

Presbyterians: Past, Present, Future
Session Three
The Origins of Presbyterians III: From Geneva to Scotland to America

A technical snafu meant this session didn't get recorded. Here's the handout.

Last week, we talked about John Calvin and the Reformation in Geneva that leads to Presbyterians. Today, we continue tracing that timeline from John Knox to America.

The Protestant Reformation in the British Isles in the 16th and 17th centuries was very Reformed in its outlook and sympathies... though it wavered back and forth to Roman Catholicism and ended up with a kind of hybrid: The Church of England.

A touch of British history to know the context:

1. Henry VIII (1491-1547) declared himself head of the Church in England in 1534, splitting with the Roman Catholic Church
2. Edward VI (1537-1553) was influenced by John Calvin's theology which shaped the early worship of the Church of England.
3. Mary Tudor (1516-1558) reigned from 1553 to 1558 and restored Catholicism in England.
 - Protestants and reformers were driven out or burned. Some fled to places like Geneva.
4. Elizabeth I (1533-1603) tried to find a balance between the extremes. The Church of England was Reformed in its theology during this time while keeping some of the Catholic worship stylings.
 - Non-conformists like Presbyterians (some of whom are known as Puritans in this time) list political and economic privileges for not being a part of the established church.

Reform in Scotland

Presbyterian (Reformed) life flourishes in Scotland... in no small way because the Scottish haven't appreciated English meddling in their lives for hundreds of years.

Patrick Hamilton brought Luther's teachings to Scotland and was martyred for this in 1528. This increased the desire for reform. France was influential in Scotland and so England encouraged church reform in Scotland to counter France and the Catholic church.

John Knox

The "Father of Presbyterianism." He ends up in Geneva and learns Reformed theology, worship, and life under John Calvin. He started writing books attacking the Catholic reigns of Mary Tudor (England) and Mary of Guise (Scotland). No queens are fond of him and John Calvin thought he was a bit of a nut. Knox returns to Scotland in 1559 as English and French troops leave.

Due in no small part to Knox's influence, the Scottish Parliament abolished Roman Catholicism and established the Presbyterian Church from the top down. Parliament adopted Knox's *The Forme of Prayers* (1560) as the worship book for the church. He also wrote the *Scots Confession*, which regulated church life and theology (we will look at this in more detail next week). His *The First Book of*

Discipline (1560) established and defended the Presbyterian order as biblical – which Parliament adopted and imposed a General Assembly for the Church of Scotland.

From Scotland to Ireland to America

When James I became king in 1603, he was generally Reformed in theology but loathed Presbyterians because they were anti-episcopacy and he believed, “No bishop; no king.” This leads Presbyterians (and Congregationalists) to start leaving Britain for America. James also wanted to bring Ireland under control and so started sending Scots to what is now Northern Ireland.

When Charles I becomes king in 1625, with his Catholic wife, the British Isles gradually descend into Civil War which ends up strengthening the resolve of the Presbyterians and the Scots. This led to the Westminster Assembly which produced a new confession and worship standards which were heavily Reformed (some Reformed bodies use the Westminster Confession as their doctrinal standard to this day). More Presbyterians leave England and Scotland for Ireland and America. Charles tries to suppress Presbyterians in Ireland, but Presbyterian faith and life thrived in Ulster (Northern Ireland).

Even after the English Civil War ends, fights and battles over religion in the British Isles continued based on who was the monarch and who could gain power. Presbyterians continue to be persecuted. William & Mary united England, Scotland, and Ireland under one crown in 1688. The Toleration Act of 1689 finally put many of these issues to rest.

The Rev. Francis Makemie (1658-1708), an Ulster Scots immigrant to America, is often referred to as the “Father of American Presbyterians.” He settled on the Eastern Shore of Virginia in 1683 and planted churches in Maryland and Virginia. He played a leading role in organizing the first presbytery in Philadelphia in 1706.