

WORK IN PROGRESS PAPER

'Satan's bloody clawes':

how the exile congregation in Geneva reacted to the Marian persecution

This emotively-charged phrase, 'Satan's bloody clawes', describing the Marian executions from a Protestant perspective, travelled across a distance, both of time and place. In another reign and more than a decade after the events he was describing, John Knox casually employed the phrase in a private letter to his best friend Christopher Goodman. Knox, in common with Goodman, the rest of the Genevan exiles and all the other refugees harbouring in Continental Europe during the reign of Mary Tudor, had experienced the persecutions and burnings from the geographical distance of exile. Within the relative tranquillity of Elizabeth's reign and thereby gaining the distance of time, Knox reflected in 1567 upon his first meeting with Goodman. 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 what the best course of action might be under Queen Mary, the new Roman Catholic ruler. The Scotsman had persuaded the Englishman 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 recalled he had spoken to Goodman, 'to praye youe not to remayne within Satans bloody clawes then horribly usyd within this land, alledging that God no doubt had preservyd youe for an other tyme to the great comfort of his Church.'¹

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 Knox's and Goodman's

¹ Knox to Goodman, n.d. but 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Denbighshire Record Office, Plas Power MSS DD/PP/839 85-7 printed in Jane E A Dawson and Lionel K.J. Glassey, 'Some Unpublished Letters from John Knox to Christopher Goodman' *Scottish Historical Review* LXXXIV 2005 192-5 at 192.

paths converged in the city of Geneva where they were elected as the joint ministers to the newly-formed English exile congregation and they 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 which in turn helped shape Protestantism within the British Isles for the entire early modern period.

With its copious surviving evidence, the Genevan congregation opens a revealing window upon the reactions to the persecution in England of the Marian exiles. Since the congregation was established after the executions for heresy had begun, 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 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.²

The eighteen-month hiatus [1553-5] between the re-establishment of Roman 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 'phony 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. A certain relief and even a curious kind of welcome

² J. Dawson, 'John Knox and the Example of Geneva' [forthcoming]

alongside a sense of guilt and a rising tide of anger were generated by the news of the martyrdoms.

Having abandoned their homeland, the exiles had initially felt a sense of guilt resulting in a strong desire to justify their actions. The 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 which had been discussed by John Knox and Christopher Goodman 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 explanations and justifications of the decision to leave the country.³ The exiles emphasised they were religious refugees banished from 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 the Mass was categorised as completely unacceptable by faithful Protestants even though it was the legally-established religion of the land. To take such a stance would intensify persecution and probably, in the long run, result in the execution of those who remained constant. The exiles were placed in the invidious position of demanding, from the relative safety of Protestant Europe, 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 chosen the cowardly path themselves.

³ This is admirably discussed in J. Wright 'Marian Exiles and the Legitimacy of Flight from Persecution' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 52 (2001) 220-43. A list of exile writings can be found in E.J. Baskerville *A Chronological Bibliography of Propaganda and Polemic, 1553-8* American Philosophical Society, Memoirs, 136, (Philadelphia, 1979) and A. Pettegree 'The Latin polemic of the Marian exiles' in *Marian Protestantism: Six Studies* (Aldershot, 1996).

Paradoxically, the actual executions alleviated some of the guilt felt by the exiles. There was a wave of relief that the predicted intense persecution had indeed materialised and the waiting of the 'phoney war' was over. The burnings fulfilled their previous dire warnings of what would inevitably happen under a Roman Catholic ruler. The re-establishment of Papal obedience and its deadly consequences brought an 'I-told-you-so' satisfaction. The exiles could also now be confident they themselves 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 martyrdoms gave a sense of particular closeness to the Early Church. Persecution also gave credence to 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. The arrival of the executions clarified the situation and for the exiles in particular neatly polarised it. With a considerable sense of relief the exiles could speak about the choice between alternatives: Christ and Antichrist.⁴

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 burning. Whilst not undervaluing the blood of the martyrs, every 'faithful' Protestant was portrayed

⁴ For a discussion of the apocalyptic context of the exiles ideas, J. Dawson 'The Apocalyptic Thinking of the Marian Exiles' in *Prophecy and Eschatology Studies in Church History*, Subsidia, 10 ed. M. Wilks (Oxford, 1994), 75-91.

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 which described the sufferings of the Marian Protestants as if they were being experienced by Christ.

'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 [10] 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. But these things, as I said, were done privately and to some extent secretly, and even with fear, as by one who was a prisoner and called to court where he is permitted to utter scarcely anything unless at the whim and nod of the judge.'⁵

By supplying full and unequivocal martyrs for the cause, the executions also 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

⁵ Lawrence Humphrey *De Religionis Conservatione et Refomatione Vera* [Basle 1559] 9-10 [Translation by Janet Kemp in her thesis, 'Laurence Humphrey, Elizabethan puritan: his life and political theories', PhD diss., West Virginia University, 1978 171-2]

language and imagery of Christian martyrdom. When writing from Strasburgh 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.⁶ Though they accepted and even welcomed their fate, the bishops' 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 would 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. The belief in the redemptive suffering of the martyrs and the more tentative assertion of trust in God's purposes provided the best way of coping with the pain of knowing friends were enduring such suffering. These sentiments were characteristic of the exiles' reactions to the initial wave of executions. In his preface to William Whittingham's New Testament of 1557, it was Calvin himself who instinctively reached for Tertullian's graphic image of the dying seed producing the crop to encapsulate the identification of the English martyrs with the Early Church and with the general theme of martyrdom.

'Let us not be discomfited as thogh all hope were lost, when we se the true servants of God dye and destroyed before our eyes: for it is saied by Tertullian, and hath alwaies

⁶ Sir John Cheke to John Calvin, 20 Oct 1555, *Original Letters relative to the English Reformation* ed. H. Robinson 2 vols (Parker Society, Cambridge, 1846) I 142-5.

bene so proved, and shal be to the ende of the worlde, that the bloude of Martyrs is the sede sowing of the Churche'.⁷

The English situation was not, however, strictly parallel to that facing other European Protestants. The blood of the martyrs was even more important to the 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 which had been shining in England during the reign of King Edward VI. 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 method of covering England's shame. By linking them directly with Christ's suffering, the martyrs helped purge the sins of the kingdom. Since saints and 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 Gardiner and Bonner, especially as it emerged in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, is well known. However, the general increase in venom against Catholic opponents which followed the executions has perhaps been underestimated. In his letter from Strasburgh to Henry Bullinger on August 23 1555, Sir Richard Morison was struggling with his anger as he attempted to convince himself God knew what was

⁷ W. Whittingham *New Testament* (Geneva, 1557) Preface

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'.⁸ 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.'⁹

The effect of such a mix of emotions upon the exiles can be viewed most clearly by examining the evidence that has survived from the Genevan congregation. In addition to the personal correspondence which revealed individual reactions, the more public response to the executions can be gauged in the exiles' polemic between 1555 and 1558. Less obvious sources for the impact of the persecution can be found in the two major products of the Genevan congregation: its liturgy and its biblical translation. As well as expressing the congregation's own attitude, these products became the chief transmitters of this understanding of the Marian persecution to future generations of Protestants within England and Scotland. Since they reached a wider audience than Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, the *Geneva Bible* and the *Forme of Prayers* [or *Book of Common Order*, as it was known in Scotland] from 1560 onwards moulded British Protestants' fundamental assumptions about the Marian persecution.

⁸ Sir Richard Morison to Henry Bullinger, 23 August 1555, *OL* I 148-50 at 150.

⁹ Prayer used in the persecution printed in J. Strype *Ecclesiastical Memorials* III ii 315-9 No XL.

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 November 1555. It was deliberately created by the group who had withdrawn from Frankfurt-am-Main following the 'Troubles' in the exile congregation there. This group remained unhappy about the use at Frankfurt of some elements of the *Book of Common Prayer* and about the treatment of John Knox who had been a minister to the congregation. On account of his outspoken criticism of the Holy Roman Emperor, Knox had been banished from the city in 1555 by the Frankfurt authorities. He had come to Geneva, though he had then left to make a secret visit to England and Scotland which lasted from the summer of 1555 to midsummer 1556. The 'Knoxian' group in Frankfurt, reassured by the favourable soundings from William Whittingham's preparatory visit, arrived in Geneva as a party in the autumn of 1555. By 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.¹⁰

Since liturgy had been the major bone of contention at Frankfurt, the congregation's first task in Geneva was to draw up their own *Forme of Prayers* which was published in February 1556.¹¹ In its Preface the congregation explained that its solidarity with Protestants in England had encouraged them to draw up the liturgy, 'we, to whome though God hath geven more libertie, yet no lesse lamentinge your bondage then rejoyssinge in our owne deliverance frome that Bablyonicall slavery and antichristian yoke'.¹²

¹⁰ The Genevan congregation and its records are discussed in C. Martin, *Les Protestants Anglais réfugiés à Genève au temps de Calvin, 1555-60* (Geneva, 1915)

¹¹ 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 Genevan situation more fully than the Frankfurt one.

¹² *The Forme of Prayers* Geneva 10 Feb 1556 [STC [2nd ed] 16561], printed in *The Works of John Knox* ed D. Laing 6 vols (Edinburgh, 1846-64) IV at 160.

The circumstances prompting their move from Frankfurt to Geneva fostered the belief among the Genevan congregation that they had undertaken a second exile. This second departure had been provoked by fellow exiles, precisely those who should have been on the same side. The congregation's sense of grievance reinforced the theme of suffering and gave the Genevan exiles an even stronger identification with those who faced direct persecution in England. They explicitly stated in the Preface to the *Forme*, 'Wherefore we beinge nowe under the same crosse of affliction that you our deare Brethern are'.¹³

The congregation's sense of the closeness of the persecution was explicitly expressed in the Prayer for the Whole Estate of Christ's Church, one of the major intercessions within the Sunday Morning Service.¹⁴ That order of service formed the basis for the congregation's regular worship each Sunday and for its mid-week sermons. The image of Satan as a roaring lion emphasised the vulnerability felt by the exiles and they made explicit reference to the current situation. '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 chiefly againste the wicked rage and furious uproares of that Romyshe idoll, enemye to thy Christe'.¹⁵ They also 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

¹³ *Forme*, Knox *Works* IV 168.

¹⁴ 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, 1984) 78. In this Prayer the congregation prayed, 'this seede of thy worde, nowe sowen amongst 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.' *Forme* Knox *Works* IV 182

¹⁵ *Forme* Knox *Works* IV 183. The image came from I Peter 5 v 8 and was linked to the lion image in Psalm, 22 v 13 and in the Geneva Bible the New Testament verse was cross-referenced to the pleas for deliverance in Psalms 23 & 54.

polemics in the Edwardian period, was used to emphasise the 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 wisdom 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.'¹⁶

There was at least the constructive thought that the church in 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', an original prayer not found in other Reformed liturgies.¹⁷ In it, 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 ponishement be an admonition and

¹⁶ *Forme Knox Works* IV184-5.

¹⁷ Spink 77-8. The use of the Book of Daniel formed an essential part of the apocalyptic framework, see the 'Argument' from the Geneva Bible quoted below at n 32.

warning to other nations amongst whom we are scattered, that with all reverence they may obey thy holy gospel.¹⁸

The congregation gave a central place to the Psalms as part of their worship and as a vital devotional aid. Led by William Whittingham, they began the augmentation and revision of the metrical versions of the psalms.¹⁹ The first few additions were printed as part of the *Forme of Prayers* in 1556 and the work continued throughout Mary's reign culminating in what is now known as the Anglo-Genevan Psalter. For the exiles the Psalms had acquired additional relevance because they were assumed to encapsulate the life of the Church throughout the ages. In the Dedicatory Preface of the Psalter of 1559, rushed through the press to present to Queen Elizabeth on her accession, the young Queen was told, 'Here shall you behold the state of the church, continually persecuted and yet miraculously preserved.'²⁰

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. By using the Psalms, the exiles were able to switch attention to the persecutors in England and bolster their confidence that these enemies would receive their 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 shall see how the hand of God is ever against them: and though he suffer them to prosper for a while, yet he brideth them, in so much as they can not touch the head of one, except he permit them, and how in the end their destruction is most miserable.'²¹ The phrase about enemies being clothed in confusion found in Psalm 35

¹⁸ *Forme Knox Works* IV 179-80

¹⁹ Starting from the Sternhold and Hopkins Psalter.

²⁰ *Geneva Psalter 1559 ed.* Dedicatory Preface to Queen Elizabeth.

²¹ *Geneva Bible A Facsimile of the 1560 edition* With an introduction by Lloyd E Berry (Madison, Milwaukee, 1969) f. 235r.

v.26 received the comment: 'This praier shal alwaies be verified against them yt persecute the faithful'.²² The focus upon the persecutors channelled the anger provoked by the burnings and for the Genevan congregation silently countered the assertion 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 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, David's career before he became king of Israel was seized upon as a prime example of persecution in the greatest of the products of the Genevan congregation. Most of the translation of the *Geneva Bible* was completed by the departure of the congregation at the end of Queen Mary's reign though it was not published until 1560 under the direction of William Whittingham who had remained behind in Geneva to see it through the press. David's relevance to contemporary events was carefully explained by the anonymous Genevan translators in the Arguments to the Books of Samuel which read like a commentary upon Queen Mary's reign. They pointed out in the First Book that 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.²³ The Second

²² *Geneva Bible* f. 242r.

²³ *Geneva Bible* f. 121r.

Book brought greater hope by showing how David triumphed: David 'setteth forthe Christ Iesus the chief King, who came of Daudid 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'.²⁴

David's story allowed King Saul to be portrayed as an archetypal tyrant and hypocrite, attributes derived from 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 I Samuel 24 v.21: 'Thogh this tyrant saw and confessed the favour of God toward David, yet ceaseth not to persecute him against his conscience'.²⁵ The point the Geneva Bible was concerned to establish was that cruelty and persecution created a tyrant. The coupling of persecution with tyranny was very significant and formed part of a process of radicalisation among the Genevan exiles. In an echo of Richard Morison's remark in his letter to Bullinger, the Geneva Bible welcomed the terrible fate awaiting persecutors, commenting upon 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'.²⁶

It was predictable that Queen Jezebel would be used as a biblical exemplar for England's ruler. The identification of Queen Mary with Jezebel initially focused upon the 'idolatry' of the Queen and her re-introduction of 'false gods' into the kingdom but the execution of Protestants in England added a further dimension. The persecuting cruelty exhibited by Jezebel came to dominate the exiles' analogy with Mary Tudor.²⁷ The note upon 1 Kings 21 v15 when Jezebel informed Ahab about Naboth's death hammered home the point and

²⁴ *Geneva Bible* f. 135v.

²⁵ *Geneva Bible* f. 132v.

²⁶ *Geneva Bible* f. 135v.

²⁷ For e.g. B. Traheron *A Warning to England to Repent* (1558) 6.

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 in the note on 2 Kings 9 v 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 iudgements to all tyrants.'²⁸ The simple and potent revenge formula of blood for blood was the key element of Jezebel's fate. There was also relish in the note for 2 Kings 9 v 37 where Jezebel's carcass proved unidentifiable because it had been eaten by dogs: 'Thus God's iudgements appeare even in this worlde against them that suppress his word & persecute his servants.'²⁹

The centrality of the theme of miraculous divine deliverance from persecution and tyranny ensured the makers of the Geneva Bible chose it to illustrate their titlepage. The illustration portrayed Moses and the children of Israel about to cross the Red Sea with Pharaoh and his troops bearing down upon them. Three texts surrounded the illustration and underlined the message: at the top, part of Exodus 14 v 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 v 14, 'The Lord shal fight for you: therefore holde you your peace.' Down both sides ran Psalm 34 v 19, 'Great are the troubles of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth them out of all.'³⁰ The same illustration was also placed in the body of the text at Exodus 14 where the Red Sea crossing was recounted. This carried a full exposition of

²⁸ *Geneva Bible* f. 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 was attached to 1 Samuel 26 v. 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 Kgs 9 24.' *Geneva Bible* f. 133v.

²⁹ *Geneva Bible* f. 169r.

³⁰ *Geneva Bible* Titlepage.

the picture's meaning which highlighted the contemporary relevance and included in its second point a direct swipe at 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.¹³¹

The themes of persecution and deliverance were also neatly tied into the New Testament experience and the ongoing sufferings of the True Church through the general apocalyptic framework.³² In line with the general Protestant tradition, the Geneva Bible identified the Papacy as Antichrist but it also underlined at every opportunity the link with persecution. The text in 2 Thessalonians 2 v 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.'³³ With an even more didactic tone the note

³¹ *Geneva Bible* f. 30v.

³² 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* f. 357r.

³³ *Geneva Bible* [new foliation for NT] f. 96v.

concerning the woman on the beast in Revelation 17 v 3 provided a careful decoding 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'.³⁴

By the time the Genevan congregation had assembled much of the initial guilt and relief had dissipated as the burnings settled into a grisly routine. Watching from the sidelines and dependent upon intermittent news bulletins from England as their friends and colleagues went into prison and to their deaths, fuelled their anger against the persecutors. The sense of human impotence was channelled into an almost desperate trust in divine deliverance and an increased stress upon the positive value of the 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. For most exile communities there was a marked slowing of polemical writing and more generally a quiescent, almost resigned, mood.

By contrast the Genevan exiles were remarkably productive during these years, completing the liturgy, psalter, full biblical translation and a range of polemical works. Far from being quiescent, the Genevan congregation were energised by their anger. The experience of persecution from a distance created its own dynamic: it radicalised the exiles. Whilst all the Genevan products contain elements of this radicalism, it appeared most plainly in the resistance tracts of 1557-8. The major tracts were written by the two ministers to the congregation. Christopher Goodman published *How Superior Powers*

³⁴ *Geneva Bible* [NT] f. 120r.

Oght to be Obeyd on the first day of 1558.³⁵ 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*.³⁶ Resistance ideas were directly supported in the writings of other congregation members, William Whittingham and Anthony Gilby, the leading lights of the biblical translation, and by William Kethe who worked on the metrical psalms.³⁷ Later evidence suggests that there was considerable, though not universal, support for resistance ideas among the congregation.³⁸

Two key linkages, the association of persecution and tyranny and the punishment of persecutors, made in the *Forme*, *Geneva Psalter*, and *Geneva Bible*, also furnished critical elements within the resistance theories. Goodman's tract, which started life as a sermon preached to the Genevan congregation in 1557, demonstrated the significance of these linkages. The text Goodman had taken for the original sermon was from Acts, the well-known assertion of Peter and John, 'We ought to obey God rather than men'.³⁹ 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 choosing this text, Goodman was

³⁵ *How Superior Powers Oght to be Obeyd of their Subiects: and Wherin They May Lawfully by God's Worde Be Disobeyed and Resisted* Geneva (Jean Crespin) 1558 [STC 12020] hereafter *HSP*.

³⁶ Knox's 1558 tracts printed in *Works IV* and *John Knox: On Rebellion* ed. R. Mason (Cambridge, 1994). For a discussion of the different audiences see J. Dawson 'The two John Knoxes: England Scotland and the 1558 tracts', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 42 (1991), 555-76.

³⁷ Whittingham and Kethe added material to Goodman's book and Gilby appended his *Admonition to England and Scotland to Repent* to Knox's *Admonition*.

³⁸ Discussed in J. Dawson, 'Revolutionary Conclusions: The Case of the Marian Exiles' *History of Political Thought* XI (1990) 257-72; 'Trumpeting Resistance: Christopher Goodman and John Knox' in *John Knox and the British Reformations* ed. R. Mason (Aldershot, 1998), 131-53.

³⁹ Acts 4 v 19 and Acts 5 v 29.

preaching directly about the persecution and his radical interpretation would have been understood within that context. Goodman called for direct resistance to Roman Catholicism to supplement the willingness to die the martyr's death. His doctrine of the 'contrary', the assertion that all negative divine commands 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'.⁴⁰ 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 text directly by reinterpreting the section about powers being 'ordained of God'. Goodman argued it was illogical that God could approve rulers who acted against Divine Laws and were tyrants. Tyrants could not be ordained of God and therefore were not owed obedience. Since persecution was always associated with 'cruelty' and an attack upon the 'innocent', it led to a complete denial of justice and automatically produced tyranny. The idea that a tyrant had by definition forfeited his political authority and ceased to be a 'public' person provided the essential pre-condition

⁴⁰ *HSP* 69-70.

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 destitute altogether, then to have a tyrant and murderer. For then are they no more public persons contemning their public auctoritie in usinge it agaynst the Lawes, but are to be taken of all men, as private persones, and so examyned and punished.'⁴¹

In Goodman's main argument for resistance derived from the covenant between God and his people, the theme of punishment played a critical role. The execution of punishment formed the key covenantal obligation which bound each member of the people of God, collectively and, in his most radical step, individually. To uphold the covenant Goodman declared it was essential to punish a tyrant and murderer and that overrode the normal patterns of political authority. '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.'⁴²

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

⁴¹ HSP 187-88. As 'Morley', the owner of Goodman's book which he had received from the author, laconically commented in the margin opposite this passage, 'an open way to rebellion', Durham University Library copy of HSP. For a discussion of the private law argument see Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* 2 vols (Cambridge, 1978) II 189-238; 'Resistance and revolution in sixteenth-century thought: the case of Christopher Goodman', in *The Church, Change and Revolution*, eds. J. Van Den Berg and P. Hoftijzer, (Leiden, 1991), 69-79.

⁴² HSP 185. Archbishop Parker recognised the radicalism of the exiles' writings and lamented to Nicholas Bacon in his letter, 1 March 1559 that no-one would be safe riding in the streets or in their bed, *Correspondence of Matthew Parker* eds J. Bruce and T. Perowne (Cambridge, 1853) 61.

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 suppress Christes Evangel, to shed the blood of the saincts of God, and to erect that most divellish idolatrie, the Papistical abominations, and his usurped tyrannie.⁴³

Fuelling this insistence upon punishment was the anger generated by the persecution. It was the blood of the martyrs that needed to be punished and revenged. The close association of tyranny, persecution and idolatry encapsulated in the story of Jezebel facilitated the merging of the categories within the political theories of resistance. The priority of persecution was explicitly revealed in September 1561 by Knox in his first discussion with Mary, Queen of Scots, on the subject of obedience to a Roman Catholic ruler. The Scottish Reformer explained he was perfectly prepared to live obediently under her rule, though his choice of biblical precedent was hardly the most flattering:

'Yf the Realme fyndis no inconvenience frome the regiment of a woman, that whiche they approve shall I not farther disallow, then within my awin breast, but salbe also 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 persecution. It was not the ruler's Roman Catholicism nor even her gender but the shedding of the blood of the martyrs which had turned Mary Tudor into 'that wicked Jesabell of England'.⁴⁴

⁴³ Knox *Works* IV 507.

⁴⁴ Knox *Works* II 279.

The Genevan congregation's experience of Marian persecution across a distance had a profound and radicalising effect upon their thinking. It left a particular kind of scar upon the individual exiles which they carried for the rest of their lives. In Knox's graphic shorthand, 'Satan's bloody clawes' was able to sum up the Marian persecution to a fellow exile. Since the 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 universalize their experience by placing the Marian burnings within the biblical framework and it was this distilled experience which was transmitted across time. Such a view complemented and dovetailed with the apocalyptic presentation of the martyrs in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*.

The Genevan understanding of persecution had major long-term implications because it was transported into the mainstream of British Protestant consciousness via the *Geneva Bible* 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. By the biblical translators' repeated highlighting of the faithful remnant of Israel, two definitions of the nature of the True Church, the persecuted minority on the one hand and the whole People of God on the other, were held in creative tension. The belief in the power of martyrdom to redeem the shame and sin of England's apostasy also became embedded in English Protestant identity. Similarly, the assumption that the struggles of Queen Mary's reign were part of the continuing cosmic battle between Christ and Antichrist became the conventional view for all British Protestants in the latter years of the sixteenth century.

When applied in retrospect to Mary Tudor's reign and so neatly confined to the past, the equation between persecution and tyranny did not appear particularly threatening. However, it contained a radical and more dangerous element which had 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 current 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 especially bitter because by 1566-7 he blamed the current troubles of 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.'⁴⁵ The subsequent struggles of the 'godly' 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 and encouraged the withdrawal of the Pilgrim Fathers across the Atlantic. In the longer term the link between tyranny and persecution resurfaced with a vengeance during the reign of King Charles I.

In Scotland, despite having no comparable experience of widespread executions for heresy before 1560 nor of subsequent Roman Catholic oppression, the assumption that persecution formed part of the Scottish Kirk's life took deep root. It was primarily mediated through the *Geneva Bible*, metrical *Psalter* and the *Book of Common Order*, the bedrocks of private devotion in Scotland as well as the official books of worship for the

⁴⁵ A. Gilby, *A pleasaunt dialogue betweene a souldier...and a chaplaine* (London, 1581) written in 1566-7. Sig A 8r.

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.⁴⁶ The presbyterian wing of the Kirk consistently employed this language of persecution when it was clashing with the royal government over the polity of the Kirk during the reign of King James VI. By the time of King 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.

Through its enduring products, the Genevan congregation was able to universalise its own experience at a distance of 'Satan's bludy clawes'. Having transformed their anger at the Marian persecutors into a positive and radical dynamic which animated their liturgy, biblical translation and writings, the Genevan exiles transmitted their understanding across time, turning it into a deeply significant legacy for the whole of Anglophone Protestantism.

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⁴⁶ See Dawson and Glassey, 'Some Unpublished Letters'.