

**J**ohn Knox (c.1514–1572) returned to his native Scotland in 1559, after more than a decade abroad, to become a minister in Edinburgh—and soon the acknowledged leader of the Reforming party in the Kirk. In close collaboration with his ministerial colleagues, Knox published three influential documents in the course of the next few years that were to be his principle contribution to the Reformation in Scotland—and to the religious and social history of his nation for the next century.

The *Book of Common Order* (“Knox’s Liturgy,” 1564), was based on prayer forms used by Knox in Geneva, and widely used in Scottish worship until the adoption of the Westminster *Directory of Public Worship* in 1645. The *Scots Confession* (1560), was a short evangelical consensus of Reformed doctrine, and the principal theological standard of the Kirk until it was superseded by the Westminster Confession in 1647.

In the (first) *Book of Discipline* (1560), Knox and the Reformers worked out their concrete program of reform in both church and society. Knox’s goal was to create in Scotland nothing less than the “Godly Commonwealth” of ancient Israel. Had the education and charity provisions of the *Book of Discipline* been implemented as Knox wished, Scotland would have had the first program of systematic poor relief and universal compulsory primary education in Western Europe. Comprehensive, egalitarian, and practical—but hardly democratic—the *Book* is still recognized as a landmark of Christian social reform.

It was said after his death that Knox was a man who neither feared nor flattered anyone alive. Scotland would have had a Reformation without him, but it was from him that it received much of its distinctive character and direction. American Presbyterians, as heirs of the church he helped to create, owe something of our character to his moral courage and social vision.

*Scripture:* “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” (2 Tim. 4: 7).

*Prayer:* “Merciful God, as we remember those who have gone before us, may we imitate their virtues, avoid their vices, and in all things give glory to you, though Jesus Christ, our Lord.”

*Picture:* John Knox as pictured in Theodore Beza’s *Icones* (Geneva, 1580). Original in the collections of the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pa.



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**“I have kept  
the faith...”**  
2 Tim. 4: 7



**Reformation Sunday**