



The Ministry of John Knox: Pastor, Preacher, and Prophet (Texts and Studies in Religion, V. 93)

Richard G. Kyle

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Dr. Kyle presents here a vigorous, well documented account of important aspects of John Knox's character and mission, topics often passed over, or discounted in the standard histories. The result is a fuller, more rounded appreciation of a complex, paradoxical historical figure. Finally, we are given a clearer picture of Knox's distinctive place within the larger scene of the early modern religious upheavals that carried much of Europe away from the medieval Church of Rome. In the religious revolution that swept across Scotland in the latter sixteenth century, few personal influences were more decisive than that of John Knox. Yet scholars over the centuries since have found the eminent Scots reformer a puzzling and controversial figure about whom consensus has proven elusive. The shadow side of Knox's character and career has been frequently delineated. He is sometimes described as, above all, a rigid, rabble-rousing religious fanatic bent on achieving his goal--a truly godly Scotland--by whatever means necessary. Indeed, John Knox reserved a special contempt for Roman Catholicism. In sermons, letters, and pamphlets, as well as in his History of the Reformation in Scotland, Knox denounced the Catholic Church in such terms as "whore of Babylon" and "synagogue of Satan." He despised it for what he saw as its ingrained corruption and willful distortions of the biblical Word of God. Critics have claimed that it was Knox's unquenchable hatred of the Church of Rome that blinded him to all else. Some contend that it was this loathing, above all, that goaded him to sow religious bigotry and violence across the land and destroy what was most venerable and beautiful in the old order. In its place, he imposed a joyless, puritanical form of Christianity. Here, then, is the core of the indictment.

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