Reformation ABCs

# K is for Karlstadt, Andreas (1486 – 1541)

As chancellor of the University at Wittenberg and chair of the department of theology, Karlstadt was initially cautious and measured in response to Luther’s challenges to Rome, but he would become one of the most extreme of Reformers. While Luther was sequestered in Wartburg castle, Karlstadt instituted bold and sweeping changes in worship. On Christmas Day 1521 he led the first reformed mass wearing street clothes, speaking the service in German and offering both elements of bread and wine to worshippers. He was one of the first priests to marry and start a family. He came into conflict with Luther by arguing against infant baptism and urging the elimination of music from worship and art from churches. Writing On the Removal of Images (1522) he said, “Who will believe us when we say that we do not love these stuffed dummies, carved or painted images, when our deeds convict us? God hates and despises images, as I shall show. He considers them an abomination and says that all human beings are in his eyes as the things they love. Images are an abomination; it follows therefore that we too shall become abominable, if we love them… Beggars are a sure indicator that there are no Christians, or else very few and dispirited ones, in any town in which beggars are seen.” Once colleagues and friends, Luther and Karlstadt became bitterly divided over matters of faith, practice, and society. Though he reconciled with Luther personally he was exiled and spent his last years teaching in Switzerland.

Pastor Bruce Davis, Wilmington, Delaware

# K is for Knox, John (1513 -1572)

A founding father of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, Knox was serving as a priest when he was influenced by religious and political reformers to opposing the Roman Catholic rule of Mary Queen of Scots. While ministering to and teaching Protestants in St. Andrews, he was captured by the French navy and made a galley slave. On his release, he was welcomed into the new Church of England, contributing to the first Book of Common Prayer and serving as royal chaplain to Edward VI. When Mary Tudor, a Catholic, became Queen of England in 1553, Knox fled to lead reformed congregations of English exiles in Frankfurt and then Geneva, at the urging of John Calvin. Knox returned to Scotland in 1559 and at the request of the new Scottish Parliament helped to write the first Confession of Faith, Book of Discipline and Book of Common Order for the Church of Scotland, reflecting the evangelical theology and democratic polity of other reformed churches in Europe. He continued to preach in Edinburgh and completed the History of the Reformation of Religion in Scotland. He wrote of himself: “I sought neither preeminence, glory, nor riches; my honor was that Jesus Christ should reign.” Knox’s fearless teaching and preaching laid the foundation for Presbyterian Churches which today include more than 2 million members in the US, more than 9 million in South Korea and more than 24 million around the world.

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