

George Wishart

The Reformation moves forward

George Wishart was born in Scotland in 1513. He was tall, with black hair and a long beard. He went to university in France (Louvain) and then became a priest.. By 1538 he was back in Scotland as a school teacher in Montrose, where he taught his students the New Testament in Greek. When the Bishop of Brechin heard that Wishart was teaching young men to read the Bible in its original language he was furious. Wishart fled to Bristol, where he got in trouble for his preaching, and he spent the next three years in Switzerland and Germany. In 1542 he taught at Cambridge University, where he was well known for his kindness and generosity towards others. He often gave his clothes and bed-sheets to the poor.

In 1543, Wishart returned to Scotland where he preached in Montrose, Dundee and the West. In 1545, plague broke out in Dundee and as soon as Wishart heard of it he went back there, preaching to everyone and caring for the sick. He told them how there was a worse disease than the plague - sin - which could only be healed by the Lord Jesus Christ. Cardinal David Beaton, nephew of the Archbishop who had put [Patrick Hamilton](#) to death, sent a priest to kill Wishart with a dagger. However Wishart took the dagger off the priest before defending him from the angry crowd. Wishart survived another attack on his life by Beaton before finally being arrested near Edinburgh in 1546. By this time, a man called [John Knox](#) was following Wishart round as a bodyguard, carrying a large two-handed sword. However Wishart wouldn't let Knox come with him to his trial and execution. "One is sufficient for one sacrifice", he said.

Wishart was taken to St Andrews and kept in prison in the dungeon of the castle. At his trial, he was found guilty of being a heretic because of what he had been preaching, even though he answered all the accusations against him by quoting from the Bible. He was then hanged and burnt at the stake outside the castle. His preaching had helped unite believers across Scotland, and like Patrick Hamilton, his death actually furthered the spread of the gospel.

Read more:

Thomas M'Crie, [The Life of John Knox](#) (Edinburgh, 1811).

[John Knox, History of the Reformation in Scotland](#) ed. W. C. Dickinson (2 vols, 1949).

John Howie, '[George Wishart](#)' in [The Scots Worthies](#) (Edinburgh, 1995 [1775]), pp 18-32.

Martin Holt Dotterweich, 'Wishart, George (c. 1513?-1546) ', [Oxford Dictionary of National Biography](#) , Oxford University Press, 2004

