an unrighteous earthly one, Knox denied Mary the supreme power she could claim if it were indeed the will of God that had given her the crown. Instead, he handed over all responsibility of her ascension to the people. Ultimately, because men were able to raise up their own ruler "in despite of God," the integrity of the kingship itself was being questioned and Knox was able to completely down-

play the divine nature of kings, and therefore, the power a king should hold in the commonwealth. Finally, by calling into question this position, Knox prepared the way for a shift of power, away from worldly, men-appointed, abusive monarchs to everyone else: the nobles and the commonalty.

Unfortunately for Knox, he published his *First Blast* at exactly the wrong moment. Soon after its publication, Mary Tudor died, leaving the throne to her Protestant half-sister Elizabeth who was very offended by what she saw as Knox's tirade against women rulers. John Aylmer, bishop of London, was anxious to repair the tactlessness of Knox's tract. In April of 1559, he published *An Harborowe for Faithfull and Trewe Subjectes* in order to defend Elizabeth's right to rule.⁷ Interestingly, his disagreements with Knox did not, however, relate to Knox's position on the inferiority of women. In fact, he agrees, stating that "in a woman is witte, understanding, and as Aristotle saith the same vertues that be in a man, savinge that they differ...that is, moore in the man then in the woman...we can pul from them that they be not strong of body, or commonly so couragious in minde." Instead, Aylmer took issue with the outright denial of the power of the monarch. He comments that "[God] sendeth a woman by birth, we may not refuse hir by violence." Ultimately, he concludes that "therefore the safest waye is, to let [God] do his will, whiche can do best, which can see plainely that wil folowe it, where we blyndly gesse and do but grope at it." Men could not determine the will of God, Aylmer maintained; they were solely dependant on God to provide for them and were not to interfere with his work. Man's duty was not to overthrow monarchs. Instead, "Let us do our dutie bi trusting [God], and he wyl do his, by helping us."⁸ The people, in Aylmer's theory, had a passive responsibility towards God simply to trust in him.

But Knox's ideas left no room for the people to be passive. Both the nobility and commonalty had a role to play; Knox intended that the nobility, in the absence of kings, would take on a new role of leadership within the political realm. This can be seen in a letter written in 1558 to the nobility and estates, or Parliament, of Scotland. Knox had been accused of Protestant practices in Scotland and excommunicated by the Catholic Church after having returned to Geneva. After this sentence was pronounced (handing him over to secular authorities to be killed), Knox wrote *The Appellation of John Knox* to Parliament requesting their help, knowing that they were capable of reversing the sentence. In his appeal, Knox refers to the Parliament as the "laufull powers by God appointed" and a "laufull and generall Council...princes in that people." He describes their role: "ye whome God hath appointed heades in your comunewelth, with single eye do studie to promote the glorie of God, to provide that your subjects be rightly instructed

in his true religion.”⁹ It is the members of Parliament, and not the regent, whom Knox deemed to be the lawful rulers, appointed by God with the purpose of providing their subjects with the true religion.

Not only were they to care for the people entrusted to them, but the nobility also had a very assertive role to play in dealing with the tyranny of monarchs. While they were to be like loving fathers towards their subjects, towards the rulers Knox makes their responsibilities clear: it is the “duetie of every man in his vocation, *but chfefely of the Nobilitie*, which is joyned with theyr Kinges, to bridel and repress theyr folie and blind rage.” Because the members of the nobility were closest to the ruler, they held the greatest influence over him and could warn him when he was going astray or going against the will of God. It was also their responsibility to remove and punish with death (“if the crime so require”) all those that “deceave the people, or defraude them of that foode of theyre soules.”¹⁰ Ultimately, the nobility had a charge to take care of their subjects by deposing of rulers and religious leaders who intended to deceive them.

These theories that downplay the importance and divinity of the monarch are not only attributable to Knox. With the onset of the Reformation across Europe, Protestants everywhere looked to theologians and clergymen to direct them in whom to obey: God or their monarch. Universal ideas regarding the divinity of kingship were challenged when people found that their monarch’s decrees conflicted with their personal beliefs regarding God and practices of worship. It was many people’s first experience with divergent opinions in practices of religion and laws of the state; for centuries, these two areas of life had coexisted peacefully, supporting each other and providing the people with clear instruction. Many other Protestant writers and ministers discussed similar theories in an attempt to comfort and provide direction to their oftentimes lost and confused congregations, and a brief examination of Knox’s theories in light of his contemporaries’ will prove helpful to this study.

The aspect of Knox’s theory most consistent with that of his contemporaries was his assigning power to the nobility. Christopher Goodman, Knox’s good friend and fellow exile during the reign of Mary I, agreed with Knox in his *How Superior Powers Oght to be Obeyd* (1558). He states that “all will confesse that it chiefly belongeth to inferior Magistrats to see a redresse in such disordres: and they themselves can not well deny it.”¹¹ Later, he comments that though all people may have certain duties to perform, it is the “Rulers and Governours” to whom “it chieflie apperteyneth to their office to see it executed, for which cause they are made Rulers.”¹² The nobility had been given power, Goodman states, in order to fulfill the duties

appointed to them concerning ungodly rulers. It is not only English Protestants who agreed with Knox. Francois Hotman and Philippe du Plessis-Mornay, two Huguenot writers, had very similar ideas concerning the nobility. In his *Franco gallia* (1573), Hotman argued that the crown must be checked, and it was the States General of France that was charged with this duty of keeping the legislative actions of the government within the limits imposed by *la religion* and *la justice*. Furthermore, it was the “authoritative decision” of the Estates that elected the king, who is described as “chosen by the votes of the people.”¹³ Mornay, in his *Defence* of 1579, observes that God had ordained not kings alone, but “magistrates below the king” to rule with him and ensure that he was fulfilling his duties. If the king began to fall away, it was the responsibility of the “inferior magistrates” to take action against him.¹⁴

Whereas most political theories of resistance transferred much of the king’s power to the nobility, Knox’s theory allows resistance by others as well. He agreed that the nobility were in charge of caring for the physical and, more importantly, the spiritual wellbeing of their subjects, while at the same time monitoring closely the activities of the ruler to ensure that he was carrying out the will of God. Knox, however, believed that the nobility were not alone in this endeavor. Not content with giving power just to the nobility, Knox grouped the nobility and the commonalty together, stating that “it is not only lawful to punish to the death such as labour to subvert the true Religion, but the Magistrates *and people* are bound to do so, onles they wil provoke the wrath of God against themselves.”¹⁵ In treating the nobility and the commonalty equally here, Knox stepped away from most of his contemporaries in developing a theory with which others such as Mornay and Hotman would in fact disagree.

Knox was adamant that the commonalty of Scotland and England were to have a voice in protecting the true religion and in securing proper biblical teaching from their rulers. Not only were they to aid the nobility by overthrowing the monarch (if necessary), but they were also given great responsibility regarding all aspects of religion. In his 1558 letter to the “Commonalty of Scotland,” Knox emphasized the corruption of the religious institutions in Scotland, making it clear that the people were in charge of their own religious training and had the right to voice their demands to the clergymen and bishops. Despite their status as commoners (lacking money and influence), Knox states that he would not “that ye should esteme the Reformation and care of Religion lesse to appertain to you, because ye are no Kinges, Rulers, Judges, Nobils, nor in auctoritie.” Instead, “in the hope of the life to come [God] hath made all equall;” therefore, they too had responsibilities. They needed to be “carefull and diligent,” patiently listening

to and examining the doctrines they heard. The people had the power to “lawfully require of [their] superiours, be it of [their] King, be it of [their] Lordes, rulers, and powers, that they provide for [them] true Preachers.” If they did not perform these duties, the people could “provide true teachers for [themselves]...them [they] may maintaine and defend against all that shall persecute them.”¹⁶ These duties were responsibilities the people had to themselves and to each other, in order to maintain the true religion.

This duty could become violent, if necessary. In *A Brief Exhortation to England*, written in 1559 (when Protestantism had just been reinstated by Elizabeth), Knox again outlines the responsibility of the people: “you muste at once so purge and expel all dregs of Papistrie, superstition, and idolatrie; that thow, O England! must judge and holde execrable and accursed.”¹⁷ The people should not, Knox insisted, merely listen and obey their superiors. They were the ones who needed to make decisions regarding religion, in matters of worship and practice; furthermore, if the people ignored their duties it would result in a punishment equal to those who deliberately went against God’s will. Inaction with the excuse of “We were but simple subjects, we could not redresse the faultes and crimes of our rulers, byshoppes, and clergie” would not be tolerated; instead, those who unwittingly aided the enemy would be counted as one of them when God returns to judge all people.¹⁸

Along with their responsibilities in all aspects of their own religious lives, as subjects, the commonalty also had a very powerful part to play with regards to the monarchy itself. In the *Exhortation*, Knox states that all were implicated in the evil work of Mary:

It is you all together, who most cruelly have shede the blood of a number of your brethren and sisters... There is no person giltles in God’s presence... none of you hath done your duetie, none hath remembered his office and charge, whiche was, to have resisted to the uttermost of your powers that impietie in the beginning.¹⁹

As subjects of England, every person had a civil duty and moral obligation to resist unrighteous monarchs. Knox was handing power over to the individual by stating that everyone had not only the capability, but also the responsibility, to resist ungodly rulers. This is seen also in the *First Blast*, where Knox states that both the “Nobilitie and Estates” and, more generally, “the People that hath bene blinded,” had a responsibility to their country and to God. It was their job to repent for having obeyed the tyrant, and then, “without further delay, to remove from authority all such persones as by

usurpation, violence, or tyrannie, do possesse the same.” Taking it one step further, Knox reassured them that it was also permissible to “execute against them the sentence of death” those that “presume to defende that impietie.”²⁰

It is here that Knox stood alone. By expressly allowing the commonalty to rise up against rulers, he went further in his resistance theories than almost all of his contemporaries. Hotman, in his second edition of the *Francogallia* (published in 1576) was careful to clarify a phrase in the first edition that could have been misconstrued as granting power to the people. He had stated that it was “the authoritative decision and desire of the people” to elect the monarch. In the second edition, he defines the people as being not everyone, but “the orders, or as we are now accustomed to say, of the Estates.”²¹ It was these representatives of the people who had power, and Hotman avoided completely bestowing real powers onto the commonalty. Mornay, too, in discussing “people,” actually refers to “those who receive authority from the people, that is, the magistrates below the king who have been elected by the people... These take the place of the people assembled as a whole.”²² Both men are sure to clarify that the people as a whole have no part in resistance.

Knox’s resistance theories have made some very bold claims. In examining his actual experiences with the people and laws of both England and Scotland from the 1540s to the Scottish Reformation of 1559-1560, it is apparent that Knox’s radical beliefs were not restricted to paper; Knox desired to see his theories come to fruition. When the Earl of Arran took over as regent in 1542, he expressed interest in books written in the vernacular and sparked a “general enthusiasm” in Scotland that led Parliament to legalize the reading of the Bible in English and Scots.²³ Knox described the process in detail in his *History of the Reformation in Scotland* (published posthumously in 1587). Earlier law had stated “that under pane of heresy, no man should reade any parte of the Scriptures in the Engliss tounge, nether yitt any tractat or expositioun of any place of Scripture.” The decision to allow reading of the Bible in the vernacular was a major step for the Protestant church because it enabled all people – regardless of their social standing or gender – to read the Bible for themselves. More importantly, each person could compare the teaching of the clergy with the actual words of the Bible, a duty that was described many times in Knox’s letters. He describes the results happily: “by Acte of Parliament, it was maid free *to all man and woman* to reid the Scriptures in thair awin tounge, or in the Engliss tounge.” In fact, Knox really did mean all people. In describing the change of situation in Scotland, he hoped that “then mycht have bene sein the Byble lying almaist upoun everie gentilmanis table. The New Testament was borne about in many manis han-

des.” Now, it was possible for the wealthier people to own a copy of the Bible, and for others to at least own part of it. The result, to Knox, was clear: “yitt thairby did the knowledge of God wonderouslie increase, and God geve his Holy Spreit to sempill men in great abundance.”²⁴ Knowledge and belief were spreading, and furthermore, with the availability of Bibles in the Scottish tongue, the people could now carry out their religious responsibilities by examining the Bible and testing their clergymen to ensure that they were being taught correctly. The vernacular Bible could be seen as the first step in Knox’s plan to give the people power.

Another major advancement towards Knox’s proposed political order occurred in December of 1557, when the Band of the Lords of the Congregation was created. By signing a bond, this group of nobles committed to work against Catholicism and the monarchs who propagated it.²⁵ Knox defines them as men who decided to “commit thame selfis, and whatsoever God had gevin unto thame, in his handis, rather than thei wold suffer idolatrie so manifestlie to regne.”²⁶ At this stage, however, the group was not able to accomplish much. England was still ruled by Mary Tudor and no one else abroad was willing to aid them in their cause.

The death of Mary in 1558 allowed for the Lords of the Congregation to commence their military resistance and Knox himself became involved in their campaigning. When the town of Perth was threatened by French forces under the direction of Mary of Guise in May of 1559, Knox and his congregation wrote a letter to the nobles, appealing for their aid. Alexander, Earl of Glencarne and one of the original signatories of the Band of 1557, responded first. He declared that “I will, by Goddis grace, see my bretherin in Sanct Johnestoun [Perth],” which in turn persuaded many other men to go as well.²⁷ Clearly Knox was well known among the Lords; Knox even traveled and worked directly with them. In June of 1559, the Earl of Argyll (another original member of the Band) and Lord James traveled to St. Andrews, “for Reformatioun to be maid thair.” They “brought in thair company Johne Knox,” and in the events that followed it is clear that the Lords were intimately connected with Knox and, in a way, responsible for him.²⁸

Knox, in his *History*, relates the story of their stay in St. Andrews. When the bishop heard that Knox had come, he realized that the men were there to “make” a Reformation. Quickly, he “assembled his colleges and confederat fellowis...accompayned with a hundreth spearis, of mynd to have stopped Johne Knox to have preached.” In the very next sentence, the *History* describes not Knox’s own reactions to their approach, but that of the Lords. Being “accompayned with thair quyet housholdis” alone, they feared the strength of the bishop, especially considering that the town itself “had not

gevin profession of Christ, and thairfor could nocht the Lordis be assured of thair freindschip.” Because of Knox’s company, the Lords now had to consider the possibility of a military endeavor. After hearing the bishop’s case against Knox, they discussed the issue of his preaching with Knox himself, wanting “that his awin judgement might be had.”²⁹ The close relationship between Knox and the Lords is evident: the Lords were associated with Knox, were willing to maintain this association despite the trouble it caused, and, in addition, respected what he had to say.³⁰ This was the kind of leadership Knox had envisioned for Scotland. The nobility were truly taking up their role as “lauffull powers by God appointed,” making marked changes in the political and religious spheres of Scotland.³¹

At the same time as Knox’s hopes for the nobility were being realized, the commonalty was also embracing their responsibility. The people were beginning to resist Mary of Guise, doing their part to “purge and expel all dregs of Papistrie, superstition, and idolatrie,”³² most memorably in the town of Perth in May, 1559. Perth, having newly “embrace[d] the trewth,” had come under the scrutiny of Mary, who tried to order that “all suche religioun thare” be oppressed. All the preachers of Perth were summoned to a meeting, and Knox, hearing the news, hurried in from Edinburgh on the second of May, “that he might be permitted to assist his brethrein, and to geve confession of his faith with thame.”³³

Knox assisted his brethren by preaching one of his most infamously inflammatory sermons. On the tenth of May, while the preachers were all away at the meeting, he preached vehemently “how odious was idolatrie...what commandiment [God] had gevin for the destructioun of the monumentis thair of; what idolatrie and what abhominatioun was in the Messe.” Again, Knox’s explicit exhortation to the commonalty to take control and change their religious misdirection is clear. Although downplayed in his *History*, it must have been a powerful sermon, for the result was a full-out riot of the commoners. The people destroyed all the “monumentis of idolatrie” in the church and then proceeded to destroy and steal from two well-established monasteries, of the Grey (Franciscan) and Black (Dominican) Friars.³⁴

It is ambiguous whether Knox was actually happy with the result of his preaching. He states that “the multitud was so enflammed, that neyther could the exhortatioun of the precheare, nor the commandiment of the magistrat, stay thame from distroying of the places of idolatrie.”³⁵ Here, for the first time, Knox seems to have some doubt about the power he had bestowed so liberally onto the people. This is evident by how he distances himself from the people by referring to himself as the “precheare” who tried to stop the masses from destroying the statues. This hesitation is also apparent in

his description of the events themselves. The people are referred to as “the hole multitude...not of the gentlemen, neyther of thame that war earnest professouris, bot of the raschall multitude.” This “raschall multitude” “did run without deliberatioun” to the houses of the friars, where they first destroyed the statues and other “idolotarie” and then sought “some spoile.”³⁶ The commonalty seemed beyond the control of even Knox and it is unclear whether he really approved of this violent behavior, despite its coherence to his charge to abolish popery and idolatry.

The riots at Perth were a direct result of the fiery preaching of Knox, who incited the crowd to take matters into their own hands by telling them that it was in their power to change the situation. Knox obviously meant for that message to be conveyed, and though he seems to doubt himself in the *History*, this hesitation is contradicted in a letter written at the end of June to his faithful friend, Mrs. Anna Lock. Knox told her all about the happenings at Perth, but this time in a much more positive light. Here, he counted himself as one of the people and constantly referred to them as “the brethrein.” His powerful sermon was not even mentioned; instead, all the blame for the violent iconoclasm was placed on Mary and her “deceitfull sentence” regarding the exile of the preachers. The iconoclasm itself is outlined in a positive light: “the brethrein...putt to their hands to reformatioun in Sanct Jounstoun, where the places of idolatrie...were made equall with the ground.”³⁷ Knox now seemed more comfortable with the occurrences, perhaps because he was relating them to a close friend, instead of the *History*. In this uncharacteristic indecisiveness, however, Knox’s hesitancy to accept the actions of the commonalty suggests his uneasiness at their display of power, although it is a clear playing out of his own theories. In this situation, the people accepted the responsibility Knox had thrust upon them and fulfilled what he defined as their duties as subjects of Scotland.

Just a month later, in June of 1559, the Lords and Knox were presented with a similar situation in St. Andrews. After his eventful arrival detailed above, Knox preached on the eleventh of June. This time, he spoke specifically against buyers and sellers in the temple of God and the result was the same. Knox states that “the magistratis, the Provest and Bailies, as the communaltie for the most parte, within the town, did aggree to remove all monumentis of idolatrie.” After this second, more peaceful, “reformatioun” was made, the Lords finally prepared for a military encounter with the army of the Queen at Cowper.³⁸

All of these events were unfolding according to plan and Knox was pleased with their progress. To Mrs. Anna Lock, Knox described excitedly that “for now, fortie dayes and moe, hath my God used my tongue in my na-

tive countrie, to the manifestatioun of his glorie...the thirst of the poore people, als weill as of the nobilitie heir, is wonderous great.”³⁹ He was, ultimately, well satisfied with the progress of the reformation in Scotland and, at the same time, recognized the work still needed to be done for all people, commonalty and nobility alike. While the impact of his theories can be seen in the years of the Scottish Reformation itself, Knox’s work should also be examined within a broader historical context; the influence of his ideas stretch well beyond the Scottish commonalty of the 1560s. In giving the people this power, Knox formed an argument for the equality of all, something that his contemporaries were trying to avoid.

This notion of equality is clearly discussed by Knox in his *Appellation* to the nobility. While Knox plainly emphasized the responsibilities the nobles had towards their subjects, he also ensured that the nobles remembered that their subjects were in fact “your brethren, to whom nature, nevertheless, *hath made you lyke in all points*.”⁴⁰ Ultimately, all people were equal. They were brethren in the faith and the nobles were not to abuse their powers as tyrannical rulers were known to do. “God hath not placed you above your brethren to reigne as tyrantes without respect of theyre profit and commoditie,” he warned. Instead, they had been placed above merely to care for their brethren. They were to act as loving fathers towards their subjects and were to work with them in overthrowing unrighteous rulers. Not only was everyone equal, but all were bound to these duties – not just as brethren in faith but also as subjects of a Protestant monarch (in this case, England). In the *Exhortation*, Knox stated that “none hath remembered his office and charge, whiche was, to have resisted to the uttermost of your powers that impietie in the beginning.”⁴¹ Everyone, as a subject, was to fight against Catholicism.

Knox’s ideas continued to flourish well past his death in 1572. With the ascension of Charles I to the throne in 1625, the Scottish church was confronted with a monarch who attempted to assimilate the Church of Scotland into the (much less Calvinist) Church of England. In 1637, Charles introduced a new Prayer Book that was, in essence, that of the Anglican Church. Finally, the Scots took action under the leadership of Scottish minister Alexander Henderson in the Scots Bishops’ Wars of 1638-1640.⁴² In 1638 the National Covenant was written, which included a list of obligations that each signatory – all nobles, clergy, and commoners – was bound to perform, mainly “to resist the innovations and evils recently introduced into the Kirk.” Initially presented to a group of nobles and barons in Edinburgh, the Covenant was soon copied and carried into towns and villages throughout the whole country for everyone to sign. This led to a General As-

sembly where traditions of the Church of England that had been imposed on Scotland were refuted in an attempt to return to the post-Reformation status of the Scottish church.⁴³ The next year, Henderson published *The remonstrance of the nobility, barons, burgesses, ministers, and commons, within the kingdom of Scotland* in an attempt to raise more support against Charles. Knox's influence is clear – it is not only the nobles who are called to action; rather, all people are being informed and included as citizens whose duty it is to protect their country and religion.

Knox created a new political structure in which both the nobility and commonalty were to work together to abolish ungodly monarchs and idolatry, while, at the same time, treating each other as brethren, understanding that “in the hope of the life to come [God] hath made all equall.”⁴⁴ Few contemporaries agreed with his radical ideas regarding the commonalty; Mornay scoffed, “do you really mean... that the entire multitude, that many-headed monster, should go rushing into matters of this sort like a raging flood? Can order be expected from the mob?”⁴⁵ Order might not come of the commonalty seizing control, as was seen in the Perth riot, but Knox believed that each person had the right and furthermore, the obligation, to demand sound teaching and godly monarchs. While this theory could be seen as merely another strain of Protestant individualism, it is accompanied by a clear understanding of the cooperation required of all people – regardless of social status or position in society. This was truly to be a collective effort, involving everyone within a community – whether that community be a parish or a country. Moreover, the implications of his work were not limited to those few years; instead, as the common people began to embrace their rights in the political and religious spheres of governance, in turn there began the development of ideas of egalitarianism and the notion of people as citizens rather than merely subjects of a realm.⁴⁶

ENDNOTES

¹ See Amanda Shepard, *Gender and Authority in Sixteenth-Century England* (Keele, 1994), also Jane Dawson, “John Knox”, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [database online]; accessed 5 October 2006.

² Dawson, “John Knox.”

³ John Knox, *A Faythfull admonition made by Iohn Knox, unto the professours of Gods truthe in England*, in *The Works of John Knox*, David Laing, ed. (Edinburgh, 1846-55), hereafter referred to as *Works*, III : 254, 257.

⁴ *Works*, III: 285-6.

⁵ Dawson, “John Knox.”

⁶ *Works*, IV: 391, emphasis added.

- ⁷ Brett Usher, 'Aylmer, John (1520/21–1594)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [database online]; accessed 26 November 2006.
- ⁸ John Aylmer, *An Harborowe for Faithfull and Trewe Subjectes* (London, 1559), in Early English Books Online [database online]; accessed 30 October 2006, C4, C, B2v, L4v.
- ⁹ *Works*, IV: 464, 467, 469, 480.
- ¹⁰ *Works*, IV: 483, 497, 482, emphasis added.
- ¹¹ Christopher Goodman, *How Superior Powers Oght to be Obeyd* (Geneva, 1558), 145, noted by Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Volume Two* (Cambridge, 1978), 235.
- ¹² Goodman, 182. These duties of the rulers and governors here specifically refer to the execution of false prophets. The rulers are charged to "take evill from amongst [the people]."
- ¹³ Skinner, 310-1, Francois Hotman, *Francogallia*, trans. J.H.M. Salmon and ed. Ralph E. Giesey (Cambridge, 1972), 231, 233.
- ¹⁴ Philippe du Plessis-Mornay, *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* (Basel, 1579), in Julian H. Franklin, *Constitutionalism and Resistance in the Sixteenth Century* (New York, 1969), 149, Skinner, 326.
- ¹⁵ *Works*, IV: 507, emphasis added.
- ¹⁶ *Works*, IV: 526-7, 532, 534.
- ¹⁷ *Works*, V: 515.
- ¹⁸ *Letter to the Commonalty*, in *Works*, IV: 535.
- ¹⁹ *Works*, V: 497, 513.
- ²⁰ *Works*, IV: 415-6.
- ²¹ Hotman, 231.
- ²² Franklin, 149, noted by Skinner, 331.
- ²³ Jenny Wormald, *Court, Kirk, and Community* (London, 1981), 104.
- ²⁴ *Works*, I: 98, 100-1, emphasis added.
- ²⁵ Wormald, 111.
- ²⁶ *Works*, I: 273-4.
- ²⁷ *Works*, I: 329, 335.
- ²⁸ *Works*, I: 347.
- ²⁹ *Works*, I: 347-8.
- ³⁰ See also Ian Cowan, *The Scottish Reformation* (New York, 1982), for more information on the Lords of the Congregation and their activity in 1559, particularly pages 115-118.
- ³¹ *Works*, IV: 467.
- ³² *Works*, V: 515.
- ³³ *Works*, I: 316-8.
- ³⁴ *Works*, I: 322.
- ³⁵ *Works*, VI: 21; I: 320, 319.
- ³⁶ *Works*, I: 322-3.
- ³⁷ *Works*, VI: 23.
- ³⁸ *Works*, I: 349-350, 352, noted by David Hay Fleming, ed., *The Register of St. Andrews Kirk Session, Part 1* (Edinburgh, 1889), 16.
- ³⁹ *Works*, VI: 26.
- ⁴⁰ *Works*, IV: 481, emphasis added.
- ⁴¹ *Works*, IV: 481, 483; V: 513.
- ⁴¹ J.H.S. Burleigh, *A Church History of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1988), 210, 214.

⁴³ Burleigh, 218-220.

⁴⁴ *Letter to the Commonalty of Scotland*, in *Works*, IV: 527.

⁴⁵ Franklin, 149.

⁴⁶ The development of Knox's thought can be seen as far into the future as the American Revolution, where the notion of republican governance – for the people, by the people – was fully realized in the overthrowing of the British monarch in 1781.