The Social Awareness of John Knox:
The Problems of Poverty and Educational Reform

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In his recent biography of John Knox, Professor W. Stanford Reid remarks that the Scottish reformer helped to enable the Kirk of Scotland "through its care of the poor and control of education to exert a powerful influence upon society as a whole."¹ In accurately recognizing Knox's contribution in these areas, Reid has poignantly reminded his readers that Knox deserves to be remembered for more than his advocacy of popular rebellion against tyrannical sovereigns (important as that is) and his opposition to female rule. It is the purpose of this paper to explore further Knox's social awareness with respect to poverty and education, and additionally to suggest several sources of possible influence on Knox's proposals for poor relief and his educational ideas.

I Responsibility for the Poor

Christians, according to Knox, have basic social obligations, including a responsibility to care for the poor. He was sympathetic towards the needs of the lower classes, though it is a mistake to see this as evidence of a naturally democratic spirit.² Care for the poor has ample Biblical sanction, and has consequently been advocated by men of all types in the history of Christianity. Exercising one's responsibility to help the lower classes is as compatible with the aristocratic spirit of *noblesse oblige* as with the democratic spirit. Knox was concerned about the poor because Scripture demanded it and because his God embodied justice and mercy, which believers were to manifest towards the less fortunate in society. Although he conceived of social obligations primarily in religious rather than political terms, he had to have been aware of the dangers of uncontrolled poverty for social order and a reformed society.

The poor had been an object of concern in Scotland, as elsewhere,³ before the Reformation. The provincial council of 1549, for example, had expressed alarm concerning misappropriation of endowments for the poor. Sir David Lyndsay, an early acquaintance of Knox, blamed the crown for allowing oppression of the poor. He was particularly sympathetic towards the commons, with their burden of high rents, church exactions, and unjust judicial decisions. Knox's probable mentor, John Major, urged that princes or communities decree that there would no longer be any beggars and provide for the impotent. Prior to the Reformation "sturdy beggars," who had no credentials and roamed the country demanding assistance, were banned. A 1552 edict prohibited a beggar from pursuing his trade outside his own parish. It is thus not surprising that Knox and his colleagues gave some attention to the poor, though with the pressing business of ecclesiastical reformation, the enigma of poverty might well have been relegated to a minor concern. Certainly the change of landlords from Catholic to Protestant did little if anything to alleviate the burdens imposed on tenants. Increasing a sense of responsibility for the poor was perhaps more difficult for the Protestant reformers than procuring desired changes in theology and worship.⁴

In an epistle to the congregation at Berwick, Knox had urged his fellow Christians to continue and even increase their care for the poor. Those able to work but preferring

idleness were not to receive help, regardless of their poverty. Orphans, widows, and others unable to work were to receive aid. Knox promised rewards for those who helped the poor, going so far as to promise eternal life for those who were liberal with their funds. Liberality towards the poor was, Knox argued, a sign that the elect were grateful for the benefits God had provided them.⁵ In 1556, as an exile, he continued to manifest his concern for the poor. "The poore, we sie altogidder neglectit by the Bischopis, proud Prelatis, and filthie Clargie, who upon thair awn bellies, licens, and vanitie, consume whatsoever was commandit to be bestowit upon the poore." The remedy which Knox proposed was to take the tithes from the Catholic clergy and bestow them on the Protestant churches, where they could be used to sustain a godly clergy and provide necessary relief for the poor, widows, orphans, and strangers, "for whais releif, all sic rentis and dewteis wer cheiflie apoyntit to the Kirk."⁶ He pursued this theme in 1558 when he appealed to the Scottish nobles and estates to remove and punish the Catholic clergy, "togither also with all idle bellies, which do robbe and oppresse the flock. . . ." The bishops especially were singled out and charged with "the neglecting of their office, for the substance of the poore, which unjustly they usurpe and prodigally they do spend. . . ."⁷

Knox and his fellow authors of the *Book of Discipline* likewise dealt with the problem of poverty. Each kirk was assigned the task of providing for its own poor, with aid going to widows, orphans, elderly, lame, impotent, and honest persons who had fallen into penury. Beggars were excepted, being recommended for punishment to the civil magistrate, who was to compel able-bodied men to labor. All persons unable to work were to return to their places of birth or long-time residence and seek assistance from the churches in those localities. Not all who were unemployed were responsible for their plight, and it is these whom the church must help. One method of assistance was relief from the payment of teinds. The deacons were specifically assigned the responsibility of collecting funds to disperse quarterly to the needy. In this manner Knox and his fellow framers of the *Book of Discipline* believed that begging could be abolished, all able-bodied men put to work, and all needy cared for by the kirk.⁸

In the ensuing years there are various examples of action taken by the Scottish kirk to care for the poor. In 1562, for example, Knox persuaded the Edinburgh authorities to petition the Queen to grant them the former Dominican property in Edinburgh as a site to erect a hospital for the poor. Mary agreed in 1563, stipulating that the work be completed in ten years. In the same year the kirk session of Aberdeen ordered compilation of a poor roll; all native-born poor were to be enrolled "conform to other godly reformed towns." The following year the General Assembly expressed concern with the burial of the poor in the rural areas of Scotland. The session of the Assembly held in June, 1565, enacted

for sustentation of the poor, that all lands founded to hospitalitie of old be restored agane to this same use, and that all lands, annualrents, or any other emoluments pertaining any ways to the friers of whatsumever ordour, or annualrents, altarages pertaining to Priests, be applied to the sustentatione of the poor, and uphald of Schooles . . .

Sometimes the action of the church was less ambitious. In 1572, for example, the session of Methlick approved the purchase of bedclothes for a bedridden lady on the condition that the clothes be returned at her death for further distribution to the needy. In the same year the minister at Aberdeen worked with the town council in distributing money to the

poor that had been collected by designated representatives who passed through the burgh collecting alms on a weekly basis.⁹ These examples would seem to indicate that the encouragements to care for the poor which Knox and his colleagues included in the *Book of Discipline* were being heeded as the reformation spread.

Knox manifested a general concern for the basic social obligations of the Christians in *The Order and Doctrine of the General Fast*. The winters of 1563-64 and 1564-65 had been unusually harsh. Although numerous Protestant ministers were in financial difficulty, Knox appealed to them in December, 1565, to continue their work. He also asked the brethren of the Congregation to provide voluntary support for the ministers. The General Assembly ordered a general fast for the last Sunday of February, 1566, and the first Sunday of March. The document explaining the fast is largely from Knox's hand, and includes an exhortation to the respective classes to fulfil their social obligations. Christians are reminded that they cannot expect spiritual relief from God if they refuse to provide relief from the unjust burdens imposed on their fellow man. Evoking the concept of *noblesse oblige*, Knox called especially upon earls, lords, barons, burgesses, and artisans to consider the means by which they gained their wealth. Deceit, unjust dealing, avarice, and unmercifulness to the poor were classed by Knox with murder, adultery, and pride. He appealed to a higher law than civil statutes as the standard for men's conduct. Despite the fact that earls, lords, barons, gentlemen, merchants, and artisans might legally be making their excessive profits and inflicting undue obligations upon the poor, divine law did not countenance such actions. A specific appeal was made for goods to be sold for reasonable prices, recalling the just price concept of the medieval world. Knox asked the upper classes to apply the Golden Rule to their dealings: if they were husbandmen would they be content being treated as they were now treating laborers? Knox would exempt no group or class for unjust dealings: judges, lawyers, merchants, artisans, and laborers were to deal justly and mercifully with their fellow man.¹⁰

Knox's appeal for social justice was certainly not revolutionary, nor was it a placid defence of the *status quo*. With respect especially to Knox it simply is not true that "the drive of the Reformers against riches and privilege [was] a radical move comparable to that of the Diggers and Levellers after the English Civil War . . ." ¹¹ Knox was no spokesman for lower class interests. He wanted the poor to be cared for, but he advocated nothing like the later economic communism of Gerrard Winstanley. More so than most other Protestant reformers, he successfully appealed to all classes to conduct themselves in accordance with the dictates of the higher law. He was most critical of the social abuses of the landed nobility, lairds, and burgesses, yet within these classes he found the source of his strongest support. To be sure, the Catholic nobles and lairds were subjected to more criticism than their Protestant counterparts, but even his Protestant supporters did not escape criticism entirely. He called for justice for the poor, but he provoked no Peasants' Revolt which would have forced him, as it did Luther, to take sides in a divisive class conflict. He had strong supporters in the West of Scotland as well as in the East and they came from every important social class. With his outspoken prophetic manner he offended all equally, but permanently affronted no major class because of reactionary or revolutionary views. His offence was the offence of the Hebrew prophets — calling for justice and warning of judgment. In his own time and in his own way he echoed the demand of Amos: "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream."

The key principles in Knox's plan for poor relief — assistance for the impotent but not the sturdy beggar, the administration of aid by the local parishes, and the compulsion of able-bodied persons to work by the magistrate — reflect Knox's experience with the Edwardian system of poor relief. When he landed in England in March, 1549, the Act of 1536 was in effect. Parish and municipal authorities had the responsibility of collecting voluntary donations in the churches to aid the impotent, but no provisions had been made to establish a program of public works to assist the able unemployed. A man or woman without visible means of support who was unemployed for a minimum of three days was liable to branding, enslavement, or imprisonment — harsh terms which Knox did not want imitated in Scotland. The English themselves were repelled by the provisions calling for the mutilation of beggars, the whipping of children, and the enslavement of people, hence the Act was repealed in 1550 and the Act of 1531 revived. Under the latter act the impotent could be licensed and allowed to beg in their local communities. The able-bodied unemployed were whipped and returned to their homes, and those who begged without license were fined. Both acts recognized the distinction between sturdy beggars and impotent poor, the responsibility of the magistrate to repress begging by the able, and the importance of voluntary giving in the local parishes to assist the needy, all of which were principles subsequently advocated by Knox and his colleagues.

During his sojourn in Geneva Knox appears to have been influenced more by the ideal than the administrative details of poor relief. In Geneva too the distinction was made between the impotent poor and the sturdy beggar. The Ordinances of 1541 prohibited begging and charged the deacons with administration of the system of poor relief. The focus of the latter was the Hôpital-Général, which provided facilities for orphans and the elderly, shelter and food for visitors unable to afford lodging, and food for distribution each week to poor households. One of the most striking features of this system is the degree of lay control, vested in the four *procureurs*, who administered the Hôpital, and one *hospitallier*, who supervised the actual care of the poor. There is no evidence that Knox proposed a similar establishment for Edinburgh, though he favored a strong degree of lay involvement in administering the system of poor relief. What must especially have impressed Knox was the strong sense of responsibility to aid the impotent poor which prevailed in Calvin's Geneva.¹²

II Educational Reform

Apart from his contribution to the *Book of Discipline*, Knox has relatively little to say in his extant writings on the subject of education. In his treatise on predestination (published in 1560) he argued that a man educated in languages and the writings of godly men was better able to avoid error and more apt to teach the truth effectively than a man without such knowledge. Yet in a meeting of the General Assembly in 1564 he asserted that "worldly wisdom" played a role in the maintenance of idolatry and the betrayal of truth. Education was important, but it had to be the right kind of education — one governed by Biblical precepts. In his *Brief Exhortation to England* in 1559 Knox had pointed out the necessity of education for the preservation of Protestantism, urging the founding of schools in all English cities and major towns. He insisted, however, that the oversight of these schools be committed to the magistrates and godly learned men. He clearly believed in the danger of allowing men not devoted to the Protestant cause to teach in the educational system.¹³

The difficulties posed by education to Knox's cause were made manifest to him in 1572. The Regent Moray had been assassinated in 1570 by a Hamilton, and Knox had subsequently criticized all the Hamiltons from his pulpit in St. Andrews. Archibald Hamilton thereupon refused to attend Knox's sermons. When threatened with ecclesiastical discipline, Hamilton appealed, as an undergraduate, to the University of St. Andrews for protection. Archbishop John Douglas, Rector of the University, and others approached Knox to resolve the conflict. Knox protested in July, 1572, contending that no school or university had the right to judge the church. Alluding to the medieval universities, he warned that universities had a record of opposing the church in the past. Within a month he wrote to the General Assembly at Perth, urging them above all else to "preserve the church from the bondage of the universities." The universities were to govern themselves in accord with Christian standards, and the church was to keep them within its jurisdiction to guarantee that those standards were maintained.¹⁴ Any assessment of Knox's contribution to education must keep this in mind. Like nearly all the reformers, he was definitely not a champion of intellectual inquiry. The universities and schools were to be ecclesiastically censured, as on the Continent, in order to preserve the integrity of the faith and propagate Christian truth as seen through the eyes of Knox and his colleagues.

The section on education in the *Book of Discipline*¹⁵ is one of the more substantial achievements of the Reformation period. Knox and his associates attempted to set forth in some detail a plan for Scotland that manifested the educational aims he had outlined in his *Brief Exhortation to England*. The educational system the Scottish reformers envisaged was thoroughly religious in its philosophy and aims: education was to train youth to be godly and virtuous. The churches in the Scottish towns were to have the responsibility of appointing schoolmasters. The churches in the countryside, following tradition, were to entrust the education of their children to ministers or readers, who were now to be responsible for basic education and the Calvinist catechism. Every major town was to have a college or grammar school for instruction in the arts, especially logic, rhetoric, and languages. Sufficient teachers and stipends were to be provided for these colleges. Scholarships were to be furnished for poor students, with the church playing the key role in supplying funds.

All children were to be given an education, regardless of their socio-economic status. Parents were not to be allowed to prevent their children from receiving an education in order to employ them in the fields or shops. Students who demonstrated special aptitude were to be charged to continue their studies in order to benefit the commonwealth. Ministers and elders would be responsible for conducting quarterly examinations of students to ascertain their progress and decide which students were to continue to a higher level. Those judged unfit to continue were trained in a craft. No student could graduate without possessing sufficient knowledge of Christianity.

A student who pursued the maximum course of education would spend several years learning to read, to understand Calvin's catechism, and to grasp the rudiments of Latin grammar. An additional three or four years would be devoted to the mastery of Latin, with logic, rhetoric, and Greek also receiving four years of study. The remainder of one's schooling (to the age of twenty-four) was to be spent studying law, medicine, or divinity. The cessation of study in divinity at the age of twenty-four is interesting in view of the medieval universities' practice of not granting the doctorate in divinity before the age of thirty-five. In fact, the shorter periods of study in law, medicine, and divinity indicate the need for these people in

Scotland as well as a belief that the traditionally long periods of study were unnecessary.

Scotland would continue to have its three universities at St. Andrews, Glasgow, and Aberdeen. No new ones were proposed, despite previous signs of interest in higher education at Edinburgh. In 1556 Mary of Guise's administration had appointed two noted scholars, Edward Henderson and Alexander Sym, to give public lectures on civil and canon law, Greek, and other subjects in Edinburgh. Two years later, part of the legacy left by Robert Reid, Bishop of Orkney, was intended to establish a college of law in that city. Yet Knox and his colleagues would have done no more than establish a college at Edinburgh for instruction in the arts, which was also their intention for the other major towns of Scotland. They rightly recognized that what higher education in Scotland needed was not a new university but reform of the existing ones. After all, Scotland already had one more university than England, where the educational system was markedly superior. Scottish students, including Knox's own sons, often studied in English or Continental universities, whereas the reputation of the Scottish universities did not attract foreign scholars. The position of Knox and his colleagues on the number of the universities was in keeping with the earlier views of John Major, who "look[ed] with no favour on this multitude of universities; . . . in consideration of the physical features of the country, this number of universities is not to be condemned."¹⁶

Some indication of the poor state of affairs in the Scottish universities in 1560 is indicated in the number of students attending. At St. Andrews there were thirty-one entrants in 1557, indicating a total enrolment of some one hundred and fifty students. The following year, however, there were only three entrants. After 1560 the number of entrants averaged thirty, indicating that at St. Andrews the major reason for the sharp decline in enrolment just prior to 1560 was due to the upheavals in religion. The situation at Glasgow was worse. The average number of annual entrants in the century preceding 1550 was ten, with none recorded between 1509 and 1535. In the aftermath of the Reformation a 1563 letter of Mary Stewart observes "rather the decay of ane Universitie nor ony wyse to be reknit ane establisht foundatioun." Aberdeen also experienced difficulty, having, for example, virtually no arts students in 1549. By 1562, according to the English ambassador to Scotland, there were only fifteen or sixteen scholars at the university. Recognition of the need for reform in the universities was not new with Knox and his colleagues, for the Catholics had been aware of the problem, as evidenced, for example by the legislation of the provincial council of 1549.¹⁷

Subjects of instruction in the universities were to include dialectic, mathematics, physics, medicine, moral philosophy, law, Greek, Hebrew, divinity, economics, politics, cosmography, astrology, and natural philosophy. Unlike the medieval universities, the reformed Scottish universities were not to include Latin grammar and literature. This does not, however, indicate a lack of classical or linguistic interest on the part of the reformers, for Latin was to be mastered prior to university entrance. In this respect the program of the reformers was more rigid than that of the Catholic reformers in 1549.¹⁸ The inclusion of Greek, which Knox learned (with Hebrew) at Geneva, is noteworthy. Only Aberdeen apparently taught Greek before the 1550s, though a smattering of the language may have been available in the grammar schools. In any case, though Greek was not unknown to all Scotsmen in the fifteenth century, there is no evidence to indicate that it was taught in Scotland until the sixteenth century, and even then not on a wide basis.¹⁹ The oft-cited statutes of the

Aberdeen grammar school are of late date (1553), and are hardly contributory evidence to the mistaken notion that the Scots had fully assimilated the classical scholarship of the Renaissance before 1560.²⁰ There is, however, no reason to go to the opposite extreme and refer to the deprecation of all classical studies in the projected reformed universities.²¹ The study of Greek was included; indeed, Knox's colleague, John Row, taught Greek at Perth in 1560; John Willock also knew Greek, and it was taught at Montrose. Although the major interest of the drafters in Greek was for Biblical studies, Knox at least is known not to have been antipathetic to humanism.

The formulators of the *Book of Discipline* also devoted some attention to regulations for other matters pertaining to the universities. To be admitted, students had to have recommendations from their school masters and ministers testifying of their learning, docility, age, and family background. Provisions were also made for the government of the universities. Knox's contribution to this section was probably slight, and it may be more reflective of the legal minds of Row and John Winram, a veteran of several Catholic reforming councils. With their assistance, John Douglas, Rector of St. Andrews University, was very likely the drafter of the section on the universities, though Knox was certainly called upon to approve their proposals.

Several characteristics of the educational scheme proposed by Knox and his associates are particularly significant. First, the scheme provided for universal education at the basic level. Possibly the educational program (because of its religious premises) was meant to include girls, as was increasingly the English practice at the pre-grammar school level, though girls certainly would not have been admitted to the universities. Nevertheless, Scotland, one of the most backward states in Western Europe, would have had the first universal compulsory program of education. The notion of universal education was basically new to Scotland with the reformers. The masters of the Elgin Cathedral schools had been required to teach any who came to them for instruction, but this is quite different from universal education at the state level. More problematical is the act of Parliament in 1496, according to which all barons and freeholders of substance were to send their eldest sons and heirs to school commencing at the age of eight or nine. They were to remain in grammar school until they had mastered Latin, whereupon they were "to remane thre yeris at the Schulis of Art and Jure sua that thai may have knowlege and understanding of the lawis Throw the quhilkis Justice may reigne universalie. . . ." Yet this act was never put into operation, was only concerned with providing Scotland with competent administrators of justice, and involved only eldest sons and heirs of the nobility and freeholders of substance. The provisions of the *Book of Discipline* were potentially more extensive. If girls were meant to be included in the lower level of the educational process, this was revolutionary, for there is no evidence that such was contemplated by the Scots in the medieval period. The admonition to expand the number of schools was not, however, revolutionary, but in keeping with recent practice. Before 1560 there were grammar schools connected with most cathedrals, collegiate kirks, and major burghs. New grammar schools had recently been founded at Crail (1542) and Kirkwall (1544). Yet more schools were needed, as indicated, for example, by the subsequent unsuccessful attempts of the General Assembly to establish new schools in Moray, Banff, Inverness, and other northern shires.²²

Secondly, attention was paid to the needs of poor students, so that the opportunity to receive a comprehensive education would depend on ability, not wealth or social background.

This was clearly a democratizing principle. Yet this was not new, for the church had earlier provided for the maintenance of poor scholars. The reformed kirk continued in this tradition. In June, 1563, for example, the General Assembly urged adequate provision for poor scholars. Moreover, such students were frequently aided by funds derived from fines levied by kirk sessions.

Thirdly, the educational program was moderately liberal in its curriculum, de-emphasizing the Scholastic theology that had been a major factor in medieval higher education. Knox and his colleagues advocated the kind of university program that was generally favored by the English Puritans in the seventeenth century, but did not go nearly as far as the more radical English reformers, such as John Webster and John Hall, later proposed. Although some attention was paid to Greek and, at the grammar-school level, to Latin language and literature, the weakest element in the curriculum was probably the insufficient attention given to classical and humanistic studies. One of the strongest aspects of the curriculum was the inclusion of instruction in the crafts, so that Knox and his friends preceded the Elizabethan Statute of Apprentices (1563) in their concern for utilitarian training. The advantages here can best be appreciated when one recalls the reactionary practices of the Scottish guilds, where crafts heretofore had to be learned.

Fourthly, the entire educational program was pervaded by a religious philosophy that aimed to train young people to be godly in whatever occupation they served. The universities would not accept students who could not demonstrate a godly character. Knox and his associates wanted a change in the type of student who received a higher education. Not only must the students be godly, but they must also be docile, i.e. capable of undergoing instruction, particularly from the Protestant point of view. The religious emphasis in education was, of course, quite in keeping with medieval and contemporary educational practice. There had been no notion of a purely secular education, and Knox and his colleagues were far from introducing one. Religion was no less important in the reformed schools than in the older Catholic ones. If anything, the Scottish reformers increased the religious emphasis by calling for the application of rigid religious requirements to entering university students.

Fifthly, overall supervision of the educational system rested in the hands of the church, which had the responsibility to provide the schools and schoolmasters. In 1563 the General Assembly expressed its intent that all education be entrusted only to those professing the Protestant faith; all others were to be removed from their teaching positions. Two years later the Assembly stipulated that superintendents or visitors of the Kirk had to examine the doctrine of teachers and those in charge of schools, colleges, and universities before admission to their positions. This was re-enacted two years later.²⁴ Ministers and elders also determined who continued in the educational process, and ministers had to provide prospective university students with recommendations. Knox himself sought for stricter control of the universities by the church. It is interesting to note that Knox and his colleagues were pressing for ecclesiastical control of education during that period in Scottish history when the existing grammar schools were passing from the control and patronage of the church into the jurisdiction of the town councils.²⁵ Although the burghs sought no innovations in the traditional curriculum and were interested only in matters of patronage and prestige, Knox and his colleagues were not willing to tolerate even this infringement of the burghs in the kirk's sphere.²⁶ In this regard they were, like nearly all contemporary Christian leaders, educational conservatives.

The educational scheme was not utopian, and in various respects did not depart radically from the medieval system. The *sine qua non* for its success was money and personnel. Knox intended that the educational funds be taken from the monies used by the Catholic church for education, and from the incomes of suppressed abbeys and chantries, but the rapacity of the nobles wrecked the scheme.²⁷ Because the Scots were not willing to provide the funds, the shortage of qualified instructors was not a limiting factor. Certainly the latter problem could have been rectified in reasonable time if the money had been forthcoming. The most serious defect of the proposed system from the modern standpoint is the very reason given for its existence — the training of godly youth. The system sought to produce young people who accepted the Calvinist catechism as a prerequisite for graduation or higher studies. Freedom of intellectual inquiry would not have been tolerated in key areas of the curriculum. The docility sought by the reformers in university students was not merely the ability to learn; it included acceptance of the church's teachings. In 1565 the Kirk of Scotland, as was noted, actually moved to ensure its control over Scottish education by requiring that teachers and those in charge of schools, colleges, and universities be examined by the church. The Kirk's decree was upheld by Parliament in 1567. Knox recognized the potential "bondage" of the church to the universities, but he failed to recognize the equally dangerous "bondage" of the universities to the church. Just as he had no concept of freedom in the religious sphere, and because he had no such concept, so he was unable to conceive of freedom in the educational and intellectual world. In fairness, of course, it must be remembered that ecclesiastical control of education was a common practice in sixteenth-century Europe, whether in Catholic, Lutheran, or Reformed territories. The system favored by Knox was certainly less rigid than that advocated by Ignatius Loyola and developed by the Society of Jesus.

The system as the Scottish reformers envisaged it would probably have been self-defeating. Ultimately universal education coupled with a moderately liberal curriculum would have created intelligent dissent and eroded authoritarian ecclesiastical intellectualism. In spite of the religious restrictions and the fact that the program was not adopted by the state, therefore, the advocacy of the program and the pattern it provided was a landmark in the history of education. In numerous ways it foreshadowed modern education, notably in its comprehensiveness and its egalitarian and practical spirit. But the *Book of Discipline* would never provide the precise pattern for modern educational development, which is commonly based on secular ideals rather different from Knox's religious principles.

Knox's views on educational reform were influenced by John Calvin and probably Martin Bucer. There is also a possibility that he derived some general ideas on reform from the earlier Scottish interest in improving education, including the ideas of John Major. The modest interest of the provincial councils in reform has been noted. There had also been concern among the Lollards, in whose Ayrshire region Knox had preached. As early as the first part of the fifteenth century the Lollard Quintin Folkerde had exhorted the Bishop of Glasgow and his clergy to take an interest in religious education. Concern for educational improvement may not have been widespread in Scotland, but examples appear in various circles. There is an example in the royal petition of 1495 calling for the founding of a university at Aberdeen. The petition observed that certain places in Scotland were geographically isolated, so that some men were "rude and ignorant of letters, and almost barbarous, who . . . cannot have leisure for the study of letters, nay, are so ignorant of these letters that, not only for preach

ing the word of God to the people of those parts but also for administering the sacraments of the church, proper men cannot be found." Interest in furthering, if not necessarily reforming, education was regularly manifested in the decades before 1560. In 1512, for example, St. Leonard's College, St. Andrews, was granted a charter of foundation by Alexander Stewart, Archbishop of St. Andrews and a pupil of Erasmus. In 1525 the vicar of Lathrisk, Sir W. Myrton, founded grammar and song schools in the town. In 1538 James Beaton, Archbishop of St. Andrews, founded St. Mary's College to promote the study of divinity, civil and canon law, natural philosophy, medicine, and other subjects. Between 1532 and 1545 Bishop William Stewart of Aberdeen built and furnished the library and other buildings at Aberdeen. Knox's own probable mentor, John Major, was concerned about the state of the Scottish universities, and may have conveyed this concern to his pupil. He complained of the lack of major gifts to St. Andrews and of the poorness of Glasgow in endowment and scholars. These are just some of the indications of native Scottish interest in educational improvement.²⁸ Knox may well have been influenced by the general concern common to such endeavors, but he was also influenced by Continental ideas.²⁹

Geneva was probably the most important source of influence for Knox's educational views. Calvin continued the medieval emphasis on the religious nature of education. During his stay in Geneva Knox had sufficient time to observe the educational system, with its particular emphasis on training the young. Calvin's new college at Geneva was not, however, founded until 1559. Unless he discussed the proposal with Calvin it is therefore very unlikely that Knox was influenced by it, as has been claimed.

That such a discussion occurred is a distinct possibility, given Calvin's long-standing interest in educational reform. As early as 1536 it was decided to establish a public school for children in Geneva, with Antoine Saunier as rector. The following year Calvin brought the humanist and educational reformer Maturin Cordier, under whom he had studied at the Collège de la Marche in Paris, to Geneva to help reorganize the college. The Ordinances of 1541 stress the importance of an adequate educational system, particularly to prepare youth for the ministry and civil government. Cordier, however, did not return with Calvin from exile, and his place was taken by Castellio (from 1541 to 1544), who had taught at the Collège de la Rive, begun by Saunier in 1536. The lower schools in Geneva needed reforming, hence Calvin contacted Claude Baduel of Nimes, who visited Geneva in 1550. Calvin's continuing interest in educational reform was again manifested in 1557, when he visited Strassburg and examined the academy of Jacob Sturm.³⁰ It is difficult to conceive that Knox could have been unimpressed by this vibrant movement of educational reform.

There is a distinct possibility that Knox may also have been influenced by Bucer, whose educational ideas were known on the Continent and also in Edwardian England. Bucer's *De Regno Christi* had been presented to Edward VI in 1551. In it the author called for the reformation of the English universities because they were remiss in producing religious teachers. Like Knox, Bucer's major concern with education was religious rather than humanistic. He urged Edward to open more schools at the pre-university level and provide for poor scholars, so that the deserving poor could receive their education free. As Knox later stated, education was not only for the furtherance of the faith but also for the welfare of the commonwealth. As early as 1543 Bucer had joined with Melanchthon and others to draft a set of regulations on church government for Cologne. Included in the regulations were directions for schools. They specified that every town was to have a properly support-

ed Latin school with pious and learned instructors, and a curriculum which included grammar, dialectic, Greek, music, and religion. Advanced schools were also stipulated, with a curriculum of religion, dialectic, Greek, grammar, mathematics, physics (including astronomy and cosmography), and law. Attention was also given to the support of poor students. While the program set forth by Knox and his associates in the *Book of Discipline* does not fully correspond to the views of Bucer, the ample parallels underscore the likelihood that Knox knew of Bucer's views (or perhaps the similar views of Jacob Sturm, a magistrate and rector of the Strassburg gymnasium).³¹

There is also a slight possibility that Knox, during the course of his travels, learned (indirectly) of plans for educational reform by leading Lutherans. Philip Melancthon published recommendations for the schools and churches of Thuringia in 1528, which have been likened to the *Book of Discipline*. He stressed the need to educate children in sound doctrine in order that they could ultimately be of service to church and state. His ideal was learned piety, a happy blending of humanism and evangelical faith. "On earth," he wrote, "there is nothing next to the Gospel more glorious than humanistic learning, that wonderful gift of God." Language and grammar were stressed as the basis of a liberal education.³² Luther and Melancthon, like Knox, sought to have schools in every parish and secondary schools in every sizeable town. Luther's views on education are set forth in his 1524 treatise *To the Councilmen of all Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Schools*. It has been suggested that this book influenced Knox as well as Calvin,³³ but there is no evidence to indicate that Knox knew the work, though he may have heard of some of its ideas indirectly. Unlike Knox, Luther placed considerable emphasis on the importance of linguistic study and libraries. He also explicitly called for the education of girls, a notion for which Knox may ultimately be indebted to him. Both men called for increased expenditure of funds for education, proposing that some of the money come from sources previously committed to Catholicism. Both men likewise called for provisions to ensure that exceptional pupils were able to continue their studies for a longer time than others.³⁴ Thus Knox's concepts of education appear to be derived from a varied background, though any estimate of the source which influenced him cannot be made with absolute certainty.

Knox's proposals for educational reform, developed in conjunction with his Scottish colleagues, surely stand comparison with the educational views of other Protestant leaders. In matters of education as in poor relief, the influence of Knox casts a long shadow over future centuries. It is therefore appropriate that Professor Reid, in concluding his biography, should recognize that Knox's "concept of the responsibility of the church for the care of the poor was maintained down into the nineteenth century," and that the emphasis he and his colleagues gave to education "became a basic characteristic of the Scot both at home and abroad . . ."³⁵ John Knox's social awareness in fact gave to Scottish Protestantism a strong sense of social responsibility.

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Notes

1 Reid, *Trumpeter of God: A Biography of John Knox* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), p. 289.

2 As does Georgia Harkness, *John Calvin: The Man and His Ethics* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1958 ed.), p. 238.

- 3 See, e.g., Natalie Z. Davis, "Poor Relief, Humanism, and Heresy: The Case of Lyon," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, ed. William M. Bowsky, 5 (1968), 215-75; and Harold J. Grimm, "Luther's Contributions to Sixteenth-Century Organization of Poor Relief," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 61 (1970), 222-34.
- 4 W. Murison, *Sir David Lyndsay: Poet, and Satirist of the Old Church in Scotland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), p. 16; J. M. McPherson, *The Kirk's Care of the Poor* (Aberdeen: J. Avery, [1941]), pp. 182-83; James MacKinnon, *A History of Modern Liberty* (London: Longmans, 1906), II, 428.
- 5 The epistle is printed in Peter Lorimer, *John Knox and the Church of England* (London, 1875), p. 264.
- 6 *The Works of John Knox*, ed. David Laing (New York: AMS reprint, 1966), IV, 127-28.
- 7 Knox, *Works*, IV, 480, 515.
- 8 *John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland*, ed. William C. Dickinson (London: Thomas Nelson, 1949), II, 290-91.
- 9 Reid, "The Coming of the Reformation to Edinburgh," *Church History*, 42 (March, 1973), 41-43; McPherson, *Kirk's Care*, pp. 27, 38, 113; *The Booke of the Universall Kirk of Scotland*, ed. Alexander Peterkin (Edinburgh, 1839), pp. 18-19, 29.
- 10 Knox, *Works*, VI, 412-14.
- 11 David Craig, *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People, 1680-1830* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961), p. 64.
- 12 Robert M. Kingdon, "Social Welfare in Calvin's Geneva," *American Historical Review*, 76 (February, 1971), 50-69; André Biéler, *La Pensée Économique et Sociale de Calvin* (Geneva, 1961), pp. 152-56; E. William Monter, *Calvin's Geneva* (New York, 1967), p. 139.
- 13 Knox, *Works*, V, 295-96, 520; *Knox's History*, II, 134.
- 14 Richard Bannatyne, *Memoriales of Transactions in Scotland, MDLXIX-MDLXXIII* (Edinburgh, 1836), pp. 258, 262; Knox, *Works*, VI, 619-20, 630.
- 15 *Knox's History*, II, 295-302.
- 16 D. B. Horn, *A Short History of the University of Edinburgh, 1556-1889* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1967), pp. 3-5; John Major, *A History of Greater Britain as well England as Scotland*, trans. and ed. Archibald Constable, *Publications of the Scottish Historical Society* (Edinburgh, 1892), X, 29.
- 17 James Scotland, *The History of Scottish Education*, I (London: University of London Press, 1969), 28, 30; Horn, *Short History*, pp. 2-3; *Statutes of the Scottish Church, 1225-1559*, ed. David Patrick (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1907), pp. 108-109.
- 18 Cf. *Statutes of the Scottish Church*, p. 109.
- 19 John Durkan, "The Cultural Background in Sixteenth-Century Scotland," *Essays on the Scottish Reformation, 1513-1625*, ed. David McRoberts (Glasgow: Burns, 1962), pp. 288-89; James Grant, *History of the Burgh Schools of Scotland* (London, 1876), pp. 26-28; D. E. Easson, "The Medieval Church in Scotland and Education," *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, 6 (1938), 21.
- 20 As claimed by W. Forbes Leith, *Pre-Reformation Scholars in Scotland in the XVIth Century* (Glasgow: James Maclehose & Sons, 1915), p. 6.
- 21 Cf. P. Hume Brown, *George Buchanan, Humanist and Reformer* (Edinburgh, 1890), pp. 235-36.
- 22 *Miscellany of the Maitland Club*, II, part i (Edinburgh, 1840), pp. 5-7; Easson, *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, 6, 23-24; Grant, *History of the Burgh Schools*, pp. 24-25; William L. Mathieson, *Politics and Religion*, I (Glasgow: James Maclehose & Sons, 1902), 207.
- 23 *Booke of the Universall Kirk*, p. 16.
- 24 *Booke of the Universall Kirk*, pp. 16, 29, 66-67.
- 25 Cf. W. J. Gibson, *Education in Scotland* (London: Longmans, 1912), p. 40; Scotland, *History*, I, 44; Reid, *Church History*, 42, 43-44.
- 26 Easson, *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, 6, 24-25.
- 27 For the vexed question of teinds, see Gordon Donaldson's introduction to *Accounts of the*

- Collectors of Thirds of Benefices, 1561-1572* (Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable, 1949); Reid, "Clerical Taxation: The Scottish Alternative to Dissolution of the Monasteries, 1530-1560," *Catholic Historical Review*, 35 (July, 1948), 151-53.
- 28 G. G. Coulton, *Scottish Abbeys & Social Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), p. 104; *A Source Book of Scottish History*, II, ed. Dickinson, Donaldson, and I. A. Milne (London: Thomas Nelson, 1953), 115; Annie I. Dunlop, introduction to *Acta Facultatis Artium Universitatis Sanctiandree, 1413-1588* (Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable, 1964), pp. lv-lvi; Leith, *Pre-Reformation Scholars*, pp. 148-50; Major, *History*, p. 28.
- 29 For an opposing view, see James Craigie, "Knox's 'Book of Discipline'," *Scottish Educational Journal* (October 14, 1960), 720-22.
- 30 John T. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), pp. 192-95; James MacKinnon, *Calvin and the Reformation* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962 ed.), pp. 39-40, 172; W. Fred Graham, *The Constructive Revolution: John Calvin & His Socio-Economic Impact* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1971), pp. 145-51.
- 31 Allan H. Gilbert, "Martin Bucer on Education," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 18 (1919), 321-45.
- 32 Clyde L. Manschreck, *Melanchthon: The Quiet Reformer* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1958), Chaps. X-XI.
- 33 John Edgar, *History of Early Scottish Education* (Edinburgh, 1893), p. 162.
- 34 *Luther's Works*, ed. Walther I. Brandt and Helmut T. Lehmann XLV (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), 347-78.
- 35 Reid, *Trumpeter of God*, p. 293.