

LutherFacts #32

Before he became a follower of John Calvin, the reformer John Knox (1513-1572) had first been drawn to Martin Luther's theological views. Born and educated in Scotland, Knox sought to convince his fellow Scots to accept the church reforms then sweeping Europe. In the late 1530s, he became a follower of the reformer George Wishart, who had studied in Germany and Switzerland and adopted many of Luther's and Zwingli's teachings. In 1546, Cardinal David Beaton arrested Wishart and placed him on trial for heresy, which led to his execution. In response, John Knox defied church authorities by attacking the Pope as the Antichrist and rejecting the existence of Purgatory. He intensified his criticisms of church doctrine and specifically called for including justification by faith as a basis for Christian belief. Under growing pressure to renounce his reforms, Knox fled to Geneva where by the late 1550s he joined the Calvinist cause and began to formulate a new form of local church governance. He returned home in the early 1560s where he eventually founded the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. A fierce proponent of Calvinist theology, Knox nevertheless incorporated many Lutheran positions on doctrine and polity into his advocacy of church reform.