

From Scotland to America: *Passing the Torch of Freedom*

For over 1,000 years the brave Scottish people reasoned, prayed, and fought for the cause of liberty. The spirit of bravehearts like William Wallace, Robert the Bruce and John Knox still runs deep in the American soul. To understand our great hope for recovering freedom and prosperity in America today, it is vital to understand the Scottish fight for liberty.

As the 14th century neared, the English King Edward “Long Shanks” was brutally tyrannizing the Scots and men like William Wallace. Long Shank’s hyper-taxation, land theft, and wholesale murder without trial broke all the rules of Common Law and Magna Carta (the heart of the English constitution). He even passed laws giving his nobles *prima nocta* (or first rights of nobles to rape Scottish women on the day of their weddings).

After his wife was brutally ravaged and killed by the English, William Wallace raised a citizen army of Scots to throw off English oppression. He became Scotland’s greatest patriot by inspiring his men to fight for liberty based upon their God-given rights guaranteed in Magna Carta and Common Law, all rights derived from the Bible. Wallace was eventually defeated and martyred. But in 1314, Robert the Bruce, King of the Scots, picked up the torch of freedom. He defeated the English oppressors at the Battle of Bannockburn, obtaining liberty in Scotland for 200 years.

Soon after, the Scots wrote the *Declaration of Arbroath*. This was the first of their biblically based freedom documents. Their words cry out to us through the ages and inspire millions even today. “For as long as but a hundred of us remain alive, never will we on any conditions be brought under English rule. It is in truth not for glory, nor riches, nor honors that we are fighting, but for freedom - for that alone, which no honest man gives up but with life itself.”

But over the next 200 years, the government abuse under the so-called “divine right” of kings, nearly wiped out freedom once again. The kings of England were burning Scotland’s most sincere believers in the streets.

Then, gloriously, in the 16th century, the original document of freedom, the Bible, was unleashed in the language of the people in Scotland. In 1558, after centuries of semi-pagan barbarity, the Scottish people were led to the Savior and His Word by a former bodyguard, galley slave, and then powerful preacher, John Knox. With their

new biblical understanding, they were the first nation to put limits on the power of government (checks and balances). Within a decade the Scots succeeded in dethroning their tyrannical queen.

The struggle for liberty against government oppression would go on for another century. But a number of precious freedom documents were created during this time of trial in Scotland.



They set the stage for America's *Declaration of Independence*.

When the English Stuart Kings, James, and Charles, attempted to destroy true biblical faith, the Scots met in the Greyfriar's church yard and signed their *National Covenant of 1638*. Many Scots signed the document in their own blood, swearing never to compromise their faith or that of their children.

The Christian Scots were declaring to the world that their rights came from God, not from the king (or any government leader, court or legislature). Therefore, a ruler, cannot force his arbitrary laws upon the people and expect them to passively follow.

To understand this bold National Covenant we must realize that these Scottish men in kilts were not just playing war games. They did not promote anarchy, as have most modern revolutions up to our time. They were biblically and intellectually prepared to stand against oppression, even unto death, by men like the eminent Professor Samuel Rutherford. Rutherford's book, *Lex Rex*, written in 1644, stands even today as the premier defense of the biblical rights and responsibilities of people to resist tyranny (out of control government) and to restore the rule of law (God's law).

For hundreds of years the people had been erroneously taught, by ruler and prelate alike, that the king was God's absolute authority on earth and was always to be obeyed. Rutherford unraveled this argument biblically. He powerfully defended the right of the people to resist, with force if necessary, a ruler who abuses his trust and his people, just like an abusive father or husband may be removed from leadership. Rutherford made it clear, as did Calvin and others, that the people have no right to riot, but must act formally through their representatives, publically naming the wrongs the ruler has committed. America's *Declaration of Independence* directly parallels the principles delineated in *Lex Rex*.

It took another 40 years and the martyrdom of 18,000 courageous ministers, until the brutal Stuart Kings were swept from power. In 1688, England and Scotland experienced true freedom under William and Mary and the Glorious Revolution and the *English Bill of Rights*. Again the revival of liberty can be traced to brave defenders of God's justice, who remembered the paper trail of freedom.

Two hundred years later, liberty was again at risk. The English King, George III, had chosen to brutally oppress his colonies in America. Defying 800 years of English law and the blood bought freedom documents back to the biblically based law code and Common Law of Alfred the Great, he taxed without representation, boarded his troops in American colonists homes (giving the English the right to steal and rape), and took entire cities captive.

But those Scots, 900,000 of them, had immigrated to America during the 18th century. They made up one-third of the colonies during the American Revolution and most of the army. They led in a historic remembrance, calling the colonists back to the documents of freedom. The *Declaration of Independence* was a re-statement of the Scottish and English biblical resistance to tyranny documents of the past 1,000 years! The Founders rose up, stood on principle, and created the finest constitutional republic in history.

This brief history reminds us of the invaluable sacrifice of the brave Scots who came to America and helped plant the tree of liberty. Now, 200 years later, we have once again forgotten the freedom documents which have been the only safe and secure anchor of liberty throughout history. Like America's Founders, the Scots and the English before us, we must turn humbly back to our God, remember the essential lessons of history and work diligently to restore true freedom and prosperity again.

-Marshall Foster