

His Grave Is Under A Parking Lot!

Scotland is filled with history and lore. The interest it has in preserving its past, and telling the story of its valiant defenses through the ages is inspiring. The Scottish people are a proud people, and rightly so. Their land is rugged, yet beautiful. They love to sport their tartans, kilts and regalia.

To hear the history of the Scots is awe inspiring in any age. Of particular interest to those in churches of Christ must be the period of the Scottish Reformation. Mary, Queen of Scots (1542-1587) came to the throne in Scotland during the final years of the reign of Mary Tudor (1516-1558), the daughter of Henry VIII, who was on the throne in England. Both Mary's were Catholic, the later being crueler. Mary Tudor of England, in retaliation to her father's ill treatment of her mother, Catherine of Aragon, had 283 "heretics" burned at the stake during her reign.

These "heretics" were Protestant leaders, mostly from the newly formed Church of England, the head of which was none other than King Henry VIII. Until Henry's rule, the nations of Europe were solidly Catholic. But, when the Pope refused Henry's divorce from Mary's mother, he started his own church, and then was freed to marry Anne Boleyn. After Henry died, his son, Edward VI ruled briefly, and then Mary came to the throne. Her determination was that all of Britain should return to Catholicism. Literally, heads rolled, giving her the grueling name we commonly hear, "Bloody Mary!"

Meanwhile back in Scotland, Mary, Queen of Scots had her own problems. She was married three times, her first two shrouded in scandal. She finally fled to England, only to find herself imprisoned until she could be tried, convicted and have her head removed by a French swordsman.

In the midst of what could be called a royal "Peyton Place," a man by the name of John Knox came to the front as leader of the Protestant Movement in Scotland. In his early years he was a Catholic Priest who came in contact with the Luthran Reformer, George Wishart in 1545. Knox was present when Wishart was burned at the stake at St. Andrews Cathedral, Scotland in March, 1546. When "Bloody Mary" of England came to the throne in 1553, Knox fled the country to avoid a "heretics" death. He fled to Geneva, Switzerland where he came under the influence of John Calvin.

When Mary of England died, Elizabeth came to the throne, and Knox returned to his beloved Scotland. At his return, Mary, Queen of Scots had laid a formal claim to the throne of England, as she had been queen of Scotland, and for a brief time, due to her marriage to a French Royal, a queen of France. Her Catholic connection made the prospects of her control of all three countries possible as well. This resulted in some fighting between the forces of Mary, Queen of Scots and Elizabeth for the throne of England. John Knox and his followers fought with Elizabeth's forces, quelling any possibility of Mary's ascension to the English throne. In return for his faithfulness, Elizabeth allowed the Protestant Reformation to continue with little resistance.

John Knox returned to Edinburgh, Scotland May 2, 1559. The following year he was given the Pastorate of St. Giles Kirk (Church). Through his influence in the Reformation, the church of Scotland (Presbyterianism), appeared in full force. Knox died in 1572. He was buried in the church yard outside St. Giles Cathedral. A few centuries later, the Scottish Parliament that meets down from the old cathedral, needed parking spaces, so the cemetery was paved over. It is believed that John Knox is buried under car space #23. So the great reformer, and founder of the Scottish religion is buried under a parking lot!

It has been my privilege in the last few days to visit Edinburgh to investigate St. Giles Cathedral, and see the pulpit from which Knox preached against Mary, Queen of Scots. It was interesting to visit the home of John Knox, and walk the streets Knox walked while living over five centuries ago. At the writing of this article, I plan today to visit St. Andrews Cathedral where Reformers George Wishart and Patrick Hamilton were burned at the stake. Later in the day, Lord willing, Jenny and I will visit the city of Dundee where lies the remains of John Glas, the great reformer and founder of the Congregational Movement.

We, who freely practice New Testament Christianity, have much to be thankful for in the sacrifices of those who lived during the Reformation Movement. It was out of these various movements across Great Britain and Europe that men like Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone among others, led thousands to accept the Bible, and the Bible alone as sole authority in all religious matters. We must rise up and pay tribute the bridges we have crossed! We must learn from their mistakes, lest we be doomed to repeat them.

—Scott