

REFORMATION 500 WEEK 43 KNOX REFORMS SCOTLAND

After bloody Mary came to the English throne, John Knox fled for his life; and “ended up as co-pastor of the English refugee congregation in Calvin’s Geneva,” which he said was “the happiest period of his life” (Needham, *2000 years*, 3:407). In 1558 he wrote his first revolutionary book, in which he argued that “female rule...contradicted both the law of nature and God’s revealed law in Scripture, and female rulers must be deposed. The treatise was aimed chiefly against Mary Tudor [bloody Mary];” but “soon after the book’s publication, Mary Tudor died and was succeeded by a female Protestant sovereign, Elizabeth [who helped to make England a Protestant country again]. Knox’s book alienated Elizabeth badly,” and “also outraged most Protestants,” including Calvin who “had its sale in Geneva banned” (Ibid. 408). On the whole, Calvin and Knox were on the same page. Knox judged Geneva to be “the most perfect school of Christ that ever was in the earth since the days of the apostles.”

In 1559, Knox returned to Scotland, “determined to do for his country what Calvin had done for the city of Geneva” (Nichols, *Reformation*, 97). “In May, after he preached a fiery sermon that making images of Jesus, God, and saints and praying to them is against the Bible, his listeners became so energized that they started to destroy all the pictures and statues in the church. The same thing happened in other cities. Soon there was an actual war, and Mary Guise [who was ruling Scotland for her sixteen-year-old daughter Mary Stuart who was also Queen of France] had to ask France to send more troops to help her. Seeing they could easily be outnumbered, the Protestant lords asked England to come to their rescue.... Finally, in March 1560, the English army came to the rescue and defeated the French in battle” (Simonetta Carr, *John Knox*, 37, 40). In June Mary of Guise died. On August 17, “the Scottish Parliament decreed a change of religion. Protestantism instead of Catholicism was made the religion of the country. A Calvinistic confession of faith, largely the work of John Knox, was adopted. The pope’s authority and all jurisdiction was abolished and the celebration of the mass was forbidden” (Kuiper, *Church in History*, 217). In January 1561, Parliament approved Knox’s *Book of Discipline*, which introduced Presbyterian church government modeled after Calvin’s system in Geneva, where each congregation is governed by elders (*presbyters*), elected from its own membership. “For the conduct of public worship Knox prepared a *Book of Common Order*. To a great extent this order of worship was based on the form for public worship used by the church of English refugees in Geneva. That in turn was based on the form designed by Calvin. This form of worship consisted in prayer, reading of Scripture, the sermon, congregational singing, and the taking up of an offering” (Kuiper, 218-219).

Mary Stuart, Scotland’s lawful queen, arrived in August 1561. Her attempt to obtain freedom to practice her catholic faith was vigorously opposed at every step by Knox, who “affirmed in a sermon that one mass was more dreadful than an invasion of Scotland” (Needham, 3:420). Knox was summoned into Mary’s presence four times, and each time “got the better of the queen,” even once “reducing her to hysterical tears by his forthright no-nonsense commitment to a Protestant Scotland in which the idolatry of the mass could have no place” (Ibid. 421).

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REFORMATION 500 WEEK 43: HEIDELBERG CATECHISM QA 112

Question 112: WHAT DOES THE NINTH COMMANDMENT REQUIRE? **That I bear false witness against no one, twist no one’s words, be no backbiter or slanderer, join in condemning no one unheard or rashly; but that on pain of God’s heavy wrath, I avoid all lying and deceit as the very works of the devil; and that in matters of judgment and justice and in all other affairs, I love, speak honestly, and confess the truth; also, insofar as I can, defend and promote my neighbor’s good name.**

The Ninth Commandment, “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor,” is designed for “the establishment and preservation of truth amongst men... for the glory of God and the safety of our neighbor” (Ursinus, 600-601). Behind this command is the fact that God Himself is “a God of *truth* and without iniquity” (Deut. 32:4); “it is impossible for God to lie” (Heb. 6:18). God created mankind in His image to imitate Him by thinking, speaking, and practicing the truth. Mankind fell by believing Satan’s lie, “You shall not surely die.” Mankind is saved by believing the truth: “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). Jesus said, “I am *the truth*” (John 14:6). When God redeems us from sin through faith in Jesus Christ, He gives us a love for truth and a hatred of lies: “lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal truthfully are His delight” (Prov. 12:22). Therefore, by the work of the Holy Spirit, “a righteous man hates lying” (Prov. 13:5). But the habit of lying, like every sinful habit, is hard to break. Therefore, Paul tells *Christians*, “putting away lying, let each of you speak truth with his neighbor” (Eph. 4:25). When we lie, we imitate the devil, who is “the father of lies” (John 8:44). All liars will suffer God’s eternal wrath in hell (Rev. 21:8). Believers will suffer God’s loving discipline. God disciplined Jacob by allowing him to be deceived – first by his uncle Laban; and then by his own sons who led him to believe that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal.

“The reputation and honor of our neighbor is his sacred right [Prov. 22:1]; and it is a grave sin to tear down his reputation and good name by speaking lies [25:18], or even by speaking unkindly about him” (Jones, *Study Helps*, 280). To twist someone’s words means “so changing the words of another person that a wrong message is given [Psalm 56:5] Backbiting is speaking behind a person’s back in an evil and hurtful manner (even though truthful facts are reported), so that injury is done. Slander is telling things about another person which we know to be untrue.” *Joining in condemning another person unheard or rashly* refers to “*believing* a lie on insufficient evidence [Prov. 18:13] We must warn others who tell us questionable things that they must beware of gossip [Prov. 18:8]. Even if we know something evil about another person, we are *not* to speak of it to others before first approaching the person *privately* and seeking his repentance – in which case, we should forget the matter and not repeat it to others [Matt. 18:15]” (Jones, 280-81); “nor are those lies which are uttered for politeness sake, excused, because we may not do evil, that good may come.... God did not bless [the Hebrew midwives] because they lied, but because they feared Him and would not slay the children of the Israelites [Ex. 1:15-21]” (Ursinus, 601-602).

God told Joshua to use military deception in defeating Ai (Joshua 8:1-26). May we say that Rahab’s lie was a form of military deception, since she chose Israel’s side in the war on Jericho? What about those who hid Jews in Nazi Germany?

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