SJT 71(3): 267–286 (2018)
doi:10.1017/S0036930618000327

'Satan's bludy clawses': how religious persecution, exile and radicalisation moulded British Protestant identities

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Abstract

The study examines the radicalisation experienced by one group of religious exiles in the middle of the sixteenth century. The English-speaking congregation in Geneva formed in 1555 produced a Bible, metrical psalter and order of worship that shaped the Anglophone Reformed tradition. Study of the congregation's output shows how watching the martyrdoms in England generated a dynamic anger and fresh interpretations of persecution, tyranny and resistance. Conveyed by the worship texts, this radical legacy passed into the identities of Reformed Protestants in the British Isles, the Atlantic world and subsequently across the globe.

Keywords: British Protestantism, Marian exile, persecution, radicalisation, Reformed identity

The Age of Reformations in Europe brought the effects of religious conflict to the majority of countries and helped shape new confessional identities whose echoes continue to reverberate to this day. Many Christians found themselves on the 'wrong' side of the confessional divides within their countries, and some faced direct persecution for their beliefs. The death in 1553 of King Edward VI of England and the accession of his half-sister Queen Mary Tudor led to the first instance when an officially Protestant kingdom chose to return to the Catholic fold. The effect upon Protestants in England of that change of allegiance and the subsequent campaign against their 'heresy' offers an excellent case study for investigating the process of political and theological radicalisation in the mid-sixteenth century.

Thanks in particular to John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, from the seventeenth century onwards the story of Protestant martyrdom and suffering during the reign of 'Bloody Mary' formed a significant component within Protestant identities throughout the Anglophone world. The *Book of Martyrs*, as it became commonly known, was designed to demonstrate Tertullian's maxim that

through all Christian ages the blood of martyrs was the seed of the Church.[1] Such a compelling and comprehensive explanation has helped keep religious persecution as the main focus of debate.[2] Less attention has been paid to the effect of the English martyrdoms and sufferings upon their co-religionists, especially those who went into exile during Mary's reign. Drawing upon a wealth of surviving evidence, the activities and attitudes of the English-speaking congregation in Geneva offer the best opportunity to study how persecution was experienced from the distance of exile and how these Protestants became radicalised. Since this congregation was established after the executions had started in England, everything it produced was created within the context of the burnings. The Genevan congregation comprised the largest single exile group, with approximately a quarter of the Marian exiles being linked to it at one stage or another. It was also the most productive and organised of the exile communities, leaving a substantial legacy: the Geneva Bible, the metrical psalter, the *Forme of Prayers* (later known as the *Book of Common Order*), a range of tracts and the more general 'example of Geneva', all of which profoundly influenced the future Churches of England and Scotland and the English-speaking Reformed tradition across the world.[3]

In a characteristically vivid description, one of the ministers of that congregation, John Knox, coined the phrase, 'Satan's bludy clawses', to describe religious policy under Queen Mary Tudor. More than a decade after the events he was recalling, he casually employed these words in a private letter to Christopher Goodman, his best friend and fellow minister in Geneva. Knox was reflecting in 1567 upon his first encounter with Goodman when they had met on the walls of Chester in 1553, not long after King Edward's death had turned the English Protestants' world upside down. The two men had been discussing the best course of action under the new Catholic ruler. The Scotsman had persuaded his new English acquaintance that they should follow the biblical injunction to flee to another place when threatened by persecution; withdrawing from England in order to fight another day. Knox remembered he had spoken to Goodman, 'to praye youe not to remayne within Satans bludy clawses then horribly usyd within

[1] The John Foxe project has made available the online text of the versions of the *Acts and Monuments* published up to 1583 at <https://www.johnfoxe.org/>.

[2] For a recent study discussing Mary's religious policy as a whole, Eamon Duffy, *Fires of Faith: Catholic England under Mary Tudor* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

[3] Jane E. A. Dawson, 'John Knox, Christopher Goodman and the Example of Geneva', in Polly Ha and Patrick Collinson (eds), *The Reception of Continental Reformation in Britain*, Proceedings of the British Academy, 164 (Oxford: OUP, 2010), pp. 107–35; 'Scotland and the Example of Geneva', *Theology in Scotland* 16/2 (2009), pp. 55–73.

this land, alledging that God no doubt had preservyd youe for an other tyme to the great comfort of his Church'.[4] Following their conversation in Chester, the two men took separate roads into exile, meeting again in 1554 in Frankfurt-am-Main. By the end of 1555 the paths of Knox and Goodman converged in the city of Geneva where they were elected as the congregation's joint ministers and spent the remainder of the Marian exile as close colleagues. The reaction to the Marian persecution generated by that Geneva congregation created an extremely important legacy that in turn helped shape Protestantism within the British Isles for the entire early modern period.[5]

The eighteen-month hiatus (1553–5) between the re-establishment of Catholic worship and doctrine in England and the onset of the heresy executions following the return to Roman obedience was deeply unsettling and confusing for all English Protestants. Such a 'phoney war' was especially taxing for those watching from a distance. Most of the exiles had fled the threat of religious persecution in 1553–4 and relied upon news filtering from their homeland as to what exactly was happening. When word of the heresy trials and burnings finally arrived in the spring of 1555, it produced a complex mixture of emotions. The news of the martyrdoms generated survivors' guilt and a rising tide of anger, alongside a certain relief and even a type of welcome. Having fled their homeland, the exiles had initially felt a sense of guilt and a strong desire to justify their actions. Their opponents' accusation, that the Protestant clergy were abandoning their vocation and their flocks and acting more like hirelings than good shepherds, was one that bit deep. This was the dilemma that had been discussed by the friends on the walls of Chester: should they stay or should they go? Since neither of them held a pastoral charge, they had felt able to depart. Between 1553 and 1555 many exiles' writings had offered justifications for the decision to leave the country.[6] The exiles emphasised they were religious refugees banished from

[4] Knox to Goodman, n.d. (c. late May or early June 1567), Denbighshire Record Office, Plas Power MSS DD/PP/839 85–7; printed in Jane E. A. Dawson and Lionel K. J. Glassey, 'Some Unpublished Letters from John Knox to Christopher Goodman', *Scottish Historical Review* 84 (2005), p. 192.

[5] For Knox's movements in exile and a description of the Genevan congregation, see Jane Dawson, *John Knox* (London: Yale University Press, 2015), pp. 90–108, 124–7, 147–54. For previously unknown evidence about the Marian exile, see Dawson's transcriptions from Goodman's papers, *Letters from Exile*, at <http://www.marianexile.div.ed.ac.uk/>.

[6] Discussed in J. Wright, 'Marian Exiles and the Legitimacy of Flight from Persecution', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 52 (2001), pp. 220–43. A list of exile writings can be found in E. J. Baskerville, *A Chronological Bibliography of Propaganda and Polemic, 1553–8*

their homeland for the sake of their faith. At the same time their tracts urged those who remained in England not to slip into Nicodemism but to continue to witness to their faith. Since it involved taking part in an idolatrous act, attendance at Mass was categorised as completely unacceptable for faithful Protestants, even though it had become once more the legally established religion of the land. To maintain that stance would intensify persecution and probably result in the execution of those who remained constant. From the relative safety of Protestant Europe, the exiles were placed in the invidious position of demanding that their co-religionists in England stay faithful unto death. The only religiously safe alternative was to leave the country, an option that was impractical or impossible for most of their readers. Given the uncompromising nature of their advice, the early writings of the exiles conveyed an underlying sense of guilt allied with the worry about having themselves chosen a cowardly path.

Paradoxically, the arrival of the executions alleviated some of that guilt felt by the exiles. There was a wave of relief that the predicted intense persecution had materialised and the waiting was over. The burnings fulfilled the previous dire warnings of what would inevitably happen under a Catholic ruler. The re-establishment of papal obedience and its deadly consequences brought a whiff of 'I-told-you-so' in the writings. The exiles could also feel confident they had not fled simply from the cry of wolf but from the genuine danger of the beast itself. The new level of intensity in the persecution reinforced the view that the true church's nature was a persecuted minority: one of the competing ecclesiologies within English Protestantism. The arrival of the executions clarified the situation and for the exiles in particular neatly polarised it. The martyrdoms gave a sense of particular closeness to the early church. Persecution also underlined the parallelism between the faithful remnant of Old Testament Israel and England's small band of 'true' Protestants. Further biblical images from Revelation enabled much sharper lines to be drawn between those who followed Christ and the supporters of Antichrist, and the language of the battlefield with its images of blood and death gained a literal as well as a symbolic meaning. With a considerable sense of relief the exiles could speak about the choice between simple alternatives: Christ or Antichrist.[7]

(Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1979); and A. Pettegree, 'The Latin Polemic of the Marian Exiles', in his *Marian Protestantism: Six Studies* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1996).

[7] J. Dawson, 'The Apocalyptic Thinking of the Marian Exiles', in *Prophecy and Eschatology*, Studies in Church History, Subsidia, 10, ed. M. Wilks (Oxford: Ecclesiastical History Society, 1997), pp. 75–91.

Since they were fighting as fellow soldiers with the martyrs, the exiles increasingly categorised the tribulations of all English Protestants at home and abroad as different points in a continuum of suffering, stretching from personal disruption to facing the stake. Whilst not undervaluing the blood of the martyrs, every 'faithful' Protestant was portrayed as a victim of persecution who was suffering for the gospel. This was most graphically expressed in an extended metaphor written by Lawrence Humphrey at the very end of Mary's reign that described the sufferings of Marian Protestants in Christ-like terms.

> For everywhere the unhappy Christ was cast out and compelled to wander; at one time he was held by chains and filthy in the squalid and dark workhouse; at other times in the woods, mountains and desert places he proclaimed his kingdom; at other times, wandering in the meadows and fields, the shepherd addressed his sheep and puny flock; at other times tossed hither and thither on the sea and waves, he became a sailor dressed in slave's clothes and in a little ship with his disciples he addressed a few; sometimes whispering with pious men in London or elsewhere in some small secret place, frequently fleeing, fearful and terrified, forced to leave his own country and flee into other lands, often on the cross, in flames, under hard and dire torments he held whatever meetings it was possible to have with you. Whenever he could find with you no nest where he could lay his head and when for a while he would steal away from imminent danger, when he was not permitted to speak, at least he provided occasionally someone as an emissary and apostle; at other times he sent off a letter or book with his command, like a courier or messenger.[8]

By supplying full and unequivocal martyrs for the cause, the executions enabled the English to share the experience of sharp persecution with many of their fellow Protestants in Europe. Most important, the English deaths justified the employment of the familiar language and imagery of Christian martyrdom. When writing from Strasbourg to Calvin on October 20, 1555 and before he knew for certain whether Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley had gone to the stake, Sir John Cheke mused on paper concerning the different aspects of the martyrdom facing the English ecclesiastical hierarchy.[9] He felt

[8] Lawrence Humphrey, *De religionis conservatione et reformatione vera* (Basel, 1559), pp. 9–10. Trans. by Janet Kemp in her thesis, 'Laurence Humphrey, Elizabethan Puritan: His Life and Political Theories', PhD diss. (West Virginia University, 1978), pp. 171–2.

[9] Sir John Cheke to John Calvin, 20 Oct. 1555, *Original Letters Relative to the English Reformation*, ed. H. Robinson, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Parker Society, 1846), vol. 1, pp. 142–5.

that while the bishops accepted and even welcomed their fate, their deaths would be a disaster for the church and their loss would cause distress to all those whom they had led in the past and should have led in the future. However, their constancy and witness would be a shining example for others; this last sentiment acquiring a subsequent poignancy in the light of Cheke's own capture, recantation and death the following year. In his letter Cheke moved to the more positive assessment of 'this slaughter of godly men', 'that the living cannot be so useful by their teaching, as the dead can by their example', and that God might be using the severity of divine justice to bring the English back to true Christianity. He ended by asserting that God's purpose must be for the good of the elect.

Here, as elsewhere, the exiles emphasised the need for divine punishment to cleanse England. A belief in the redemptive suffering of the martyrs and a more tentative assertion of trust in God's purposes offered the best way of coping with the pain of knowing close friends were suffering. These sentiments were characteristic of the exiles' reactions to the initial wave of executions. The English situation was not, however, strictly parallel to that facing other European Protestants. The blood of the martyrs was even more important to English Protestants, because it would help wash away the shame of their country's apostasy: a problem unique to the English experience. At the start of Queen Mary's reign one of the trickiest challenges facing the Protestants had been to explain why the kingdom had turned its back on the light of the gospel that had been shining in England during Edward's reign. The kingdom had abandoned God and committed the sin of apostasy. The arrival of the executions could even be given a form of welcome since the blood of the martyrs was the most powerful antidote to England's shame. By linking them directly with Christ's suffering, the martyrs helped purge the sins of the kingdom. Since the saints and the treasury of merits were forbidden theological ground for Protestants, there was an obvious reluctance to over-emphasise the redemptive suffering of the martyrs. However, their constancy unto death brought a major psychological lift and did much to restore English Protestant self-confidence.

Anger was one of the strongest emotions released by the news of the burnings and it built as the persecution continued. This was directed against the persecutors both individually and collectively. The targeting of Stephen Gardiner, bishop of Winchester, and Edmund Bonner, bishop of London, particularly as it emerged in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, is well known. However, the general increase in venom against Catholic opponents that followed the executions has perhaps been overlooked. In his letter from Strasbourg to Henry Bullinger on 23 August 1555, Sir Richard Morison was struggling with his anger as he attempted to convince himself God knew

what was best for his people. He consoled himself that divine justice would catch up with his enemies:

> Saul sought to destroy David, but did no more than attempt so great a crime. Among us, how many living members of Christ are thrown into the flames! Saul, who was his own murderer, saw his three sons slain in one day; and shall Winchester always live? Shall he live to increase, and not to lay aside his boldness? God liveth and is no less a hater of wickedness now than he has ever been heretofore.[10]

A more generalised attack upon the persecutors was made in a prayer used during the exile which petitioned God, 'to root up the rotten race of the ungodly to the end that they being consumed in the fire of thine indignation thine exiled church may in their own land find place of habitation'.[11]

The effect of such a mix of emotions upon the exiles can be viewed most clearly by analysing the evidence that has survived from the Genevan congregation. In addition to personal correspondence that revealed individual reactions, the more public response to the executions can be gauged in these exiles' polemic between 1555 and 1558. Less obvious sources for the impact of the persecution can be found in the major products of the Genevan congregation: its order of worship, metrical psalter and biblical translation. These texts later became the chief transmitters of the congregation's understanding of the Marian persecution to future generations of British Protestants. Reaching a wider audience than Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, the Psalm Book, Geneva Bible and the *Book of Common Order* moulded the fundamental assumptions about the Marian persecution within the English-reading Protestant world.

Although some exiles had taken refuge in Geneva from the early days of Mary's reign, a separate English-speaking congregation was not formally established until 1 November 1555. Those who had withdrawn following the 'Troubles' in the exile congregation at Frankfurt were able to find refuge in Calvin's city. In Frankfurt these exiles had objected to the use of some elements of the Book of Common Prayer.[12] They had also been shocked by the treatment of John Knox, who had been ministering to them. On

[10] Sir Richard Morison to Henry Bullinger, 23 Aug. 1555, *Original Letters*, vol. 1, p. 150.

[11] Prayer used in the persecution printed in J. Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, III/ii, pp. 315–19, no. XL.

[12] Euan Cameron, 'Frankfurt and Geneva: The European Context of John Knox's Reformation', in R. Mason (ed.), *John Knox and the British Reformation* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), pp. 51–73. The new material and chronology of the controversy are found in Timothy Duguid, 'The "Troubles at Frankfurt": A New Chronology', *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 12 (2013), pp. 243–68; and *Letters from Exile*.

account of his direct criticism of the Holy Roman Emperor, the Frankfurt authorities had banished Knox from the city in 1555.[13] He had come to Geneva, though he had left shortly afterwards to make a secret visit to England and Scotland that lasted from the summer of 1555 to midsummer 1556. The 'Knoxian' group in Frankfurt, reassured by favourable soundings during William Whittingham's preparatory visit, arrived in Geneva as a party in the autumn of 1555. By the start of November they were sufficiently settled to constitute themselves formally as a church and share the use of the 'Auditoire' building (St Marie de la Nove) with the Italian exile congregation.[14]

Since liturgy had been the major bone of contention at Frankfurt, the congregation's first task in Geneva was to draw up their own order of worship, the *Forme of Prayers,* and publish it on 10 February 1556 in English and Latin.[15] The Preface explained that solidarity with Protestants in England had encouraged the congregation to create this liturgy: 'we, to whome though God hath geven more libertie, yet no lesse lamentinge your bondage then rejoysinge in our owne deliverance frome that Bablyonicall slavery and antichristian yoke'.[16] The contentions that prompted the move from Frankfurt to Geneva led the new congregation to feel they had undertaken a second exile.[17] This second departure had been provoked by fellow exiles, precisely those who should have been on the same side. This gave the Genevan exiles an even stronger identification with those who faced direct persecution in England, as they explicitly stated in the Preface, 'Wherfore we beinge nowe under the same crosse of affliction that you our deare Brethern are''.[18] A similar identification was expressed in the 'Prayer for the Whole Estate of Christ's Church', one of the major intercessions within the Sunday

[13] For the 'Troubles' from Knox's perspective, see Dawson, *Knox*, pp. 90–108. In their letter to John Calvin, Knox's opponents accused him of provoking the start of the executions in England: 'that outrageous pamphlet of Knox's added much oil to the flame of persecution in England'. *Original Letters,* vol. 2, p. 761.

[14] The Genevan congregation and its records are discussed in C. Martin, *Les Protestants Anglais réfugiés à Genève au temps de Calvin, 1555–60* (Geneva: Librairie A. Julien, 1915).

[15] Although the *Forme* contained key elements of one of the liturgies used in Frankfurt for Sunday Morning Prayer and Communion, it was compiled in Geneva in the winter of 1555–6 and reflected the experiences of that period rather than the earlier ones.

[16] *The Forme of Prayers* (Geneva, 1556) printed in *The Works of John Knox*, ed. D. Laing, 6 vols. (Edinburgh, 1846–64), vol. 4, p. 160.

[17] A theme present in Christopher Goodman's sermon at the first service, Manuscript notes of the sermon, 1 Nov. 1555, DD/PP/839, pp. 17–21.

[18] Knox, *Works*, vol. 4, p. 168.

Morning Service.[19] The vulnerability felt by the exiles led them to petition God to preserve them

> against all assaultes of Satan, who goeth abowte continually like a roaring lyon, seeking to devoure us . . . And seinge we lyve nowe in these moste perillous tymes, let thy Fatherly providence defende us against the violence of all our enemies, which do every where pursue us; but chiefely againste the wicked rage and furious uproares of that Romyshe idoll, enemie to thy Christe.[20]

They prayed directly for England, 'we moste humbly beseche thee to shewe thy pitie upon our miserable contrie of England, which once, through thy mercie, was called to libertie, and now for their and our synnes, is broght unto moste vile slauery and Babylonicall bondage'. The biblical image of wolves, made so familiar by William Turner's run of polemics in the Edwardian period, was used to express anger at the clerical persecutors, 'Roote owte from thence (o lord) all raueninge wolues, which to fyll their bellies destroie thy flocke'. Specific mention was made of those who faced suffering and death in England and their utter reliance upon spiritual strength and comfort was emphasised.

> And shewe thy great mercies upon those our bretherne which are persecuted, cast in prison, and dayly condemned to deathe for the testimonie of thy trueth. And thogh they be vtterly destitute of all mans ayde, yet let thy swete comfort neuer departe from them: but so inflame their hartes with thy holy spirite, that thei may boldely and chearefully abide suche tryall as thy godly wisdome shall appoint.

In a more triumphalist mood the positive effect of the martyrs' witness and death was celebrated. 'So that at lenght, aswell by their deathe as by their life, the kingdome of thy deare Sonne Jesus Christ may increase and shyne through all the worlde.'[21] One minor consolation was that the church in

[19] This prayer immediately followed the sermon in the order of service, taking the place of Calvin's Long Prayer, B. D. Spinks, *From the Lord and 'The Best Reformed Churches': A Study of Eucharistic Liturgy in the English Puritan and Separatist Traditions 1550–1633* (Rome: Centro Liturgico Vincenziano, 1984), p. 78. In this prayer the congregation prayed, 'this seede of thy worde, nowe sowen amongest us, may take suche depe roote, that neither the burninge heate of persecution cause it to wither, nether the thorny cares of this lyfe do choke it'. Knox, *Works*, vol. 4, p. 182.

[20] Knox, *Works*, vol. 4, p. 183. The image of the roaring lion came from 1 Pet 5:8 and was linked to Ps 22:13, and in the Geneva Bible the New Testament verse was cross-referenced to the pleas for deliverance in Pss 23 and 54.

[21] Knox, *Works*, vol. 4, pp. 184–5.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930618000327 Published online by Cambridge University Press

England's suffering would be a warning to other Protestants. Opening the Morning Service was the 'Confession of our Synnes framed for our tyme out of the 9 Chapter of Daniel' when the congregation acknowledged,

> O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, unto us perteyneth nothing but open shame, as it ys come to passe this day unto our miserable contry of Englande; . . . [others may] beholde the grevous plagues of our contrie, the continuall sorrowes of our afflicted bretherne, and our wofull banishment. And let our afflictions and juste ponishemente be an admonition and warninge to other nations amongest whome we are skattered, that with all reverence they may obey thy holy gospell.[22]

The Psalms were accorded a central place within public worship, and within private devotion they offered great spiritual comfort and release. Led by William Whittingham and assisted by William Kethe and later by John Pulleyne, the Genevan congregation undertook the augmentation and revision of the English metrical versions of the Psalms that had begun in Frankfurt. For the exiles the Psalms had acquired additional relevance because they were assumed to encapsulate the life of the church throughout the ages. The first additions were printed as part of the *Forme of Prayers* in 1556, including Psalm 137, which dwells on the sorrow of exile, and penitential psalms such as Psalm 51, used to express the depth of repentance that might turn God's wrath from England. Work continued throughout Mary's reign, culminating in what has become known as the Anglo-Genevan Psalter. The care taken over matching the music and versification to the sentiments of the Psalms indicated how deeply felt these emotions were and what an important role the metrical psalms played in the spiritual life of the community.[23]

Sixteenth-century commentators assumed King David composed most of the Psalms, and the Genevan congregation saw them as an extended commentary upon the theme of his own persecution and deliverance under King Saul. The exiles used the Psalms to focus upon the English persecutors and to remind themselves that these enemies would receive their

[22] Knox, *Works*, vol. 4, pp. 179–80; Spinks, *From the Lord*, pp. 77–8. This prayer written by Miles Coverdale was part of the liturgy used in the exile congregation in Wesel; Robin Leaver, *'Goostly psalmes and spirituall songes': English and Dutch Metrical Psalms from Coverdale to Utenhove, 1535–1566* (Oxford: OUP, 1991), pp. 195–215. Coverdale eventually settled in Geneva in 1558. The use of the Book of Daniel formed an essential part of the exiles' apocalyptic framework; see the 'Argument' from the Geneva Bible quoted below at n. 35.

[23] Timothy Duguid, *Metrical Psalmody in Print and Practice: English 'Singing Psalms' and Scottish 'Psalm Buiks', c1547–1640* (Farnham: Routledge, 2014), ch. 1.

punishment in God's good time. The Geneva Bible's 'Argument' at the start of the Psalms explained, 'The wicked and the persecuters of the children of God shal se how the hand of God is ever against them: and thogh he suffer them to prosper for a while, yet he brideleth them, in so muche as they can not touche an heere of ones head, except he permit them, and how in the end their destruction is most miserable.'[24] The phrase about enemies being clothed in confusion found in Psalm 35:26 received the comment: 'This praier shal alwaies be verified against them yt persecute the faithful'.[25] The focus upon the persecutors channelled the anger provoked by the burnings and for the Genevan congregation silently countered the assertion that the martyrs were dying defending the Book of Common Prayer. Their own critical stance over the Edwardian liturgy encouraged them to direct attention away from what the martyrs were defending and towards those who executed them.

Since King David was believed to prefigure Christ, and because his story offered a guide for the life of the church, examining the details of David's life helped Marian Protestants face their own troubles. In particular, in the greatest of the products of the Genevan congregation David's career before he became king of Israel was seized upon as a prime example of persecution. Most of the translation of the Geneva Bible was completed by the time the congregation departed at the end of Queen Mary's reign, though it was not through the press until 1560. King David's relevance to contemporary events was carefully explained by the anonymous translators in the Arguments to 1–2 Samuel, which read like a commentary upon Queen Mary's reign. They pointed out that in 1 Samuel the Israelites had failed to follow the ordering of the church laid down by God, demanding instead a king to rule them. Therefore God

> gaue them a tyrant and a hypocrite to rule over them, that they might learne, that the persone of a King is not sufficient to defend them, except God by his power preserve and kepe them. . . . he [Saul] was by the voyce of God put downe from his state, and David the true figure of Messiah placed in his steade, whose pacience, modestie, constancie, persecution by open enemies, fained friends, and dissembling flatterers are left to the Church and to every member of the same, as a paterne and example to beholde their state and vocacion.[26]

[24] *Geneva Bible A Facsimile of the 1560 edition* (Madison and Milwaukee, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), fo. 235r. For a discussion of the Geneva trans. see David Daniel, *The Bible in English* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), chs. 16–17.

[25] Geneva Bible, fo. 242r.

[26] Geneva Bible, fo. 121r.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930618000327 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Greater hope was found in 2 Samuel, which showed how the Jewish king had triumphed: David 'setteth forthe Christ Iesus the chief King, who came of Dauid according to the flesh, and was persecuted on every side with outward and inward enemies, aswel in his owne persone, as in his members, but at length he overcometh all his enemies and giueth his Church victorie against all power bothe spiritual & temporal'.[27] David's story allowed King Saul to be portrayed as an archetypical tyrant and hypocrite, attributes demonstrated by his persecution of David. Even what appeared to be one of Saul's generous acts after David had spared his life, could be turned round by the comment in the note to 1 Samuel 24:21: 'Thogh this tyrant saw and confessed the favour of God toward David, yet ceaseth not to persecute him against his conscience'.[28] The point the Geneva Bible was concerned to establish was that cruelty and persecution created a tyrant. The coupling of persecution with tyranny was a significant step within the process of radicalisation among the Genevan exiles. Echoing Richard Morison's remark, the Geneva Bible welcomed the terrible fate awaiting persecutors, highlighting King Saul's suicide, 'So we se that his cruel life hathe a desperate end, as is commonly sene in them that persecute the children of God.'[29]

It was predictable that Queen Jezebel would be used as a biblical exemplar for England's monarch. The identification of Queen Mary with that Old Testament ruler initially focused upon her 'idolatry' and reintroduction of 'false gods' into the kingdom, but the execution of Protestants added a further dimension. The persecuting cruelty exhibited by Jezebel came to dominate the exiles' elision of the two queens.[30] The note upon 1 Kings 21:15, when Jezebel informed Ahab about Naboth's death hammered home the point and added a gender twist for full measure. 'This example of monstreous crueltie the holy Gost leaueth to vs to the intent yt we shulde abhorre all tyrannie, and specially in them, whome nature & kinde shulde moue to be pitiful and inclined to mercie.' There was no attempt to disguise the satisfaction of the biblical translators at the killing of Jezebel. Jehu's action was specifically commended as being divinely authorised in the note on 2 Kings 9:33: 'This he did by the motion of the Spirit of God that her blood should be shed that had shed the blood of innocents, to be a spectacle and an example of God's judgements to all tyrants.'[31] The simple

[27] Geneva Bible, fo. 135v.
[28] Geneva Bible, fo. 132v.
[29] *Geneva Bible*, f. 135v.
[30] E.g. Bartholomew Traheron, *A Warning to England to Repent* (Wesel (?), 1558), p. 6.
[31] Geneva Bible, fo. 169r. There was another commendation of Jehu's action and a cross-reference to the story in 2 Kings. This particularly annoyed King James VI/I because it

and potent revenge formula of blood for blood had provided the justification for Jezebel's ignominious fate. There was also relish in the note for 2 Kings 9:37 where Jezebel's carcase proved unidentifiable because it had been eaten by dogs: 'Thus God's iudgements appeare even in this worlde against them that suppresse his word & persecute his servants'.[32]

The theme of miraculous divine deliverance from persecution and tyranny was so central to the congregation's hope for the future that the makers of the Geneva Bible chose it to illustrate their title-page. The woodcut showed Moses and the children of Israel with their backs to the Red Sea as Pharaoh and his troops were bearing down upon them. Three texts surrounded the illustration and underlined the message: at the top, part of Exodus 14:13, 'Feare ye not, stand stil, and beholde the saluacion of the Lord, which he wil shewe to you this day'; along the bottom, Exodus 14:14, 'The Lord shal fight for you: therefore holde you your peace.' Down both sides ran Psalm 34:19, 'Great are the troubles of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth them out of all.'[33] The same woodcut was also used in the body of the text at Exodus 14, where the Red Sea crossing was recounted. This carried a full exposition of the picture's meaning that highlighted its contemporary relevance as well as including in its second point a direct swipe at the other English exiles.

> In this figure foure chief points are to be considered. First that the Church of God is ever subiect in this worlde to the Crosse & to be afflicted after one sort or other. The second, that the ministers of God following their vocation shalbe evil spoken of, and murmered against, even of them that pretend the same cause and religion that thei do. The third, that God delivereth not his Church incontinently out of dangers, but to exercise their faith and pacience continueth their troubles, yea and often tymes augmenteth them as the Israelites were now in lesse hope of their lives then when thei were in Egypt. The fourth point is, that when the dangers are moste great, then Gods helpe is moste ready to succour: for the Israelites had on ether side them, huge rockes & mountaines, before them the Sea, behinde them most cruel enemies, so that there was no way left to escape to mans iudgement.[34]

was attached to 1 Sam 26:9, where it detracted from the story of David sparing Saul's life, because he was the Lord's anointed, by commenting, 'To wit in his own private cause: for Jehu slew two Kings at Gods appointments, 2 Kings 9.24.' Geneva Bible, fo. 133v.

[32] Geneva Bible, fo. 169r.

[33] Geneva Bible, title-page.

[34] Geneva Bible, fo. 30v.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930618000327 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The general apocalyptic framework adopted by the exiles helped them tie together themes of persecution and deliverance into the New Testament experience and the ongoing sufferings of the true church.[35] In line with Protestant tradition, the Geneva Bible identified the papacy as Antichrist, but also emphasised at every opportunity a direct link with persecution. The text in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, which spoke of a 'man of sin', was explained: 'This wicked Antichrist comprehendeth the whole succession of the persecutors of the Church & all that abominable kingdome of Satan whereof some were beares, some lyons, others leopards as David describeth them, and is called the man of sin because he setteth him self against God.'[36] With an even more didactic tone, the note concerning the woman on the beast in Revelation 17:3 carefully decoded of the images, 'The beast signifieth ye ancient Rome, ye woman that sitteth thereon, the newe Rome which is the Papistrie, whose crueltie and bloud shedding is declared by skarlat'.[37]

By the time the Genevan congregation had assembled, the burnings were settling into a grisly routine and the exiles became dependent upon intermittent news bulletins from England. Their anger against the persecutors was stoked by watching from the sidelines as their friends and colleagues went into prison and to their deaths. The consequent feelings of human impotence and survivors' guilt were channelled into an almost desperate trust in divine deliverance and an increased stress upon the positive value of this suffering as part of the fight against Antichrist. From the perspective of exile and largely unaware of the nuances of the situation in England, the long years between 1555 and 1558 brought little change in the unrelenting persecution. Among most of the English exile communities, there was a noticeable slowing of polemical writing and a more quiescent, almost resigned, mood. By contrast, the Genevan exiles were extremely productive during these years, completing the liturgy, Psalter, biblical translation and a range of polemical works. Far from being quiescent, the Genevan congregation were energised by their anger, and for them witnessing persecution at a distance created its own dynamic: it radicalised them. While all the Genevan products contained elements of this radicalism, the resistance tracts of 1557–8, written by the two ministers

[35] The 'Argument' for the book of Daniel explained how the prophecies it contained revealed 'suche things as shulde come to the Church, even from the time that thei were in captivitie, to the last end of the worlde . . . And as from the beginning God ever exercised his people under the crosse, so he teachethe here, that after that Christ is offred, he wil stil leave this exercise to his Church until the dead rise againe, and Christ gather his into his kingdome in the heavens.' Geneva Bible, fo. 357r.

[36] Geneva Bible [new foliation for NT], fo. 96v.

[37] Geneva Bible [NT], fo. 120r.

to the congregation, gave it the clearest expression. Christopher Goodman published *How Superior Powers Ought to be Obeyd* on the first day of 1558.[38] John Knox's *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the monstrous regiment of women* was published anonymously at about the same time, and he directed three other 1558 tracts primarily to Scotland, *The Copie of a Lettre deliuered to the ladie Marie, Regent of Scotland . . . augmented, 1558*; *The Appellation of John Knox; A Letter addressed to the Commonalty of Scotland*. [39] The writings of other congregation members, William Whittingham and Anthony Gilby, the leading lights of the biblical translation, and William Kethe who, like Whittingham, worked on the metrical Psalms, all directly supported those resistance ideas.[40] Later evidence suggests that there was considerable, though not universal, support for resistance ideas among the congregation.[41]

Two key linkages, the association of persecution and tyranny and the punishment of persecutors, made in the *Forme*, the Anglo-Genevan Psalter and Geneva Bible, also furnished crucial elements within the resistance theories. Goodman's tract had started life as a sermon preached to the Genevan congregation in 1557 and demonstrated the significance of these linkages. The text from Acts taken for the original sermon contained the well-known assertion of Peter and John, 'We ought to obey God rather than men'.[42] From the beginning of the Protestant revolt, this had been used as the central conscience clause permitting passive disobedience to any 'ungodly' directive from a ruling authority. It had become a fundamental text for all those facing persecution and in Marian England it underpinned the validity of the martyrdoms. By selecting this text, Goodman was preaching directly about the persecution, and his radical interpretation would have been understood within that context. He called for direct resistance to Catholicism to supplement the willingness to die the martyr's death. His doctrine of the 'contrary' (i.e. that all negative divine commands

[38] *How Superior Powers Ought to be Obeyd of their Subiects: and Wherin They May Lawfully by God's Worde Be Disobeyed and Resisted* (Geneva, 1558); hereafter *HSP*.

[39] Knox's 1558 tracts are printed in *Works*, vol. 4, and *John Knox: On Rebellion*, ed. R. Mason (Cambridge: CUP, 1994). For a discussion of their content, Dawson, *Knox*, pp. 139–46, 154–63.

[40] Whittingham and Kethe added material to Goodman's book, and Gilby appended his *Admonition to England and Scotland to Repent* to Knox's *Admonition*. Kethe's metrical version of Ps 94, 'O Lord since vengeance doth to thee', was appended to Knox's *Appellation*. See Dawson, *Knox*, p. 160.

[41] Dawson, *Knox*, pp. 164–76; 'Trumpeting Resistance: Christopher Goodman and John Knox', in R. Mason (ed.), *John Knox and the British Reformations* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), pp. 131–53; 'Revolutionary Conclusions: The Case of the Marian Exiles', *History of Political Thought* 11 (1990), pp. 257–72.

[42] Acts 4:19 and Acts 5:29.

carried a positive corollary) was a fairly crude polemical tool enabling him to establish the case for positive action.

> We learne by the commandements of God, that so oft as he forbiddeth any thing which he wolde not to be done, in the self same, he commandeth us the contrarie, as for example: Thou shalt not murther, steale, commit adulterie, or beare false wittnes. It is not ynough to abstaine frome these thinges, neither is God therin fullie obeyed, except we do the contrarie...that is, to save, preserve, and defende, as well the goodes as the persones of our brethren and neighbours.[43]

This argument gained its force from the original text's centrality for English Protestants facing persecution. The theme of co-suffering with the martyrs was taken one step further and presented as two forms of positive action. Resistance and martyrdom became complementary ways of fighting against Antichrist.

The automatic link between persecution and tyranny was equally important in Goodman's exegesis of other central biblical texts. To advocate resistance within a Protestant framework, Goodman was faced with the injunction from Romans 13 to obey 'the powers that be'. He tackled this proof text by reinterpreting the section about powers being 'ordained of God' and arguing it was illogical to think that God would approve rulers who became tyrants and acted against divine laws. Therefore tyrants could not be ordained of God and consequently their subjects did not owe them obedience. Persecution automatically produced tyranny because its 'cruelty' and attack upon the 'innocent' led to a complete denial of justice. The idea that a tyrant had by definition ceased to be a 'public' person because he had forfeited his political authority provided the essential precondition for Goodman's use of Lutheran arguments for resistance derived from private-law theories.

> It is all one to be without a Ruler, and to have such as will not rule in Gods feare. Yea it is much better to be destitut altogether, then to have a tyrant and murtherer. For then are they nomore publik persons contemning their publik auctoritie in usinge it agaynst the Lawes, but are to be taken of all men, as private persones, and so examyned and punished.[44]

[43] *HSP*, pp. 69–70.

[44] *HSP*, pp. 187–8. 'An open way to rebellion' was how 'Morley', an owner of Goodman's book, which he had received from its author, laconically commented in the margin opposite this passage, Durham University Library copy of *HSP*. For a discussion of the private law argument, Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols.

The theme of punishment played a central role within Goodman's main argument for resistance, which rested upon the covenant between God and his people. The execution of punishment formed the essential covenantal obligation binding each member of the people of God. This was both a collective and, in Goodman's most radical assertion, an individual obligation. To remain within the covenant the people or even an individual must ensure a tyrant and murderer was punished, and that duty overrode normal patterns of political obedience.

> And thoghe it appeare at the firste sight a great disordre, that the people shulde take unto them the punishment of transgression, yet, when the Magistrates and other officers cease to do their dutie, they are as it were, without officers, yea, worse then if they had none at all, and then God geveth the sworde in to the peoples hande, and he himself is become immediately their head.[45]

Knox was equally vehement about the need to punish and made his explicit statement in that section of the *Appellation* which directly addressed England:

> And therfor I fear not to affirm, that it had bene the dutie of the Nobilitie, Judges, Rulers, and People of England, not only to have resisted and againstanded Marie, that Jesebel, whome they call their Queen, but also to have punished her to the death, with all the sort of her idolatrous Preestes, together with all such as should have assisted her, what tyme that shee and they openly began to suppresse Christes Evangil, to shed the blood of the saincts of God, and to erect that most divellish idolatrie, the Papistical abominations, and his usurped tyrannie.[46]

It was the anger generated by the persecution that fuelled this insistence upon punishment, because the blood of the martyrs needed to be revenged. The close association of tyranny, persecution and idolatry encapsulated in the story of Jezebel facilitated such a merging of categories within the political theories of resistance. The central place of persecution in Knox's own radical thinking was revealed in September 1561 during his first discussion with Mary, Queen of Scots, on the subject of obedience to a Catholic

(Cambridge: CUP, 1978), vol. 2, pp. 189–238; J. Dawson, 'Resistance and Revolution in Sixteenth-Century Thought: The Case of Christopher Goodman', in J. Van Den Berg and P. Hoftijzer (eds), *The Church, Change and Revolution* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), pp. 69–79.

[45] *HSP*, p. 185. Archbishop Parker recognised the radicalism of the exiles' writings and lamented to Nicholas Bacon in his letter of 1 Mar. 1559 that nobody would be safe riding in the streets or even in their bed. *Correspondence of Matthew Parker*, ed. J. Bruce and T. Perowne (Cambridge: CUP, 1853), p. 61.

[46] Knox, *Works*, vol. 4, p. 507.

ruler. The Reformer explained that in Scotland he was perfectly prepared to live obediently under her rule, providing there was no persecution of Protestants.

> Yf the Realme fyndis no inconvenience frome the regiment of a woman, that whiche thei approve shall I not farther disallow, then within my awin breast, but salbe alse weall content to lyve under your Grace, as Paull was to lyve under Nero; and my hope is, that so long as that ye defyle not your handis with the blood of the sanctis of God, that neather I nor that Booke shall eather hurt you or your authoritie: for in verray deed, Madame, that Book was written most especialie against that wicked Jesabell of England.

As his statement made crystal clear, what separated the Scottish from the English Queen Mary was not the ruler's Catholicism nor even her gender but the shedding of the blood of the martyrs. For Knox, 'that wicked Jesabell of England' was indeed 'Bloody Mary'.[47]

The Genevan congregation's experience of Marian persecution from a distance had a profound and radicalising effect upon their thinking and left a scar upon the individual exiles that they carried for the rest of their lives.[48] In Knox's graphic shorthand phrase, 'Satan's bludy clawses' could describe the entire Marian persecution. Since that exile experience was one stage removed from the immediacy of those who had suffered persecution within England, it automatically acquired a different perspective. The geographical distance had already placed the burnings into a more generalised setting where the persecutors became the main focus for anger. The Genevans sought to universalise their experience by understanding the Marian persecution in biblical terms and within an apocalyptic timeframe. Such a view complemented the presentation in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* of the martyrs as the story of the 'true' church.

The Genevan understanding of persecution was transmitted across time because it was transported into the mainstream of British Protestant consciousness via the Geneva Bible, the Psalm Books and the *Book of Common Order*. The centrality of persecution as a theme within the Geneva Bible and its strong association with the Old Testament experience of the people of God formed the bedrock of Anglo-Scottish Protestant culture. The biblical translators' repeated highlighting of the faithful remnant of Israel fed into two definitions of the nature of the true church that were held in creative tension: the persecuted minority on the one hand, and the whole people of God on the other. Within English Protestant identity the sacrifice of the

[47] Knox, *Works*, vol. 2, p. 279.
[48] Dawson, *Knox*, p. 176.

martyrs' blood ensured the shame and sin of England's apostasy under Mary had been redeemed. Similarly, the assumption that reign had witnessed a ferocious battle within the continuing cosmic struggle between the forces of Christ and Antichrist became the conventional view for all British Protestants in the latter years of the sixteenth century. Neatly confined to the past, when applied in retrospect to Mary Tudor's reign, the equation between persecution and tyranny did not appear particularly threatening. However, it contained a radical element with the potential to destabilise ecclesiastical politics in Elizabethan England and Jacobean Scotland. From 1560 onwards the language and concept of persecution had become a received part of Protestant discourse within the British mainland. Once those who disagreed with government policy towards the church began to categorise themselves as persecuted, the potential for further radicalisation existed. In Elizabethan England the Vestments Controversy made Anthony Gilby, and many of his fellow former Genevan exiles, especially bitter. By 1566–7 he was blaming the troubles faced by non-conforming ministers upon those who had been former exiles and colleagues. He accused the 'lordly' bishops of despising the ministers and pointed out they 'persecute those same persons, whom of late they loved as brethren, and bare Christ's cross with them in the late persecutions'.[49] The subsequent struggles of the Protestant opposition within the Elizabethan church encouraged the formation of a mentality of persecution. Although this did not usher in political radicalism or even extensive separatism, it did help the 'godly' regard themselves as an identifiable community.[50] In the long run this encouraged the withdrawal of the Pilgrim Fathers across the Atlantic, and throughout the three kingdoms the link between tyranny and persecution resurfaced with a vengeance during the reign of Charles I.

In Scotland, despite having no comparable experience of widespread executions for heresy before 1560, the assumption that persecution formed part of the Scottish Kirk's life took deep root. It was primarily mediated through the Geneva Bible, the Psalm Books and the *Book of Common Order*, the bedrocks of private devotion in Scotland, as well as the official books

[49] Written in 1566–7, A. Gilby, *A pleasaunt dialogue betweene a souldier . . . and a chaplaine* (London, 1581), sig A8r. The Vestments controversy also split the unity of the former Genevan exiles with William Whittingham e.g. receiving harsh criticism for his eventual acceptance of vestments see Patrick Collinson, 'The Letters of Thomas Wood, Puritan, 1566–1577', in *his Godly People* (London: Hambledon Press, 1983), p. 57.

[50] Peter Iver Kaufman, 'The Protestant Opposition to Elizabethan Religious Reform', in Robert Tittler and Norman Jones (eds), *A Companion to Tudor Britain* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), pp. 271–88.

of worship for the new Reformed Kirk. Within a few years the concepts of the persecuted minority and the faithful remnant had settled into the Kirk's self-image, assisted by John Knox's own increasingly paranoid views at the end of his life.[51] During the reign of James VI, the presbyterian wing of the Kirk consistently employed this language of persecution when it clashed with the royal government over the polity of the Kirk. By the time of Charles I's ecclesiastical innovations, the mentality of persecution was a permanent fixture and contributed one essential strand to the writing of the National Covenant and to the outbreak of the Covenanting Wars.[52] Through its enduring products, the Genevan exile congregation was able to universalise its own experience of 'Satan's bludy clawses'. Having transformed anger at the Marian persecutors into a positive and radical dynamic that animated their liturgy, metrical Psalms, biblical translation and tracts, those exiles transmitted their understanding across time. It became a profoundly significant, and potentially explosive, legacy for the whole of Anglophone Protestantism.

[51] Dawson, *Knox*, pp. 286–304.

[52] For a discussion of some of the strands within the National Covenant, J. Dawson, 'Bonding, Religious Allegiance and Covenanting', in Steve Boardman and Julian Goodare (eds), *Kings, Lords and Men in Scotland and Britain, 1300–1625: Essays in Honour of Jenny Wormald* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), pp. 155–72.