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John Knox II

Lead: In the mind of John Knox, the circumstances of persecution in England and the teachings of the Hebrew scriptures on the covenant swirled into the concept of righteous revolution.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: The life of John Knox

hovered over the fault line between religion and politics. Europe was aflame. Catholics and Protestants persecuted and were persecuted for their faith. Knox struggled to describe the appropriate Christian attitude toward leaders who were idolatrous and disobedient to God.

Everywhere he looked Protestants were hounded on every side for their

**faith. He himself had been
condemned to French naval galleys
and was later exiled to the continent.**

**In response he developed a theory of
revolution. He believed that when a
ruler demanded compliance with false
religion, subjects were freed from
their divine obligations of obedience.**

**During the winter of 1557-8 Knox
composed his most famous writing,**

*The First Blast of the Trumpet against
the Monstrous Regiment of Women.* In

it he condemned the rule of women in
general, an attitude which was not
particularly unusual in a world
dominated by men, but he specifically
condemned what he considered to be
the illegitimate and evil rule of the
"Marys," Mary of Guise, Regent of
Scotland, Mary Tudor, Queen of

England, and Mary, Queen of France who would become Mary Queen of Scots. To his embarrassment, the glaring inconsistency of his logic became evident when the hope of Protestants everywhere, Queen Elizabeth I, came to the throne of England. She was not amused and, until his death, Knox found himself unwelcome in the land that had given

him refuge just a decade before.

Knox derived his thinking from the Hebrew Scriptures which described a relationship with God that was similar to a middle eastern suzerainty covenant, a political arrangement between a greater power and a lesser power. In such an bargain both parties have obligations to one another, sometimes money,

sometimes protection, all the time devotion. If either party fails in their obligations, the other is relieved of responsibility and might rebel or discipline the other.

Knox believed that if an earthly ruler failed to protect believers or led them to do or believe bad things, the believer was then freed from his or her obligations to obey the ruler.

Ultimately, the believer must obey God. Knox was less clear on the mechanism of revolution, whether the actual revolt could be taken on by individuals acting alone or by so-called "magistrates," lesser rulers who would then attack the monarch in the name of the people.

Knox' intellectual struggle reflected the difficulties facing the

religiously devout when they are surrounded by a culture or a government that is either hostile or indifferent to the demands of their faith. His experience in Scotland was far more satisfying than that which he observed in England with its half-way covenant, mild Calvinist doctrine, but with lingering liturgical and church government similarities to Roman

Catholicism.

The Scottish embrace of Calvinism and Presbyterian order in 1560, was due in significant measure to John Knox, his counsel, fiery preaching, vigorous leadership, and intellectual groundwork.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

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