

**The Reputation of George Buchanan (1506-82) in the
British Atlantic World before 1832**

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Abstract

This thesis examines the reputation of the Scottish political theorist and historian George Buchanan (1506-82), not only within Scotland but also as it was transmitted throughout the British Atlantic World during the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In order to assess how his name and ideas have been abused by later generations, the thesis begins by examining Buchanan's own beliefs in their sixteenth-century context. The Calvinist faith that defined Buchanan for later generations was, it transpires, tempered during his lifetime by a devotion to humanism. Yet Buchanan's status as a pillar of the Scottish Reformation establishment was an important factor in making his name and ideas usable (or, on the other hand, unusable) for political theorists in later centuries.

The central focus of the thesis is on Buchanan's political theory, particularly on the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century afterlife of his radical and popular theory of the right of resistance against tyrannical rulers, outlined in his *De Iure Regni apud Scotos* (1579) and the *Rerum Scoticarum Historia* (1582). Within the political cultures of Scotland, England, Ireland, and the American colonies, Buchanan's reputation was most vigorously contested during periods of political crisis and revolution: the Covenanted uprisings of seventeenth-century Scotland; the revolutions against the Stuarts in seventeenth-century England; the American Revolution; the era of the French Revolution; and, finally, the radical era in Scotland in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars.

In addition, the thesis also examines the place of Buchanan – and of the Covenanted tradition with which he came to be associated – in the culture of Enlightenment Scotland. Indeed, the thesis explores the question of how far the association of Buchanan's name with Covenanted extremism promoted or retarded his acceptance into the canon of political theory.

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Chapter 1

The Politics and Religion of George Buchanan

Introduction

Following the publication of his short but intense political tract *De Iure Regni apud Scotos* in 1579, it has been suggested, George Buchanan remained “an influential political theorist for at least the next two centuries.”¹ Further investigation is required to add nuance to this generalisation and to illuminate the development of different understandings and misunderstandings of Buchanan’s work, his character, and his career, in the centuries after his death. Buchanan’s reputation in the Atlantic World had a fluctuating trajectory and was based less on what he wrote, than on how he was read. He was variously perceived as saint or sinner; champion for truth and the Protestant church or vile detractor of the character of Mary Queen of Scots; a prodigiously perceptive historian or a credulous one; a radical or a moderate theorist of resistance; a dangerous incendiary or, eventually, a voice compatible with British Revolution principles.

In order to assess how his name and ideas have been used, misused and manipulated, Buchanan is first examined in his own context of sixteenth-century Scotland and sixteenth-century Europe. His approaches to the writing of history and political theory, as well as the development of his religious beliefs, are analysed in chapter one. Although Buchanan’s reputation in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries was based to a considerable extent on his status as a Calvinist, a pillar of the Scottish Reformation, it is argued that his work can better be examined in the context of humanism rather than Calvinism.

Chapter two considers approaches to historical reputations, and to the reputations of political theorists in particular. With its intellectual communities of Scotland, England, Ireland, and the American colonies, the Atlantic World generated many of the texts that would eventually coalesce as the Western canon of political theory. The Atlantic World is also used as a framework for the examination of contexts in which the question of resistance was debated in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and

¹ D. Allan, *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 1993), 67 footnote.

early nineteenth centuries. Following chapters illuminate the uses, faithful and unfaithful, to which Buchanan's name and ideas were put in these contexts, and also consider circumstances in which Buchanan was marginalized or ignored.

In the seventeenth century, Scottish and English opponents of the Stuart dynasty and its style of government used Buchanan to justify varying levels of resistance against Charles I and his successors. Following the Glorious Revolution, the usage of Buchanan's name and ideas was connected to sensitivities about past theories and acts of resistance. Scottish Presbyterians sought to cast themselves as loyal subjects of their constitutional monarchy, whereas Scottish Episcopalians and English and Irish Anglicans were keen to shame Presbyterianism and Whiggism in the three kingdoms, blaming both for the instability of the seventeenth century. The American Revolution, considered in chapter six, was a point of collision, as patriot colonists were caught between the need to justify resistance against George III, and awareness of the stigma that the names and ideas of certain political theorists could bring upon their cause. In late-eighteenth-century Scotland, in contrast, Buchanan began to be re-imagined as a national hero, venerated for his learning, his Protestantism, and his outspoken defence of freedom. In 1788 his life and achievements were commemorated with the building of a sizeable monument in his hometown of Killearn, near Stirling.

Born into a Gaelic-speaking community, George Buchanan (1506-82) acquired knowledge of English and Latin at an early age, and of the 76 years of his life, he spent more than 30 abroad. Having studied and taught in St Andrews and Paris in the 1520s and 1530s, he returned briefly to Scotland between 1537 and 1539, during which time he wrote anti-clerical satires against the Franciscan order at the behest of James V. However, the king was fickle in his religious affiliations, and as his antipathy towards the Franciscans subsided, Buchanan was forced to flee, first to England, and then to the Continent, where he remained for over twenty years. He taught at the College de Guyenne in Bordeaux and then spent the years between 1547 and 1552 in Portugal. It was at this time, while teaching at the University of Coimbra, that he fell foul of the Inquisition, and during his confinement in a Portuguese monastery he wrote his famous Psalm paraphrases. Released in 1552, he acted as a private tutor in France, and was on good terms with the Guise family. He

returned to Scotland after the Reformation at around the same time as Mary Queen of Scots, probably in 1561. Buchanan's Continental writings included a profusion of poems and a number of Latin tragedies, including *Jephthes* and *Baptistes*, written during the 1540s. He returned to Scotland as a scholar and humanist of considerable repute.

Until the mid-1560s, Buchanan was on good terms with Mary. He seemingly acted as her unofficial court poet and classical tutor, for which he received a pension in 1564.² After the murder of Darnley in 1567 he turned against her and became her most violent detractor. He acted as Moderator of the General Assembly in the pivotal summer of 1567, the time of Mary's deposition; and in 1570, he was appointed tutor to James VI, the son in whose favour Mary had been forced to abdicate. Buchanan was instrumental in preparing the 'case for the prosecution' against Mary, narrating her misdeeds and attempting to justify her deposition in the *Detectio* in 1571. His political theory had the same aim, justifying rights of resistance against tyrannical monarchs, and *De Iure Regni apud Scotos*, although published in 1579, was possibly written as early as 1567. In *Rerum Scotticarum Historia*, published in 1582, Buchanan sought to illustrate that his principles of resistance were to be found in the grand sweep of Scottish history.

Numerous historians have pointed out surprising and apparently contradictory elements of Buchanan's religious belief, particularly in connection with the resounding secularism of his political theory. Hume Brown has argued that Buchanan "was in full sympathy with the Protestant revolution," although "he held these convictions in a fashion very different from Calvin and Knox."³ Donaldson has suggested that Buchanan "was in truth a humanist rather than a Christian."⁴ Trevor-Roper has observed, "Buchanan, perhaps alone among the Scottish Calvinists, was essentially a humanist, not a preacher."⁵ Williamson comments that Buchanan's devotion to the classics was "somewhat remarkable for a man who

² I. D. McFarlane, *Buchanan* (London, 1981), 229.

³ P. Hume Brown, *George Buchanan: Humanist and Reformer* (Edinburgh, 1890), 355.

⁴ G. Donaldson, *Scotland, James V – James VII* (Edinburgh, 1965), 114.

⁵ H. R. Trevor-Roper, 'George Buchanan and the Ancient Scottish Constitution', *English Historical Review*, Supplement 3 (1966), 9.

became Moderator of the Church of Scotland.”⁶ McFarlane has admitted that Buchanan had nothing like the zeal of Calvin, Beza or Knox, despite the fact that “He was their friend,” and “He had been Moderator of the General Assembly.”⁷ Salmon asserts, “Buchanan is no orthodox Presbyterian of the Knoxian variety.”⁸ Mason regards the *De Iure Regni* as “strikingly secular”⁹, and Durkan comments on its “surprisingly secular tone emanating as it does from a former Moderator.”¹⁰ Varying hints of Catholicism,¹¹ Lutheranism,¹² Calvinism, and even Judaism¹³ and atheism¹⁴ have been proposed as elements of Buchanan’s faith; however few have suggested that he might have been anything less than a thoroughly committed Calvinist. Arguably the suggestion can be made that while George Buchanan was a Calvinist, there were personalised elements in his beliefs, and definite shadings of unorthodoxy.

Some attempt is required to qualify and add more depth to the existing view of Buchanan as a rigid Calvinist, a view that would appear to be confirmed by his having held the positions of Moderator of the General Assembly, and tutor to James VI. Anecdotes abound concerning his bullying of the young king, and the sourness of his character, which Hume Brown described as “grave even to severity.”¹⁵ However, evidence of a stern personality cannot be taken as confirmation of his

⁶ A. H. Williamson, *Scottish National Consciousness in the Age of James VI* (Edinburgh, 1979), 109.

⁷ McFarlane, *Buchanan*, 337.

⁸ J. H. M. Salmon, ‘An Alternative Theory of Popular Resistance: Buchanan, Rossaeus, and Locke’, in J. H. M. Salmon, *Renaissance and Revolt: Essays in the intellectual and social history of early modern France* (Cambridge, 1987), 150.

⁹ R. A. Mason, ‘People Power? George Buchanan on Resistance and the Common Man’, in R. von Friedeburg (ed.), *Widerstandsrecht in der frühen Neuzeit: Erträge und Perspektiven der Forschung im deutsch-britischen Vergleich* (Berlin, 2001), 169.

¹⁰ J. Durkan, *Bibliography of George Buchanan* (Glasgow, 1994), p. xiv.

¹¹ It has been suggested that Buchanan was ordained as a Catholic priest in the French bishopric of Coutances in 1557-8, a position which he nominally held and only formally resigned in 1561. E. Bonner, ‘French Naturalization of the Scots in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries’, *Historical Journal*, xl (1997), 1096.

¹² In his statement about his life, the *Vita*, Buchanan stated that during his time in Paris in the 1530s he “fell in with the Lutheran sectaries.” Hume Brown, *Buchanan*, 74.

¹³ Williamson argues that at the University of Coimbra in Portugal Buchanan “inhabited a world which was unmistakably crypto-Jewish, but in no way philo-Semitic.” Accusations of ‘Judaizing’ were made against Buchanan before the Lisbon Inquisition, but this was simply routine mud slinging. Buchanan, Williamson argues, was as anti-Semitic as the average man of the sixteenth century, principally on the grounds of the Jewish role in the corrupting rise of commerce and luxury. P. J. McGinnis & A. Williamson, ‘Introduction’, *George Buchanan: The Political Poetry* (Edinburgh, 1995), 16-7.

¹⁴ For allegations of atheism made against Buchanan by Mary Queen of Scots, in a fit of pique, and by her French supporter, Francois de Belleforest, see McFarlane, *Buchanan*, 348, 351.

¹⁵ Hume Brown, *Buchanan*, 182.

Calvinism. One factor that must be taken into account in the development of Buchanan's ideas and beliefs is his close tie to Mary's half-brother the earl of Moray.

The illegitimate son of James V, Lord James Stuart, later the earl of Moray, was Buchanan's friend and patron, and was the first Regent of Scotland in the minority of James VI. In the second half of the 1560s Buchanan was "patently Moray's man."¹⁶ It was partially through Moray's influence that Buchanan secured the appointment as Moderator of the General Assembly in 1567.¹⁷ Buchanan was not an ordained minister of the Kirk, and did not have to be to sit on the General Assembly, the composition of which was fluid at this time.¹⁸ This was made possible by virtue of his post as Principal of St. Leonard's College, St. Andrews, a position also secured for him by Moray. In any case, the choice of Buchanan for the post of Moderator is indicative more of his skills as an organizer, a persuader, a good committee man. It was a man with these attributes, rather than a great but uncompromising spiritual leader, that was required in the vital summer of 1567.

Mason views Buchanan's religious beliefs in terms of a relative commitment to Catholicism until fairly late, followed by a sudden swing towards Protestantism in the 1560s. His, "new-found Catholic orthodoxy" of the 1550s facilitated patronage and advancement through the Stuart and Guise families in France, while his later commitment to Protestantism, equally, was "sufficiently decisive for him to be on excellent terms with the Protestant lords who dominated the Queen's privy council."¹⁹ Hume Brown has argued in similar terms, asserting that although Buchanan's first interest in Protestantism was in the 1530s, "this certainly cannot imply that he now definitely embraced the opinions of Luther, or that he formally broke with Catholicism."²⁰ He also regarded Buchanan's final conversion to Protestantism as taking place fairly late, around 1560, commenting that as late as

¹⁶ McFarlane, *Buchanan*, 323.

¹⁷ Trevor-Roper, 'Buchanan and the Ancient Scottish Constitution', 15.

¹⁸ W. Ferguson, *The Identity of the Scottish Nation: An Historic Quest* (Edinburgh, 1998), 95 footnote.

¹⁹ Mason, 'People Power', 167.

²⁰ Hume Brown, *Buchanan*, 74.

1558, “he speaks of the Pope as *Pater Romanus* in a tone utterly incompatible with Lutheran or Calvinistic leanings.”²¹

Although it would be cynical to suggest that Buchanan’s ‘faith’ was merely a self-serving choice that turned with the prevailing tide (and Mason does not suggest this), it might be posited that for Buchanan, religious belief was connected to the welfare of the commonwealth, as well as personal revelation. Hume Brown implied an element of conscious choice in his statement, “not at least till near his final return to Scotland about 1560 did he throw in his lot with the religious reformers.”²² Indeed, Calvinism for Buchanan might be seen as a ‘lifestyle choice’, rather than the product of a call from God.

Surprisingly little evidence of Buchanan’s religious beliefs can be discerned in his writings, both before and after his conversion to Protestantism. In his Calvinist phase from the 1560s onwards, Buchanan wrote poetry, polemical works, political theory and history, and reworked his plays for publication, and it is in these writings that evidence of his Calvinism must be sought. This is problematic, as polemic, political theory and history were genres in which Buchanan arguably felt that religious expression had little or no place. The conventions of writing such works in the context of post-Reformation Scotland made references to religion virtually inescapable. Nonetheless, Buchanan displayed considerable impatience with scriptural debate in the *De Iure Regni*, and while he included ecclesiastical history in the *Historia*, he resisted ascribing religious causes to events.

It is in Buchanan’s poetry and plays that most expressions of religious feeling and Protestant orthodoxy are to be found. Notably, these were genres that were significantly circumscribed by conventions of content and composition. In playwriting in particular, Buchanan had opportunities to place words in the mouths of characters, to speak sentiments and vocabularies that he did not necessarily endorse himself. There was far less discussion of faith in his political theory and history, genres in which he was, as it were, speaking in his own voice.

²¹ Hume Brown, *Buchanan*, 160.

²² Hume Brown, *Buchanan*, 74.

The play *Jephthes*, written as early as 1545, is more a moral tale than a religious one, despite its Old Testament setting. Jephtha's daughter Iphis becomes a stoic martyr to her father's rash oath, rather than a martyr for faith. It is in the play *Baptistes*, written in the early 1540s and probably revised for its publication in 1577, that evidence of Buchanan's reformist tendencies might be found.²³ It is one of few of Buchanan's works where faith is discussed in detail, as John the Baptist professed conventional piety as he meditated movingly on his forthcoming death.²⁴ Bushnell points out, "Only the martyr has an enviable future in this play," but *Baptistes* is the only work in which Buchanan appears to show any interest in religious martyrdom.²⁵

Baptistes should also be seen in a political context. Before the Lisbon Inquisition, Buchanan stated that the play was not a statement of heretical religious beliefs but a political allegory, with Sir Thomas More represented as the martyr, and Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn as Herod and his queen.²⁶ However, Buchanan would clearly have had an interest in giving pro-Catholic motives for the writing of the play and denying any allegations of reformist sympathies. In England in 1643, the play was republished under the title of *Tyrannical Government Anatomised, being the Life and Death of John the Baptist, or a Discourse Concerning Evil Councillors*, and some assumed it to have been the work of John Milton. Again the play was seen in a contemporary context, as an allegory of parliament's struggle against Charles I and his queen, Henrietta Maria.²⁷

An even stronger statement of faith is to be found in Buchanan's elegy for the death of Jean Calvin, written in 1564. Its tone was strongly spiritual, asserting, "If anyone thinks that our souls do not survive after death... He looks forward to eternal punishment in hell."²⁸ This meditation on otherworldly matters was unusual for Buchanan. In the *De Iure Regni* he appeared to express hard-line, resolutely

²³ P. Sharratt & P. G. Walsh, 'Introduction', *George Buchanan Tragedies* (Edinburgh, 1983), 4.

²⁴ G. Buchanan, 'Baptistes', in Sharratt & Walsh (eds.), *Tragedies*, 158.

²⁵ R. W. Bushnell, 'George Buchanan, James VI and neo-classicism', in R. A. Mason (ed.), *Scots and Britons: Scottish Political Thought and the Union of 1603* (Cambridge, 1994), 102.

²⁶ S. Kerman, 'George Buchanan and the Genre of Samson Agonistes', *Language and Style*, xix (1986), 23.

²⁷ J. T. T. Brown, 'An English Translation of George Buchanan's *Baptistes* attributed to John Milton', in *Glasgow Quatercentenary Studies 1906* (Glasgow, 1907), 61-90.

²⁸ G. Buchanan, 'Elegy for John Calvin', in McGinnis & Williamson (eds. & transl.), *Political Poetry*, 112.

Calvinist views on discipline and the social consequences of sin, but here, his principal concern was not the afterlife, but the welfare of the commonwealth. He noted that St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians forbade Christians to hold any social intercourse with sinners. "If this were observed," he said, "the wicked would have to perish of hunger, cold and exposure unless they came to their senses."²⁹ It is uncertain, however, whether Buchanan was actually endorsing such a policy, particularly as the next point in his argument concerned the opinion that such laws may deter rulers from turning into tyrants.

Evidence of Buchanan's religious commitments can also be sought in the way he wrote history. To some extent, a Protestant gloss is discernible in the *Historia*, and this is particularly evident in the account of the reign of Donald IV.³⁰ He was portrayed as an excellent king who appeared to have foreshadowed sixteenth-century concerns: "He assiduously applied himself not only to promote true religion [*verum Dei cultum*] in his own dominions, but, by every rational method, endeavoured to diffuse it wherever it appeared practicable."³¹ Buchanan's use of the expression 'true religion', a term which was loaded with Protestant meaning, couched in terms of rationality and practicality, was a clear attempt to frame the narrative of early Christianity in the language and concerns of the struggle between the reformed faith and Roman Catholicism in the sixteenth century.

Furthermore, King Donald expounded the benefits of preaching and popular understanding of the Word in the vernacular language, another important concern of reformed religion:

Nor did he think it a mean office in a king, to interpret to his people, in their public assemblies, the sermons of the preachers, which, being

²⁹ G. Buchanan, *A Dialogue on the Law of Kingship among the Scots: A Critical Edition and Translation of George Buchanan's De Iure Regni apud Scotos*, ed. and trans. R. A. Mason & M. S. Smith (Aldershot, 2004), 159. This edition will be used for most references, and will be given hereafter as Buchanan, *De Iure Regni*. References to earlier editions will be given in full.

³⁰ The numbering of Scottish kings used here is Buchanan's, and includes the spurious forty kings whose lives he narrated in the early books of the *Historia*. By modern reckoning, Buchanan's Fergus I did not exist, and Buchanan's Fergus II would be recognised by historians as Fergus I.

³¹ G. Buchanan, *The History of Scotland*, ed. and trans. J. Aikman, (Glasgow, 1827), I, 253; G. Buchanan, 'Rerum Scoticarum Historia', in T. Ruddiman (ed.), *Opera Omnia* (Edinburgh, 1715), I, 86. The Aikman edition of the *Historia* will be used for most references, and will be referred to hereafter as Buchanan, *History of Scotland*. The *Opera Omnia* will be used for all Latin references from the *Historia*.

delivered in the Scottish language, were not sufficiently understood by them.³²

Buchanan narrated the arrival of the monks who would become known as Culdees in the reign of Fincormachus, the 35th king. From the first mention of the Culdees, a reformed slant was placed upon them, setting up a contrast between the purity of the early church and the corruption of the Roman Catholicism that was to follow.

Buchanan compared the Culdees to the medieval monastic orders that succeeded them, arguing that these later monks were “As much their inferiors in doctrine and in piety, as their superiors in riches, ceremonies, and other external rites, by which the eye is captivated, and the mind deceived.”³³ He put a spin on the Culdees that was not merely reformed, but proto-Presbyterian, asserting that for a long period before the arrival of Roman influence, they governed themselves without bishops.

Buchanan tried to avoid making references to religious faith or emotion, privileging simple morality above this. To take such a position was unconventional in post-Reformation Scotland, but was not necessarily unorthodox. Nonetheless, if John Knox (c. 1505-72) is taken as the barometer of orthodox Calvinism, then Buchanan will be seen to differ from him in a number of ways.

³² Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, I, 254.

³³ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, I, 199.

Humanism and Calvinism

The faith that took the name of the French reformer Jean Calvin, (1509-64) evolved in many different directions after his death. Calvin's teachings, laid down in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, published in its final form in 1560, emphasised the inevitably corrupt and sinful nature of humankind. Only God's grace could bestow salvation, and God's decision on the salvation of the individual was made long before his or her lifetime. With Calvin's death in 1564, Theodore Beza (1519-1605) became the new driving force behind European Calvinism and set about systematising Calvinist theology.

In contrast, humanism in the mid-sixteenth century was an unsystematic, creedless, and eclectic set of views, which privileged morality over religious dogma. The origins of humanism as an intellectual and cultural movement can be seen in the revival of classical learning during the Renaissance, evident in the work of Erasmus, (1446?-1536) and Thomas More (1478-1535). What was important was basic Christian piety, a relatively minimalist and even ethical view of religion with few essential beliefs. This flexibility made humanism significantly different from, and possibly even incompatible with Calvinism. In political and historical terms, humanism viewed men as autonomous agents, capable of shaping the world in which they lived. Civic humanism insisted that participation in the commonwealth, selfless and austere concern for its welfare, and war on its behalf, were the principal means of achieving liberty and progress.

Although Calvin was a humanist, as was the later Scottish reformer Andrew Melville (1545-1622), humanism was never as doctrinaire as Calvinism would later become, nor as intolerant of other belief systems. Thus, humanism could accommodate Calvinism, but Calvinism, by the late sixteenth century, found it increasingly difficult to reconcile itself to humanism. The difference is perhaps well illustrated by the fact that while Calvinism demands a capital letter, humanism does not.

James Kirk argues that the Scottish Reformation was recognisably Calvinist from the 1560s, and that the arrival of Andrew Melville from Beza's Geneva in 1574 did not constitute a significant shift in the development of Presbyterianism in Scotland. The

idea that Melville attacked the mild Episcopacy that was in place in the 1560s and 1570s, and substituted in its place, “his own brand of presbyterianism, doctrinaire and innovating, wholly contrary to the principles and aims of the earlier reformers,” is, Kirk argues, a myth.³⁴

In contrast, Gordon Donaldson has regarded as significant the decision of the first reformers to govern the Kirk through superintendents. Although these superintendents were not Episcopal, as they did not have sacramental powers of ordination, they were certainly not strictly Presbyterian, as they as individuals carried out the administrative and disciplinary functions that would later pertain to presbyteries.³⁵ Donaldson argues that the emergence of ‘classical presbyterianism’ came in the early 1570s, around the time of Andrew Melville’s return to Scotland. Rhetoric against Episcopacy hardened in favour of a more narrowly Presbyterian system: “Language previously employed to justify the replacement of idle bishops by efficient bishops was resorted to in refutation of superiority of any kind.”³⁶ This development in Calvinist thought, with strict insistence on Presbyterian polity and the doctrine of the ‘two kingdoms’, cannot be seen as a process of continuity from 1560: “Presbyterian thought as a whole had a quality, doctrinaire and intransigent, which had never characterised the discussions of church order among the first reformers.”³⁷ The early stages of the Scottish Reformation treated the question of church government as a matter of expediency. Only later did it become a question of divine right.

The hardening of Presbyterianism is discernible in the Negative Confession of 1581, which was eventually incorporated into the National Covenant of 1638. In 1581, the Confession was intended more to prevent Catholic influence on James VI than to define and consolidate Presbyterianism in Scotland. It was following the Black Acts of 1584, in which the King began to assert the supremacy of the crown over the church, that opponents of the royal policy such as Andrew Melville began to interpret the Negative Confession as a binding covenant in defence of

³⁴ J. Kirk, ‘The Politics of the Best Reformed Kirks’: Scottish achievements and English aspirations in church government after the Reformation’, *Scottish Historical Review*, lix (1980), 39.

³⁵ G. Donaldson, *The Scottish Reformation* (Cambridge, 1960), 124.

³⁶ Donaldson, *The Scottish Reformation*, 184.

³⁷ Donaldson, *The Scottish Reformation*, 187.

Presbyterianism. By the early seventeenth century, Calvinist theology became even more doctrinaire in defending its doctrine of predestination against the Arminian heresy.

In the mid-sixteenth century, then, humanism and Calvinism were complementary, but these conditions existed only for a brief period. Febvre argues that before Protestantism became institutionalised, there was a window where humanism and reform could co-exist. Humanism “believed it was being served by the first phase of the Reformation and served it in turn.” This window was closed when humanists became perturbed by the growing zealotry of the reformers and effectively had to choose between humanism and Calvinism, movements that were by now “opposed to each other but sometimes sounding the same note.”³⁸

The interactions of humanism and Calvinism in sixteenth-century Scotland have been the object of much debate. Allan has argued that in early modern Scotland there was effectively an organic connection between the two:

A specifically Calvinist form of humanism, introduced under the influence of John Knox and greatly elaborated by his many learned successors, had become a dominant feature of early modern Scottish historical scholarship.³⁹

There are certainly analogies to be drawn between the two; for example, the suppression of the passions was a lesson taught by both the humanist orator and the Calvinist preacher.⁴⁰ Although Allan acknowledges the problematic nature of this idea of ‘Calvinist humanism’ to some extent, he concentrates principally on the difficulties historians faced in constructing an account of historical causality that could reconcile the humanist emphasis on man’s free will with Calvinism’s increasingly dismissive account of human action and intention.⁴¹ However, with the development of stricter Calvinist theology and ecclesiology in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, arguably the connections between Calvinism and humanism could not hold, and more entrenched incompatibilities can be discerned.

³⁸ L. Febvre, *The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century: The Religion of Rabelais*, trans. B. Gottlieb (Cambridge MA, 1982), 13.

³⁹ Allan, *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment*, 54.

⁴⁰ Allan, *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment*, 79.

⁴¹ Allan, *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment*, 109.

Many of Buchanan's views on the pre-Reformation Catholic Church that were common to Protestants, were also held by Erasmian humanists from the 1530s and 1540s. This strain of thought included a strong dose of anti-clericalism, which was more concerned with moral abuses than narrowly theological or doctrinal issues. Williamson argues that the aim of Scottish humanism was "to imagine traditional Scotland within the terms and values of classical political virtue." However, he distinguishes between the "Erasmian humanism" of Boece, the "Calvinist humanism" of Buchanan, and the "specifically Presbyterian humanism" of Hume of Godscroft.⁴² Arguably such distinctions are overly rigid in a system of views as flexible and diverse as humanism. Buchanan can better be seen as having a foot in all of these camps: Erasmian, Calvinist, Presbyterian. It is humanism rather than Calvinism that best characterizes him, and his humanism consisted of various elements, one of which was Erasmian anti-clericalism.

Buchanan's strong anti-clericalism, particularly directed at Franciscan monks, is evident in poems such as *Somnium*, written in 1535, and *Franciscanus* of 1538. Buchanan regarded them as a lazy and socially subversive theocracy. He deplored such impositions as confession and purgatory, idolatry and transubstantiation, regarding them as abuses of religion in the name of greed. The 'magical' elements of Roman Catholicism were condemned as deliberate fabrications to keep the people in ignorance and subjection.⁴³

The abuses of the Catholic Church were also a concern of Buchanan in his later writings. In the *De Iure Regni* he railed against the papacy and its monopoly of interpretation in theology, complaining, "Christ is not merely compelled to speak through your lips but to express your own opinions."⁴⁴ Kingdon has commented on the difficulties in defining Buchanan's religious views, noting that his appropriation

⁴² A. H. Williamson, 'Scots, Indians and Empire: The Scottish Politics of Civilisation 1519-1609', *Past and Present*, cl (1996), 69.

⁴³ For examples of Buchanan's anti-clerical poems see *Political Poetry*, 'Somnium', 168-171; 'Franciscanus', 186-245; 'The Graven Image Speaks to the Pilgrims', 246-7; 'To the Worshipper of Idols', 246-7.

⁴⁴ Buchanan, *De Iure Regni*, 61.

of conciliar thought, “Could as easily come from an anti-clerical Gallican as from a Protestant.”⁴⁵

Many of the abuses of the medieval Church that Buchanan so despised were not merely loathed by Calvinists, or even by Protestants generally, but also by Erasmian humanists. Hector Boece (1465-1536) was a Catholic, humanist and friend of Erasmus, and his *Scotorum Historiae*, published in 1527, was one of Buchanan’s main sources for the composition of his own *Historia*. As Mason notes, the medieval chroniclers Fordun and Bower, followed by Boece, had sought to argue that the early church in Scotland was and always been closely tied to Rome in order to resist the English claims that the Scottish church was subordinate to the archdioceses of York or Canterbury. Buchanan, as a Protestant historian, took a very different line and insisted “that Celtic Christianity, the faith of St Columba and the Culdees, was indeed different, distinctive and unique – Catholic but certainly not Roman Catholic.”⁴⁶

Boece and Buchanan differed significantly on matters of the papacy and church government, matters that might be seen relatively straightforwardly as Catholic against Protestant. Boece argued that with the arrival of Christianity in Scotland under King Donald I, the king invited the Pope to send missionaries to Scotland. Buchanan’s version, in contrast, excluded the Pope, and argued that papal influence arrived late in Scotland.⁴⁷ Boece claimed that the Culdees had bishops, which they chose themselves until the arrival of the papal envoy Palladius, and thereafter bishops were chosen by the Pope.⁴⁸ Buchanan argued that the Culdees were in effect presbyters, that they governed themselves without bishops until the arrival of Palladius.⁴⁹ Boece took a positive view of Palladius, claiming that the relics of his

⁴⁵ R. M. Kingdon, ‘Calvinism and Resistance Theory 1550-1580’ in J. H. Burns & M. Goldie (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Political Thought 1450-1700* (Cambridge, 1991), 218.

⁴⁶ R. A. Mason, ‘Civil Society and the Celts: Hector Boece, George Buchanan and the Ancient Scottish Past’ in E. J. Cowan & R. J. Finlay (eds.), *Scottish History: The Power of the Past* (Edinburgh, 2002), 117-8.

⁴⁷ H. Boece, *The History and Chronicles of Scotland*, transl. J. Bellenden, (Edinburgh, 1821), I, 194-5; Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, I, 187, 249-50.

⁴⁸ Boece, *History and Chronicles of Scotland*, I, 207, 286.

⁴⁹ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, I, 229.

body were held “in gret veneration among the pepill.”⁵⁰ Buchanan’s was thoroughly negative.

However, on a more humanist patch, in areas concerned with the moral abuses of the Catholic Church, Boece and Buchanan were in agreement. Boece criticised the generosity of some monarchs, particularly David I, to the church, commenting that the religious orders might display more devotion if they were less endowed with gifts, and bemoaning the weakness this engendered in the monarchy.⁵¹ Similar concerns are evident in Buchanan, who set up conventional Erasmian oppositions between “splendour... and pomp” and “simplicity and holiness.”⁵² In the sixth century reign of King Aidanus, Buchanan narrated the arrival of the papal envoy Augustine, who “did not so much inculcate the precepts of Christianity, as the Romish ceremonies.” He noted Augustine’s impositions on a church “already degenerating into superstition, with new ceremonies, and lying wonders, that scarcely a vestige of true piety remained.”⁵³

Thus Boece and Buchanan did share, to some extent, an Erasmian humanist view of the moral abuses of the Roman Catholic Church. Buchanan’s opinions, however, were also coloured by his Protestantism, and this is illustrated by the fact that he saw the degeneration of the Church beginning far earlier (indeed, as early as the sixth century), while Boece saw it as a relatively recent phenomenon. Nonetheless, Ferguson has stressed that Buchanan’s criticisms of moral abuses do not constitute “a sustained assault on the medieval church” and “cannot be considered consistently anti-Roman.” Rather, “He does little more than reflect long-standing anti-clericalism such as is to be found in the poetical works of Dunbar and Lindsay.”⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Boece, *History and Chronicles of Scotland*, I, 286.

⁵¹ Boece, *History and Chronicles of Scotland*, II, 73, 299, 334.

⁵² Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, I, 230.

⁵³ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, I, 250.

⁵⁴ Ferguson, *Identity of the Scottish Nation*, 106-7.

A Lukewarm Calvinist?

If John Knox can be taken as the standard of Scottish Calvinism, then it can be questioned to what extent George Buchanan was a Scottish Calvinist, as numerous strong contrasts can be drawn between them. Knox had a more Calvinist personal history than Buchanan, as an early convert who experienced persecution and exile. The date and experience of Buchanan's conversion is unknown, and, as Mason notes, there is no evidence of some "cathartic spiritual experience to account for it."⁵⁵

The fact that Buchanan was able to sit on the General Assembly while remaining on good terms with Queen Mary in the years before 1567 illustrates how distant he was from the Calvinist extremism of Knox. McFarlane suggests that Buchanan's position was "fluid but moderate," that "Buchanan was not a religious fanatic."⁵⁶ Ferguson classifies Buchanan, like Mary, as a *politique* who put political questions before "narrowly confessional claims." He suggests that Buchanan's commitment to the reformed Church developed "only gradually," and, "even then he was never to be a zealot like the theocratic Knox."⁵⁷

Anti-Catholicism was one of the main tenets of Knox's reforming zeal, and he argued that the Catholic faith was a "mortal pestilence" which would bring damnation to all who followed it.⁵⁸ In the *First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* of 1558, Knox drew parallels between Old Testament Israel and his own time, arguing that both had degenerated by sliding into idolatry.⁵⁹ Idolatry was Knox's greatest concern, and he defined it thus: "Vain religion and idolatry I call whatsoever is done in God's service or honour without the express commandment of His own Word."⁶⁰ He argued that idolatry should always be punished with death.⁶¹ He was also strongly concerned with covenant ideas, and had no hesitation in affirming that covenants were still in existence in sixteenth-

⁵⁵ Mason, 'People Power', 167.

⁵⁶ McFarlane, *Buchanan*, 209, 321.

⁵⁷ Ferguson, *Identity of the Scottish Nation*, 82.

⁵⁸ J. Knox, 'Letter to the Regent', in R. A. Mason (ed.), *On Rebellion* (Cambridge, 1994), 57.

⁵⁹ J. Knox, 'First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women', in Mason (ed.), *On Rebellion*, 4.

⁶⁰ J. Knox, 'Appellation to the Nobility', *On Rebellion*, 73.

⁶¹ J. Knox, 'General Assembly Debate', *On Rebellion*, 195.

century Europe: “I fear not to affirm that the Gentiles... be bound to the same league and covenant that God made with His people Israel.”⁶²

Buchanan, however, appeared to be singularly uninterested in any concept of religious covenant, a difference that marked him out from most of the Scottish, English, French, Dutch, and German Calvinist theorists of the time, including Knox, French Huguenots such as Beza and Phillipe du Plessis-Mornay, (1549-1623) and the German Johannes Althusius (1557-1638).⁶³ Althusius, although more religiously orientated than Buchanan, shared something of his secular conception of political society. Author of the *Politica methodice digesta* of 1603, he was concerned with covenants, but arguably with a different emphasis from Knox. He often used the vocabulary of the covenant as a synonym for other words describing political and social relationships such as ‘contract’, ‘compact’, or, in one instance, the expression, “common consent and covenant.”⁶⁴ Skinner regards Althusius as a largely secular thinker, similar to Buchanan. Both, he argues, maintained “an eloquent silence” on the subject of religious covenant, and preferred to concentrate on more secular forms of contract. Buchanan and Althusius, he argues, saw themselves as writing “exclusively about politics, not theology.”⁶⁵

Oestreich, in contrast, argues that Althusius “was a true Calvinist,” and contends that contractual and covenantal ideas occupied a central position in his social and religious thought. The relative secularism of early editions of the *Politica* was later altered when Althusius “greatly increased the number of biblical quotations in the new edition.”⁶⁶ Althusius placed greater emphasis on the Scriptures than did Buchanan, particularly in viewing the Decalogue as central to social life, both as religious truth, and as a utilitarian basis for a stable society. Although Skinner may have overstated Althusius’s secularism, a comparison between Althusius and Buchanan is interesting in illustrating the extent to which it was possible to leave

⁶² Knox, ‘Appellation to the Nobility’, 103.

⁶³ For Huguenot conceptions of covenants, see G. Oestreich, *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State*, ed. B. Oestreich & H. G. Koenigsberger, trans. D. McLintock (Cambridge, 1982), 144-5.

⁶⁴ J. Althusius, *Politica: an abridged translation of Politics Methodically Set Forth and Illustrated with Sacred and Profane Examples*, ed. F. S. Carney, (Indianapolis, 1995), 46.

⁶⁵ Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge, 1978), II, 341.

⁶⁶ Oestreich, *Neostoicism*, 150.

religion out of political theory. It is when this omission is compared alongside such a lofty totem of Calvinism as Knox that it begins to look unorthodox.

‘Holy Fountains’: Buchanan on the Classics and the Scriptures

As we have seen, Knox believed that Old Testament law was still applicable in his own time. He quoted Deuteronomy on the Jewish law for the election of kings which excluded foreigners and women, and argued that this law did not merely appertain to the Jews, but had remained in force ever since, like the Ten Commandments.⁶⁷ In contrast, Buchanan’s well-documented impatience with biblical debate in the realm of politics is uncharacteristic of a Calvinist, and Skinner sees it as “typically humanist.”⁶⁸ Williamson argues that Buchanan effectively ignored the history of Israel furnished by the Old Testament: “Because of its unique, sacred character, Israel was irrelevant to other societies which could only be legitimately founded upon popular sovereignty.”⁶⁹ Mason notes the extent to which Buchanan’s approach to the Scriptures set him apart from the “biblical literalism” of Knox and his fellow Marian exile Christopher Goodman, and even from the more moderate engagement with the Scriptures evident in the Huguenots Beza and Mornay. He observes, “Such a historicist approach effectively negated the universal validity of scriptural authority that was fundamental to so much of the Protestant political polemic of the Reformation era.”⁷⁰

Buchanan was sparing in his biblical citations, and when he did employ them it was usually to make a point about kingship, not faith. He consistently set biblical debates in their historical contexts, whether he was discussing the Old Testament polity of the Jews, or the Roman Empire as experienced by St. Paul. In the *De Iure Regni* he emphasised, displaying some irritation, the differences between the polity of the Jews, and the Christian era:

Even if the kings of the Jews were not punished by their subjects, these examples do not have much bearing on our practice. For they were not originally elected by their subjects but were given to them by God.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Knox, ‘First Blast of the Trumpet’, 28.

⁶⁸ Skinner, *Foundations*, II, 344.

⁶⁹ Williamson, *Scottish National Consciousness*, 108.

⁷⁰ Mason, ‘People Power’, 169.

⁷¹ Buchanan, *De Iure Regni*, 125.

Buchanan's choice of the dialogue form for the *De Iure Regni* might be seen as an aspect of his tendency to place words in the mouths of 'characters', to raise objections in order to defeat them. The Scottish diplomat Thomas Maitland was made to play the role of "the straight man,"⁷² and he was the 'character' who most commonly raised the topic of the Old Testament. This was the case with the discussion of Moses and his administration of justice, and with the subject of the prophet Jeremiah.

Maitland mentioned that the prophet Jeremiah had ordered the Jews to obey the tyrannical king of the Assyrians, and Buchanan seized upon this to deny that single scriptural examples could be used as precedents:

The prophet does not command the Jews to obey all tyrants but only the king of the Assyrians. If you wish to infer a legal principle from what is ordained in one particular case, first, you know very well – for dialectic has taught you – how absurdly you would be proceeding.⁷³

It was not good practice to seize upon individual examples in the Scriptures – otherwise it could equally be argued:

All tyrants must be killed by their subjects since it was at God's bidding that Ahab was killed by the commander of his own troops. I advise you, therefore, to find some more solid defence for tyrants in Scripture, or to leave Scripture aside for the present and return to the teaching of the philosophers.⁷⁴

Buchanan insisted that the Scriptures were not the only source of wisdom and law, and when he did cite them he generally preferred the New Testament to the Old. Just because a precedent for some action or belief could not be found in Scripture did not make it illegitimate. In effect he pled for reason and expediency over revelation.

So if anyone asks me for an example from the books of Holy Scripture where the punishment of evil kings is approved, I shall ask him in turn where it is censured. If it is agreed that nothing should be done without precedent, how many of our civil processes will be left to us? How many of our laws? Most of them, after all, are not derived from ancient example, but were created to deal with new and unprecedented crimes.⁷⁵

⁷² Kindgon, 'Calvinist Resistance Theory' in Burns & Goldie, *History of Political Thought*, 216.

⁷³ Buchanan, *De Iure Regni*, 117.

⁷⁴ Buchanan, *De Iure Regni*, 117.

⁷⁵ Buchanan, *De Iure Regni*, 125.

Buchanan even went so far as to scorn the jeremiad style beloved of Knox, ridiculing the claim that God set tyrants over peoples as a punishment, and insisting that only royal sycophants and flatterers would claim such a thing. “If anyone maintains that even bad princes are ordained by God, beware of the sophistry of such talk.”⁷⁶ However, there was one instance in which Buchanan adopted the jeremiad style.

The most reformist of Buchanan’s writings is one of his few vernacular works, *Ane Admonitioun to the Trew Lordis* of 1570. In language reminiscent of Knox’s *Appellation to the Nobility*, he exhorted the nobility to maintain the fight against the Queen’s party, urging them: “To consider how godly the action is which you have in hand.”⁷⁷ Buchanan adopted a sermonic tone to assert that God was on the side of the reformers and the King’s party:

Think it no less providence of your heavenly father than if he had sent you a legion of angels in your defence, and remember that he showed himself never more friendly and succourable to no people than he has done to you, and trust well, if you will preserve in obedience and recognoscence of his manifold graces, he will multiply his benefits to you and your posterity, and shall never leave you, until you forget him first.⁷⁸

This sort of rhetoric, with its covenantal language of God’s expectations of His people was highly unusual for Buchanan. If this was not Buchanan’s style, should it be taken as evidence of his beliefs? It is tempting to speculate that Buchanan was deliberately adopting Knox’s jeremiad style, using the conventions of one of his appellations, as they were familiar and well established in Scotland by 1570. It was at this time that Buchanan was appointed as tutor to the King, and he perhaps judged that a well-timed display of devotion to the cause would be expedient. Most significantly, the *Admonitioun* was probably written in April 1570 in the months following the assassination of Moray. At this point Scotland was leaderless, as Lennox was appointed Regent only in June of that year. This was a desperate period for Buchanan in which he all but gave up on the writing of his history.

⁷⁶ Buchanan, *De Iure Regni*, 115.

⁷⁷ G. Buchanan, ‘Ane Admonitioun to the Trew Lordis Maintenanaris of Justice and Obedience to the Kingis Grace’, in W. A. Gatherer (ed.), *The Tyrannous Reign of Mary Stewart* (Edinburgh, 1958), 183.

⁷⁸ Buchanan, ‘Ane Admonitioun to the Trew Lordis’, 198-9.

The *Admonitioun* stands as the most convincingly Protestant of Buchanan's works, as one of the only instances in which he unproblematically adopted the language of the Scottish Reformation. The anomalous nature of this work only highlights the extent to which most of his other writings are devoid of religious feeling and to an extent 'unprotestant'. Buchanan's commitment to Calvinism was out-weighted by his commitment to humanism, and the example of the *Admonitioun* as an apparent indicator of orthodoxy must be set against his singularly unorthodox devotion to classical literature.

Mason has commented on Buchanan's classical inspirations, citing the Greeks Plato and Aristotle, and the Romans Cicero, Livy and Seneca, as particular influences.⁷⁹ This classical bent can be regarded as significant in the man who was to tutor James VI, primarily because of the tension that this could cause with orthodox Christianity. Buchanan's plays illustrate his mixing of Christian and classical ideas and vocabularies, as both *Baptistes* and *Jephthes* were episodes from biblical history cast as neo-classical tragedy.⁸⁰ This was a typical humanist tactic and didactic teaching method, as the 'classicising' of biblical stories allowed Greek and Latin rhetoric to be "freed from their pagan moral content and invested with Christian truth."⁸¹

Strikingly, however, in writing the *Genethliacon* for the occasion of James's birth in 1566, Buchanan prescribed how a prince should be educated in a way that differed from this careful synthesis of the Christian and the classical. He recommended study of the classics, "holy fountains," [*sacris de fontibus*] for an education in "the true art of ruling a kingdom in peace and war."⁸² It is remarkable enough that Buchanan should refer to classical literature as 'holy fountains', but even more remarkable that he did not go on to explicitly prescribe Bible study. Buchanan did, however, lay down study of the scriptures for James when he became his tutor.

Knox's references to the pagan classics, to Aristotle and the Roman Law Digest, were few, and were made in generally disparaging terms. Classical authors were ignorant of God's Word, he said, unblessed by revelation and "illuminated only by

⁷⁹ Mason, 'People Power', 166.

⁸⁰ Bushnell, 'George Buchanan, James VI and neo-classicism', 98.

⁸¹ Kerman, 'George Buchanan and the Genre of Samson Agonistes', 21.

⁸² Buchanan, 'Genethliacon', *Political Poetry*, 162-3.

the light of nature.”⁸³ Buchanan shared none of this condescension, and some of his discussions of the classics can be regarded as unorthodox, and suggestive of a quasi-religious devotion. Indeed, Levine has argued that the humanists’ love of classical authors was such that “they tended to idealize them and thus paradoxically to remove them from history and give them a sort of timeless status.”⁸⁴ This illustrates the possibility of ‘worship’ of the classics.

Early on in the *De Iure Regni* Buchanan declared his intention to “explain not so much my own views as those of the ancients.”⁸⁵ He regarded the paganism of the classical authors as a positive testament to their learning and good sense: Aristotle had reached the same conclusions as St. Paul, centuries earlier, “under nature’s guidance.”⁸⁶ Furthermore, in his extended discussion of St. Paul, Buchanan constantly examined him in a classical context. In places where Knox would have used a biblical quotation, Buchanan looked to the examples of ancient tyrants such as Caligula, Nero and Domitian to affirm, “You will find nothing in Paul to show why they should not be punished for violating the laws of God and of man.”⁸⁷ Where the Scriptures were lacking, Buchanan certainly found an abundance of classical examples of the punishment of tyrants.

⁸³ Knox, ‘First Blast of the Trumpet’, 22.

⁸⁴ J. M. Levine, *Humanism and History: Origins of Modern English Historiography* (Ithaca, 1987), 13.

⁸⁵ Buchanan, *De Iure Regni*, 15.

⁸⁶ Buchanan, *De Iure Regni*, 51.

⁸⁷ Buchanan, *De Iure Regni*, 113-5.

Great Men: the purpose of humanist history

Humanism rather than Calvinism is the overriding feature in Buchanan's writing of history. As a humanist exercise, the study of history was designed to inculcate morality and good citizenship in its readers, and in some respects morality was more important than religious faith or conformity. This applied particularly to the nobility and to future kings, the class of men that scholars of Buchanan's station were accustomed to tutor. This concentration on the qualities of 'great men' typifies the aristocratic aims of humanist history: to influence those who would be great men in the future. As Williamson argues, Buchanan spent the decades after his return to Scotland following the Reformation, "promoting Scotland as a civic commonwealth where selfless aristocrats identified and pursued the public good, while they repressed and contained private interests, self-serving passions, narrow ambition."⁸⁸

Buchanan wrote a great deal in the 'mirror of princes' genre, principally as a guide for James VI, warning him against sailing close to the "reefs of flattery."⁸⁹

Buchanan's ideal of the monarch as moral exemplar is evident in the *Genethliacon*, where the mirror of princes device was expressly acknowledged:

Thus do the people fasten their gaze on the king, And they love him,
and they model their lives on his; They strive to fashion themselves
and their characters from the mirror, as it were, which he holds up for
them.⁹⁰

Buchanan's high standards applied equally to the nobility, but the struggle between reason and the passions was particularly important in the person of the ruler. To this end he asserted the need for laws to restrain man's most dangerous passions, "to subject these monsters to reason."⁹¹

Mason has discussed Buchanan's near-impossible ideal of a perfect prince, arguing, "Remarkably secular and defined in austere moral terms, Buchanan's model was not

⁸⁸ P. J. McGinnis & A. H. Williamson, 'Introduction', *The British Union: A critical edition and translation of David Hume of Godscroft's De Unione Insulae Britannicae* (Aldershot, 2002), 2.

⁸⁹ Buchanan, 'Dedication to James VI', *De Iure Regni*, 3.

⁹⁰ Buchanan, 'Genethliacon', 156.

⁹¹ Buchanan, *De Iure Regni*, 131.

biblical, but humanistic and classical.”⁹² In encouraging sober, rational behaviour in James, Buchanan was implicitly attacking the conduct of his mother, whose greatest sin was to be led by passion and to act irrationally, a fault that was intolerable in a ruler, (but to be expected in a woman). Unlike Knox, Buchanan’s loathing of Mary was not based on Catholicism or idolatry, which risked only her soul, but tyranny, the threat she posed to the commonwealth.

It might be argued that Buchanan did not necessarily demand a godly prince, just a moral one. The *Historia* made it clear that the Scottish ideal of monarchy preceded even the arrival of Christianity, and therefore was not a product of revelation. Tuck argues that in Buchanan “We can see someone deeply imbued with humanism adjusting it to fit his religious sensibilities.”⁹³ Arguably, however, the contrary is true: rather than compromising his humanism to fit Calvinism, he adjusted his Calvinism to fit his humanism.

Williamson notes that Buchanan’s humanism was occupied with problems that would later become tenets of ‘Commonwealthman’ thought in the late seventeenth century, and this is particularly evident in the later books of the *Historia* dealing with the personal reign of Mary Queen of Scots. Fear of a standing army is evident as Buchanan voiced suspicion about her desire for a personal bodyguard. He also complained of the corrupting effects of luxury, the “vain show of courtly magnificence.”⁹⁴ He believed that commerce was an undesirable development, based as it was on self-interest rather than public virtue. This is evident in his loathing of the sprawling Iberian empires in the New World, as *De Sphaera* warned of the corruption and decay these would bring to Europe.⁹⁵ Williamson contends that Buchanan’s dislike of the Iberian empires led him to place his hopes in France while England was under the rule of Mary Tudor, and this optimism is evident in the *Epithalamium*, written on the occasion of Mary Queen of Scots’ marriage to the Dauphin in 1558. Later, as the Guises became ever more ambitious and intolerant

⁹² R. A. Mason, ‘Rex Stoicus: George Buchanan, James VI and the Scottish Polity’, in J. Dwyer, R. A. Mason & A. Murdoch (eds.), *New Perspectives on the Politics and Culture of Early Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1982), 11.

⁹³ R. Tuck, *Natural Rights Theories: Their origin and development* (Cambridge, 1979), 43.

⁹⁴ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 450.

⁹⁵ Buchanan, ‘De Sphaera’, *Political Poetry*, 68.

and Buchanan's ideal seemed to be crumbling, he turned his attention back to Scotland, a newly reformed seat of optimism.⁹⁶

This, however, is not to say that Buchanan believed in any sense in Scottish destiny or election, merely that Calvinist Scotland was the best hope for the fulfilment of his civic ideal. Williamson argues that a large part of Calvinism's appeal to Buchanan was its "powerful validation of the civic spirit."⁹⁷ He suggests this significant civic dimension to Buchanan's beliefs, but arguably he understates it. He asserts that in Buchanan "The soteriological became at once the civic," and regards this fusion as "authentically Protestant spirituality." He is right in arguing that concern with discipline, that is, subjection of the passions, "could be civic no less than Christian, find its sources in Cato no less than in Calvin."⁹⁸ However it can be argued that for Buchanan, social discipline was not for the purpose of honouring God, but for the good of the commonwealth.

Arguably the soteriological and the civic were not altogether compatible. Why then did Buchanan write so little of the former and so much of the latter? The writings he produced after 1560 were significantly more concerned with *the worldly matters of* the welfare of the commonwealth than with otherworldly concerns of salvation. Buchanan did not speak the language of damned and elect souls, and it was left to Knox to question whether Mary Queen of Scots was of the elect, which he had "just cause to doubt."⁹⁹ Buchanan rather spoke in the vocabulary of genuine and corrupted citizens. His writings never questioned the likelihood of Mary attaining salvation – despite her attending Mass, and her alleged complicity in tyranny, adultery and murder. Although he did not live to see Mary's death, he did live to see Bothwell's, and said nothing of the question of his salvation, commenting only, "his infamous life closed in merited wretchedness."¹⁰⁰ It was not usual for Buchanan in his many eulogies in the *Historia* to speculate on destination of the deceased. Even at the death of Moray, he emphasised how much his patron would be missed by the people and how disastrous his death was for the commonwealth, but said nothing on

⁹⁶ McGinnis & Williamson, 'Introduction', *Political Poetry*, 24-28.

⁹⁷ McGinnis & Williamson, 'Introduction', *Political Poetry*, 28.

⁹⁸ McGinnis & Williamson, 'Introduction', *Political Poetry*, 28.

⁹⁹ Knox, 'General Assembly Debate', 186.

¹⁰⁰ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 529.

the likelihood of him going to heaven.¹⁰¹ Arguably for Buchanan, the civic spirit of Calvinism outweighed its spiritual attractions.

¹⁰¹ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 572-3. Buchanan's poem on the subject of Moray's death did note that Moray would be "welcomed into Heaven," but focused more on the grief of the commonwealth. Buchanan, 'For James Stuart, Regent of the Scots', *Political Poetry*, 162.

Histories of the Reformation: Knox and Buchanan

Knox and Buchanan gave markedly different narratives of the Scottish Reformation, and this is not surprising given the different scope and aims of their respective histories. Buchanan wrote a national history of Scotland with the aim of demonstrating the timely interventions of the nobility for the good of the commonwealth, whereas Knox produced a more narrow history of the Reformation itself. Their differences are well-illustrated by the heroes they chose in their respective accounts. Knox privileged himself and his fellow religious reformers, and celebrated the martyrs who had gone before him, whereas Buchanan preferred a view of the Reformation that was civic as well as religious, with the nobility, particularly Lord James Stuart (the future earl of Moray), and the earl of Argyll as the main agents of change. Buchanan detailed a Reformation very different to that described by Knox, one carried out by sober, public-minded members of the nobility, with less credit apportioned to the ordinary people, or even the religious leaders. The varying concerns of the reformer and the humanist are neatly summed up by their opposite identifications of Cardinal Beaton: Knox hated him as an idolater, “A conjured enemy to Jesus Christ,”¹⁰² while Buchanan, with his emphasis on public utility, hated him as a tyrant. In his discussion of the murder of the cardinal, he said the perpetrators were congratulated not merely for their action against idolatry and irreligion, but for their defence of the commonwealth, “as the restorers of public liberty,” [*libertatis publicae auctores*].¹⁰³

Buchanan had favourable words for Knox, although he apportioned him little in the way of credit, praise, or blame for the Reformation. Buchanan did not give Knox a central role in his narrative, largely because he had chosen Moray as his hero, a man of virtue and action in both the civil and religious spheres. Knox was introduced in the *Historia*, without any context or biographical detail, at the besieged palace of the murdered Cardinal, attacking those inside for their idleness and licentiousness. Buchanan narrated Knox giving a characteristic harangue: “God would not be mocked, but would soon inflict severe punishment upon them, by those whom they

¹⁰² J. Knox, *History of the Reformation in Scotland*, ed. W. Croft Dickinson, (London, 1949), I, 12.

¹⁰³ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 361; Buchanan, ‘Historia’, *Opera Omnia*, I, 295 (mispaginated as 285).

least feared, on account of the profanation of his laws.”¹⁰⁴ Besides this, allusions to Knox in the *Historia* were few. He appeared giving an inflammatory sermon which inspired an iconoclastic riot in Perth, and again at the coronation of James VI.¹⁰⁵

Buchanan was generally disapproving of iconoclasm when it was carried out by the people, but less so when it was undertaken by the nobility. He narrated the iconoclastic riot inspired by Knox’s sermon at Perth, and described it as “the operations of the very lowest of the populace, [*infima plebecula*] while the more respectable were gone to dine.”¹⁰⁶ In contrast, Lord James Stuart and the earl of Argyll were described as “the principal leaders of the reformation,” [*praecipui auctores instaurandae religionis*].¹⁰⁷ When they dismantled idols, Buchanan described it in thoroughly positive terms. They “cleansed” Stirling [*emundarunt*], “freed” Linlithgow “from all superstitious bondage,” [*superstitioso cultu liberant*], and in Edinburgh, went about “purifying the churches from all trappings of popery,” [*aedium sacrarum ab omni missisicandi apparatu repurgationem*].¹⁰⁸

Unlike Knox, Buchanan considered medieval Catholicism in detail, treating it as an era of corruption and decline between the two golden ages of early Christianity and the Reformation. He did not give great weight to the first stirrings of Protestantism in Scotland in Book XIV, and appeared to be far more interested in the abuses of the intertwined and self-interested Church and State than in the rise of the Protestant alternative. Early in Book XV, however, Buchanan made Cardinal Beaton his principal villain, and noted increased reformed activity, and it was with the arrival of George Wishart that Buchanan’s reformed sympathies became evident. Knox’s treatment of the medieval period, in contrast, consisted of little of the abuses of the Catholic Church, and more on those he styled the proto-Protestants of the time, the Lollards.

Knox made much of the martyrdoms of Patrick Hamilton and George Wishart, whereas Buchanan appeared singularly uninterested in the willing sufferers of the

¹⁰⁴ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 362.

¹⁰⁵ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 404, 527.

¹⁰⁶ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 404; Buchanan, ‘Historia’, *Opera Omnia*, I, 313.

¹⁰⁷ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 406; Buchanan, ‘Historia’, *Opera Omnia*, I, 314.

¹⁰⁸ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 412-3; Buchanan, ‘Historia’, *Opera Omnia*, I, 316.

Reformation. Patrick Hamilton received little more than a mention in the *Historia*,¹⁰⁹ and while Buchanan gave a thoroughly positive account of George Wishart¹¹⁰, he did not have much to say on the subject of his martyrdom, regarding it merely as the best example of the civil and ecclesiastical tyranny of Cardinal Beaton. Buchanan appeared to regard martyrdom as of great glory to the individual, but little benefit to the commonwealth, and therefore it was not one of his main concerns.

¹⁰⁹ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 297.

¹¹⁰ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 353-9.

Pagan and Christian Causalities in the *Historia*

Although Buchanan placed a reformed slant upon his ecclesiastical history, he displayed a lack of commitment to Protestant vocabulary. In numerous cases, words such as ‘reformed’ and ‘providence’ had to be supplied by his translators, particularly by his nineteenth-century editor James Aikman. Buchanan’s ecclesiastical vocabulary unavoidably featured words with strongly classical and pagan connotations, and it is evident that the writing of Protestant history in Latin was problematic.

Many of Aikman’s translations were perfectly sound, but in a number of instances, he supplied the word ‘reformed’ where Buchanan may not have intended it. Buchanan’s *adversus purioris doctrinae magistros* was translated as “against the teachers of the reformed religion,” and although this might seem reasonable enough, it can be pointed out that *purioris* could have many meanings, such as cleaner, purer, simpler, plainer, more spotless, more holy.¹¹¹ Aikman’s selection of the word ‘reformed’ ignores Buchanan’s use of a comparative adjective, and might be seen as an attempt to impose his own meaning and to strengthen the Protestant content of the *Historia*. In another instance, Aikman rendered Buchanan’s expression *sincerioris religionis studium*, as “love for the reformed religion.”¹¹² This again was to ignore Buchanan’s comparative adjective and to supply the word ‘reformed’ where ‘enthusiasm for more unblemished religion’ might have been more accurate.

In another example, Buchanan’s *Scotorum procures, instaurandae religionis principes* was translated as “the lords of the congregation.”¹¹³ However, it can be suggested that a better translation would be ‘the leading men of the Scots, heads of the reformed religion’, and this would ring true if Buchanan wanted the emphasis here to be on the nobility of the leading reformers. Similarly, Buchanan’s *Procures, libertatis vindices* was translated as “the noblemen of the reformed party.”¹¹⁴ A better translation would be “the noblemen, the defenders of liberty.” This illustrates a

¹¹¹ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 355; Buchanan, ‘Historia’, *Opera Omnia*, I, 293.

¹¹² Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 378; Buchanan, ‘Historia’, *Opera Omnia*, I, 302.

¹¹³ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 413; Buchanan, ‘Historia’, *Opera Omnia*, I, 316.

¹¹⁴ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 422; Buchanan, ‘Historia’, *Opera Omnia*, I, 321.

disjunction between Buchanan's intended civic discussion of the reformation, and Aikman's attempt to keep to the subject of religion.

Although Aikman regularly supplied the word 'reformed' or 'reformation', it should be noted that Buchanan used it less regularly, and when he did it was usually with the verb *instaurare*, to renew or restore. Aikman translated *Ecclesiae* as "of the reformed church", and while this is justifiable on the grounds of clarity, it might be objected that Buchanan himself thought it would be sufficiently understood simply as 'the church'.¹¹⁵ In instances where Buchanan wished to make the 'reformed' meaning clear, he did so explicitly; such as when discussing "the authority of the reformed church" he used *Ecclesiae instauratae auctoritas*.¹¹⁶

Unlike Knox, Buchanan did not identify providence as a principal cause of the Scottish Reformation. Instead he emphasised human agency, casting Moray as his hero and Cardinal Beaton, Archbishop Hamilton, Mary of Guise and her French party, and Mary Queen of Scots as his principal villains. Again, it will be seen that in a number of instances Aikman supplied the word 'providence' in his translation, illustrating the tension between pagan and Christian concepts of divine intervention. The Latin *providentia* meant not only 'providence' in terms of the earthly intervention of a Christian God, but in a looser classical sense meant foresight or foreknowledge, a less deterministic view.

References to providence were scarce in the *Historia*. Almost all concerned the Reformation period, and the majority were in connection to Moray. There were, however, a few invocations of providence in the early part of the *Historia*, such as in the discussion of the reign of Fergus II. Buchanan's *manifesta vis numinis* was translated by Aikman as "a particular providence."¹¹⁷ This expression might better be translated as "the clear power of divine command," and Buchanan's choice of the noun *numen* is interesting here, as although it could mean a command, it was used by Roman authors to refer either to the will of the Gods or to the will of the emperors. This example further highlights the difficulties inherent in a pagan vocabulary,

¹¹⁵ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 449; Buchanan, 'Historia', *Opera Omnia*, I, 332.

¹¹⁶ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 502; Buchanan, 'Historia', *Opera Omnia*, I, 355.

¹¹⁷ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, I, 218; Buchanan, 'Historia', *Opera Omnia*, I, 75.

where ‘God’ could exist in the plural, and civil leaders could be portrayed in godlike terms. It makes it easier to see why Aikman played safe with his choice of Christian providence here.

Most of Buchanan’s comparatively rare references to providence concerned Moray, and Mason has noted the “heroic stature” accorded to him in the *Historia*.¹¹⁸

Moray’s assassination had a significant impact on Buchanan and for a time he lost enthusiasm for completing the *Historia*. This has led McFarlane to suggest, “There is much to be said for the view that the *De iure regni* and the *Historia* are part of Buchanan’s attempt to justify the claims of the Regent Moray to the throne.”¹¹⁹ The place of Moray in the *Historia* must be regarded as highly significant, and begs the question of whether providential references to him articulated a view of historical causation, or were simply conventional expressions of respect and deference.

In one of the strongest providential suggestions in the *Historia*, Buchanan noted Moray’s success in administering justice in the Borders. “God prospered his exertions beyond expectation,” [*Deus, ultra spem hominum, ejus justos conatus promovit*].¹²⁰ In another instance, Moray gave thanks to God for his escape from a conspiracy against his life, with the understanding that this had taken place “Not by any strength or wisdom of his own, but solely by his providence.” [*nullis suis viribus & consilio, sed ejus unius benignitate*].¹²¹ Although *benignitate* means kindness, benevolence, generosity, and does not translate directly as providence, it still suggests direct interference by God. Finally, Buchanan’s eulogy for Moray’s death spoke of how it “seemed as if the peculiar favour of God accompanied all he did,” [*Ut divina quaedam providentia in omni negotio assuisse videatur*].¹²² This is one of the few occasions where Buchanan used the word *providentia*.

In some examples Buchanan placed invocations of providence in instances of direct speech, such as David Hamilton’s admonition to Regent Hamilton to proceed cautiously with the reformer George Wishart. Buchanan’s *cogita beneficia in te*

¹¹⁸ Mason, ‘People Power’, 168.

¹¹⁹ McFarlane, *Buchanan*, 418.

¹²⁰ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 449; Buchanan, ‘Historia’, *Opera Omnia*, I, 333.

¹²¹ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 464; Buchanan, ‘Historia’, *Opera Omnia*, I, 339.

¹²² Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 572; Buchanan, ‘Historia’, *Opera Omnia*, I, 385.

collata divinitus was translated by Aikman as “Reflect upon the mercies bestowed upon you by providence.”¹²³ This is probably quite acceptable, although it should be noted that the expression *divinitus* does not directly signify providence, but can be used more loosely to indicate divine agency or inspiration, or can mean ‘in a godlike manner’. What is also notable about this case, however, is that Buchanan used the vocabulary of providence as words placed in the mouth of his ‘character’: these were not, as it were, his ‘own words’. At this point Buchanan, again unusually, allowed his character to launch into a jeremiad, warning his kinsman the Regent of the Old Testament example of Saul. “Mark how the favour of God followed him while obedient to his law, and in how much misery he was involved when he neglected his precepts.”¹²⁴

The same device of direct speech was used in Randolph’s oration following the murder of Moray. He said “God, the ruler of the universe, [*Deus, universi opifex*] had granted that nation a kingly government, it was their bounden duty to honour, obey, and render all homage to their kings.”¹²⁵ Again, if one was to be fussy about translations, it could be pointed out that *opifex* means worker, artisan, ‘Creator’, rather than ‘ruler’. Buchanan’s invention of speeches made by the great men in his narrative was a typical humanist rhetorical contrivance, but might also be seen as a device used by him to express attitudes or vocabularies that he did not entirely endorse, whether that be an Old Testament jeremiad, or an injunction to obey kings because they were sent by God.

While Moray was included in numerous references to providence, there are also allusions to his own decisions, his own actions, and the unintended consequences of them, such as, “The lenity of the regent overcame the pleas of public utility, calamitously for his country, and fatally for himself.”¹²⁶ Buchanan regarded Moray’s failure to heed warnings that his life was in danger as one of the reasons for his death, thus injecting a strong element of free will into his system of causation. The *Historia* did not have a clearly defined scheme of causation, and there is little in it to tell us what Buchanan’s intentions were in this respect. However it can be

¹²³ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 354; Buchanan, ‘Historia’, *Opera Omnia*, I, 292.

¹²⁴ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 354.

¹²⁵ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 576; Buchanan, ‘Historia’, *Opera Omnia*, I, 387.

¹²⁶ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 567.

argued that the *Historia* did not give a privileged place to God's providence as a direct cause of events, but rather employed a view akin to Neostoicism, which privileged the free will of virtuous and active agents, while also giving providence some due.

It can be questioned whether invocations of providence by Buchanan were meant to be taken literally. It is notable that when he makes such references, speaking in his own words, they are usually to praise one of his particular heroes, such as Fergus II or Moray. Rather than actual statements of causality, they might be seen as conventional expressions, the way one might say 'thank your lucky stars' or 'as chance would have it'. Fussner has considered Francis Bacon's usage of the vocabularies of fortune and providence, and concluded that they were intended only for literary effect.¹²⁷ It can be argued that invocations of providence were not always intended to imply direct intervention by God, and in Buchanan's case, his scheme admitted little scope for this.

Allan, in contrast, argues that the invocations of providence in early modern histories were more than just rhetoric. He suggests that Calvinist historians could see the survival of important historical evidence as a gift of providence, citing Knox's thankfulness for extant documents concerning the Lollards.¹²⁸ But Buchanan was not like Knox. Eagerly, and with great conviction, Knox seasoned his *History of the Reformation* with references to providence. Buchanan in his own *Historia* did so far more sparingly, and his commitment to any providential scheme of causality must be questioned.

This is best illustrated by the treatment of Buchanan in these respective texts. Knox's *History of the Reformation* narrated Buchanan's escape from the clutches of James V and the Franciscans in 1539. He ascribed this deliverance to "the merciful providence of God," continuing to give thanks that he "remains alive to this day, in the year of God 1566, to the glory of God." He then went on to extol "the rare graces of God given to that man," and fear what the consequences might have been

¹²⁷ F. Smith Fussner, *The Historical Revolution: English Historical Writing and Thought 1580-1640* (London, 1962), 269.

¹²⁸ Allan, *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment*, 53-4; Knox, *History of the Reformation*, I, 9-10.

“if God had not provided remedy to his servant by escaping.”¹²⁹ Buchanan, in contrast, soberly resisted the temptation to make quite so many invocations of God. He simply narrated:

In the beginning of the following year, A.D. 1539, many persons suspected of Lutheranism, were apprehended. At the end of February, five were burned; nine recanted, and many were banished. Among these last, was George Buchanan, who escaped by the window of his bedchamber while his keepers were asleep.¹³⁰

Thomas Betteridge uses the example of Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* to argue that over-reliance on providence in ecclesiastical history tended to produce simplistic readings of causes and effects. In Foxe’s treatment of the accession of Elizabeth to the English throne, the end of the persecution of Protestants was not viewed as a sequence of causes and effects, but rather, “Elizabeth’s succession did not lead to the end of persecution but was part of the same God-given happening.”¹³¹ This causal over-simplification can also be seen in Knox’s *History of the Reformation*, where Mason finds “a not inconsiderable intellect considerably diminished by an unwillingness to think in anything other than the crude dualities so characteristic of early Protestant thinking.”¹³² Greater sophistication is to be found in Buchanan, whose lesser reliance on providence allowed the consideration of a myriad of causal relationships: personal, moral, religious, political, dynastic, social and economic.

Mason has examined the post-Reformation need for a ‘usable past’, the desire to endow the new Kirk with a history in a search for “instant legitimacy.”¹³³ Knox was undoubtedly a massive influence on the creation of Protestant identity in Scotland, however, he was signally uninterested in early Scottish history. It was Buchanan “the second of Scotland’s great Protestant patriarchs,”¹³⁴ rather than Knox who provided the Kirk with a usable past – but this was not a providential one. Buchanan was not only more authoritative as a historian than Knox, but he was the supplier of the definitive ‘Protestant’ version of pre-Reformation history, preferable to the ‘Catholic’ versions of Fordun and Boece.

¹²⁹ Knox, *History of the Reformation*, I, 29-30.

¹³⁰ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 317.

¹³¹ T. Betteridge, *Tudor Histories of the English Reformations, 1530-83* (Aldershot, 1999), 177.

¹³² R. A. Mason, ‘Usable Pasts: History and Identity in Reformation Scotland’, *Scottish Historical Review*, lxxvi (1997), 58.

¹³³ Mason, ‘Usable Pasts’, 57.

¹³⁴ Mason, ‘Usable Pasts’, 54.

Mason suggests that if Knox had wanted to construct a proto-Protestant narrative of pre-Reformation Scottish history, “the materials certainly did exist.”¹³⁵ Available narratives included the arrival of Christianity in Scotland under Donald I and the Culdees. Although Knox chose to ignore these narratives and concentrate only on the Reformation, Buchanan adopted them and shaped them into what would become the standard ecclesiastical history of Scotland: one of purity, decline, and then reformation. Thus, as Mason points out, “If Knox failed to adopt the mantle of a Scottish Foxe, it was not because Scotland had no history, but because Knox was no historian.”¹³⁶

Thus while Knox’s attempt at forging a usable past for the reformed Scottish Church was partial, “It was George Buchanan’s signal achievement to supply the new reformed Kirk with the historical legitimacy it required but which Knox had failed to provide.” Buchanan did this in a way “which combined his Presbyterian sympathies with the politics of a classical republican.”¹³⁷ Mason admits that any version of a Scottish Protestant identity built on such a base was bound to be “unstable and fiercely contested,” and this was certainly the case.¹³⁸ A Protestant identity founded on Buchanan’s unusual Protestantism, and a usable past for a Protestant nation that left little room for providence was bound to be problematic. In the centuries following his death, Buchanan’s reputation was reshaped to smooth out these difficulties.

The problems that Buchanan’s civic humanism posed to Calvinist orthodoxy did not only include his scant reference to providence. Buchanan had also made a number of references to a more unorthodox process of causation. His references to fortune in the *Historia* were relatively rare – it might be pointed out that they were no more common than his references to providence – but they were present nonetheless. Early on in the *Historia* he discussed the unsatisfactory nature of primogeniture, as it committed the succession of the monarchy “to the will of fortune.”¹³⁹ In the struggle

¹³⁵ Mason, ‘Usable Pasts’, 63-4.

¹³⁶ Mason, ‘Usable Pasts’, 64.

¹³⁷ Mason, ‘Usable Pasts’, 68.

¹³⁸ Mason, ‘Usable Pasts’, 68.

¹³⁹ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, I, 311.

between Bruce and Baliol after the death of Robert I, Buchanan described how, “These inconstant freaks of fortune, [*Haec variantis fortunae inconstantia*] again tore Scotland into two factions.”¹⁴⁰ In another instance, again bewailing the evils of primogeniture, Buchanan argued, “In such inconstancy of fortune, [*in tanta fortunae inconstantia*] it must sometimes happen that boys, or others unfit for governing, would succeed as heirs to the chief magistracy.”¹⁴¹ Arguably these invocations of fortune were not intended to be taken any more literally than were the allusions to providence. References to providence were nods to orthodoxy, but references to fortune were on more dangerous ground.

Providence, it was assumed by the Calvinist mind, equalled justice, however capricious it might appear to the eyes of fallen man. But fate and fortune were not necessarily just. Walsham has discussed how orthodox Protestants loathed the heathen associations of fate and fortune, and their continuing use as ideas and vocabularies.¹⁴² “Protestants were not prepared to brook any trace of popery and paganism which involved sidestepping the full implications of providential theology.”¹⁴³ Allan has also noted how the Kirk in Scotland tried to silence “rival pagan causalities.”¹⁴⁴ Yet such sidestepping is discernible in Buchanan. He rarely cited providence or divine retribution as significant historical causes, as to do so would encourage submission to an otherworldly force, not the classical and humanist ideals of action, vigour and unceasing struggle.

As Hay has argued, classical historians tended to conceive of history as motivated by human nature: “The engine of change was essentially moral.”¹⁴⁵ The religious beliefs of classical historians did not affect the way they wrote history, and arguably Buchanan, following classical models, shared this attitude.¹⁴⁶ Momigliano concurs, asserting that the classical historians’ emphasis on political and military affairs was “in itself an attitude towards religion... The historian was unlikely to emphasize

¹⁴⁰ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 10; Buchanan, ‘Historia’, *Opera Omnia*, I, 157.

¹⁴¹ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 549; Buchanan, ‘Historia’, *Opera Omnia*, I, 376.

¹⁴² A. Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), 20.

¹⁴³ Walsham, *Providence*, 28.

¹⁴⁴ Allan, *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment*, 121.

¹⁴⁵ D. Hay, *Annalists and Historians from the Eighth to the Eighteenth Centuries* (London, 1977), 10.

¹⁴⁶ Hay, *Annalists and Historians*, 12.

direct intervention of the gods in history.”¹⁴⁷ He continues, “The attitude of the historian towards religious beliefs underlined the inherent aristocratic character of history writing.”¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, Burns has argued that Buchanan’s avoidance of religious discussion in his history and political theory may well have been motivated by his intended European readership, a readership that was “not to be satisfied – many of them could only have been repelled – by the biblical rhetoric of a Knox or a Goodman.”¹⁴⁹

Buchanan’s loathing of superstition would act as a further bar to the discussion of prodigies, portents and prophecies. Interestingly this is one of the principal differences between Buchanan’s *Historia*, and Boece’s *Scotorum Historiae*, which was his source. Boece was prone to digress on such subjects as “mony mervellis”, including references to strange shapes in the moon, showers of blood, raining stones, fish inexplicably washed up on beaches, comets in the sky, and outbreaks of worms.¹⁵⁰ Buchanan usually disdained to mention such portents, or when he did, he expressed scepticism. Narrating an allegation of witchcraft against the 78th king, Duff, he stated “I have thought proper to relate this story, as I have received it; what judgement is to be formed concerning the witchcraft, I leave to the judgement of my readers.”¹⁵¹

Allan has considered the apparently contradictory natures of Protestant providence, with connotations of passivity, and classical and humanist fortune, which were more strongly associated with the active life. While he acknowledges the possible conflicts of these views of historical causation, he arguably underestimates the extent to which they undermine his view of the organic unity of humanism and Calvinism. He argues that Buchanan’s “deft negotiation” between the causalities of providence and fortune is characteristic of a man who was “by temperament and education a humanist, but by allegiance a loyal supporter of the Protestant and Jacobean parties

¹⁴⁷ A. Momigliano, ‘Popular Religious Beliefs and the Late Roman Historians’, *Essays in Ancient and Modern Historiography* (Oxford, 1977), 142.

¹⁴⁸ Momigliano, ‘Popular Religious Beliefs and the Late Roman Historians’, 143.

¹⁴⁹ J. H. Burns, *The True Law of Kingship: Concepts of Monarchy in Early Modern Scotland* (Oxford, 1996), 196.

¹⁵⁰ Boece, *History and Chronicles of Scotland*, I, 286, II, 228, 331, 358.

¹⁵¹ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, I, 292-3. Similarly, Buchanan was sceptical of the three witches in the narrative of Macbeth’s career, and regarded them as evidence of psychological disturbance rather than supernatural happening. Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, I, 336.

to whom providentialism had acquired a precocious importance.”¹⁵² Allan downplays Buchanan’s relatively scarce references to fortune, arguing that he displayed “a widespread tendency to diminish the pagan connotations by the use of Christian terms.”¹⁵³

However, this view can be disputed. Buchanan’s references to providence and fortune were held in a rough balance, where neither was privileged. If providence had acquired a ‘precocious importance’ for Buchanan’s party, then arguably it had not done so for him. His use of Christian terms is questionable and he embraced pagan vocabularies, apparently with little care for whether or not they interfered with a Christian scheme. Allan focuses on the translation of Buchanan’s *History of Scotland* which appeared in London in 1690, but, as we have seen, any approach to understanding Buchanan’s account of historical causation should separate Buchanan’s words from those of his translators, and examine the original Latin for evidence of pagan equivocations of meaning. More important for Buchanan’s purposes than any Christian scheme of causation, was the humanist certainty that the historical character had to wrestle with fortune in order to demonstrate and prove his virtue. What Buchanan needed was a scheme of causation that would privilege action over passivity and submission to otherworldly forces, and arguably he found this in Neostoicism.

Oestreich has shown how the rise of Neostoic ideas in the early modern period was instrumental in bringing about “positive acceptance of permanent state power, which was embodied in the standing army.”¹⁵⁴ Although this would have been an abomination to Buchanan, the charm of Neostoicism, like that of its parent movement humanism, was its flexibility and eclecticism. As Oestreich asserts, “Neostoicism was far from being a doctrinaire movement,” but was rather a “broad philosophical attitude.”¹⁵⁵

Justus Lipsius, (1547-1606) the influential Dutch humanist and professor at the University of Leiden from the 1570s, was opposed to the tyrannicidal tendencies of

¹⁵² Allan, *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment*, 137 footnote.

¹⁵³ Allan, *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment*, 110.

¹⁵⁴ Oestreich, *Neostoicism*, 8.

¹⁵⁵ Oestreich, *Neostoicism*, 7-8.

resistance theorists such as Buchanan.¹⁵⁶ However, the flexibility of the Neostoic movement would allow its ideas to be appropriated by just about anyone, including both Protestant and Calvinist resistance theorists: “It embodied elements of militant Calvinism together with arguments used by the Jesuits, with their emphasis on the freedom of the will.”¹⁵⁷ From Buchanan’s point of view, the usefulness of Neostoicism was that it could demonstrate the active virtues. This was in contrast to Stoicism in its classical and medieval forms, which could be seen to recommend the opposite – seclusion, withdrawal, contemplation – the antithesis of the civic humanist ideal.¹⁵⁸ The philosophy of Neostoicism “did not aim solely at providing a moral doctrine for the private individual” but was “primarily political in character.”¹⁵⁹

This other side of Stoicism, the side concerned with the private individual rather than the commonwealth, championed “interior freedom” as a way of coping with external tyranny.¹⁶⁰ This was the antithesis of active resistance, and instead admitted suicide, as practised by numerous Roman heroes, or urged tranquil acceptance of death, as in Buchanan’s plays *Jephthes* and *Baptistes*.¹⁶¹ This example once more highlights the disjunction between Buchanan’s plays, where most expressions of religious faith are to be found, and his other works, where civic factors are privileged. Arguably, to take his plays as the best evidence of his own faith is to exaggerate the extent to which Buchanan was an orthodox and conformist Calvinist. It might also be suggested that the plays, written in the 1540s, were following Calvin’s own teachings and extolling passive rather than active resistance.¹⁶² It is in Buchanan’s civic humanism that the most challenging problems are to be found in defining his religious beliefs. His commitment to civic humanism made Neostoicism, rather than the more passive form of Stoicism, useful to his scheme of thought.

The Neostoic view of historical causation, according to Lipsius, admitted both providence and fate, but free will was still paramount. Providence, it was assumed,

¹⁵⁶ Oestreich, *Neostoicism*, 40.

¹⁵⁷ Oestreich, *Neostoicism*, 33.

¹⁵⁸ Oestreich, *Neostoicism*, 9.

¹⁵⁹ Oestreich, *Neostoicism*, 14.

¹⁶⁰ P. Burke, ‘Stoics and Sceptics’, in Burns & Goldie, *History of Political Thought*, 491.

¹⁶¹ Burke, ‘Stoics and Sceptics’, 493.

¹⁶² Burke, ‘Stoics and Sceptics’, 493.

was the cause of all events, good or ill. This was mediated through fate, which came from God, but was also dependent on human action. This was an argument against determinism, an assertion that, “God has foreseen everything, but he does not force it upon men.”¹⁶³ This was Lipsius’ synthesis “to reconcile Stoicism and Christianity.”¹⁶⁴

Buchanan could not have read the works in which Lipsius outlined his conception of Neostoicism, as they were published after his death. However, it is not too much to imagine Buchanan sharing many of Lipsius’ assumptions and arriving at similar conclusions, albeit in a silent, indeed possibly even unconscious manner. Buchanan and Lipsius moved in similar intellectual circles. Both were friends and correspondents of Sir Philip Sidney, and members of what Phillips has described as “a pattern of interlocking religious, political, and literary interests.”¹⁶⁵ He describes Buchanan as “in effect, a member *in absentia* of the Sidney circle,” and Oestreich has noted that Lipsius was also a friend of Sidney.¹⁶⁶ Allan also illustrates the Scottish connections to France and the Netherlands that were significant in the transmission of Neostoic ideas.¹⁶⁷ Buchanan may have known of the genesis of Lipsius’ ideas, but if not, he still had access to similar ideological materials which could have acted as building blocks for his somewhat unsystematic system of causation.

Providence was all very well, but Buchanan disliked it as a first cause. Too many deterministic statements along the lines of ‘God prospering’ Moray’s exertions would problematise that which Buchanan regarded as the whole point of humanist history: it would deny the virtue of Moray’s manly struggle with earthly forces. An injection of free will along the lines of that outlined by Neostoic thought admitted this orientation towards action, towards the individual hero, and allowed for the celebration of humanist history’s ‘great men’. What Buchanan was groping for in the *Historia*, but did not entirely find or elucidate, was a system of causation that

¹⁶³ Oestreich, *Neostoicism*, 23.

¹⁶⁴ Oestreich, *Neostoicism*, 28.

¹⁶⁵ J. E. Phillips, ‘George Buchanan and the Sidney Circle’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, xii (1948-9), 24.

¹⁶⁶ Phillips, ‘George Buchanan and the Sidney Circle’, 55; Oestreich, *Neostoicism*, 114.

¹⁶⁷ D. Allan, *Philosophy and Politics in Later Stuart Scotland: Neo-Stoicism, Culture and Ideology in an Age of Crisis, 1540-1690*, (East Linton, 2000), 19-30.

gave due credit to providence, but still privileged free will – active manly struggle – carried out with God's blessing.

Buchanan and the question of who can resist

Buchanan is conventionally regarded as having taken a highly radical position on the question of exactly who could resist a tyrannical monarch. Skinner regards Buchanan as “By far the most radical of all the Calvinist revolutionaries.”¹⁶⁸ And Williamson affirms, “By the end of the 1560s Buchanan had emerged as by far the most radical political theorist anywhere in the three kingdoms.”¹⁶⁹ However, it is notable that almost all the narratives and examples of active resistance that he gave in his history and political theory involved the nobility. The key test of the radicalism of resistance theories was how far they allowed the ordinary people, either collectively or individually, to resist tyrannical rulers, without the action having to be carried out, led, or endorsed by intermediaries such as the nobility or inferior magistrates. Did Buchanan endorse such action by the people?¹⁷⁰

Cowan suggests that Buchanan “fudged” or “fumbled” the question of popular resistance.¹⁷¹ In one place in the *De Iure Regni*, Buchanan clearly stated that the ordinary people could resist in themselves. This was fairly explicit, but there were instances elsewhere in the *De Iure Regni* and more particularly in the *Historia* where he appeared to qualify this view and suggest that his preferred agents of resistance might be the nobility, the ‘inferior magistrates’. This line of thought was more conventional in Calvinist resistance theory, particularly in that of the Huguenots.¹⁷²

The less radical *Historia* was Buchanan’s final work. Can it be regarded as his ‘last word’ on the subject of resistance? Williamson has suggested that Buchanan’s apparently diminishing radicalism was a product of disillusionment with the failure of the nation to unite against Mary during the civil war, and that this prompted his

¹⁶⁸ Skinner, *Foundations*, II, 343 footnote.

¹⁶⁹ McGinnis & Williamson, *The British Union*, 6.

¹⁷⁰ The term ‘popular’ is used to describe rhetoric or arguments that championed the role of the people in resisting tyranny, as opposed to the nobility or inferior magistrates.

¹⁷¹ E. J. Cowan, ‘The Making of the National Covenant’, in J. Morrill (ed.), *The Scottish National Covenant in its British Context* (Edinburgh, 1990), 80; E. J. Cowan, *‘For Freedom Alone’: The Declaration of Arbroath, 1320* (East Linton, 2003), 92.

¹⁷² The classic statements of Huguenot resistance theory, all three of which stipulated that inferior magistrates should carry out resistance, are Francois Hotman’s (1524-90) *Francogallia*, published in 1573; Theodore Beza’s *Du Droit des Magistrats*, published in 1574; and the *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*, usually ascribed to Phillipe Du Plessis Mornay, published in 1579. *Constitutionalism and resistance in the sixteenth century: three treatises by Hotman, Beza and Mornay*, ed. and trans. J. H. Franklin, (New York, 1969).

shift in emphasis from the people to the nobility as agents of resistance.

“Buchanan’s radicalism faded, and his *Rerum Scoticarum Historia* (1582) would be more in line with contemporary French monarchomach theory.”¹⁷³

Salmon has traced the development of different strands of resistance theory from the conciliarists to the Glorious Revolution. He argues that certain theorists, including Buchanan and later John Locke, took an ideological route that was different to that of the more conventional monarchomachs, such as the Huguenots. There was not one road from Constance to 1688, but two.¹⁷⁴ Buchanan, he asserts, differed from the Huguenots and their insistence that resistance must be carried out by the inferior magistrates, even if it was in the name of the people. “In this respect,” he says of Buchanan, “he was a more radical populist than they.”¹⁷⁵ In his opinion, Buchanan saw the deposition of Mary in 1567 as “the just application of the sovereignty of the people.”¹⁷⁶ But the problem remains that this was an event that Buchanan saw as being carried out by the nobility.

Salmon gets around this by noting that while Buchanan was fairly explicit in his abstract argument that the people could resist, he displayed “deliberate vagueness... when it came to describing an actual process whereby kings might be resisted, judged and punished.”¹⁷⁷ He takes this to mean that although Buchanan went further in *narrating* resistance undertaken by the nobility, he did not endow them with sovereignty, therefore the option of resistance was still theoretically open to the ordinary people. Although he was fond of repeating all the usual shibboleths of resistance theory, in his analysis of Romans 13 and his love of dicta such as *populi salus suprema lex esto* and *rex singulis major, universis minor*, Buchanan was still fundamentally different and thoroughly populist.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷³ McGinnis & Williamson, *The British Union*, 8-9.

¹⁷⁴ Salmon, ‘An Alternative Theory of Popular Resistance’, 136. The term ‘monarchomach’ or ‘king-killer’ was coined by William Barclay in *De Regno et Regali Potestate adversus Buchananum, Brutum, Boucherium, et reliquos Monarchomachos*, published in 1600. Barclay united the names of the Protestant resistance theorists Buchanan and Brutus, (the pseudonym under which *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* was published) with the name of Jean Boucher, (1548-1644) the French resistance theorist of the Catholic League.

¹⁷⁵ Salmon, ‘An Alternative Theory of Popular Resistance’, 142.

¹⁷⁶ Salmon, ‘An Alternative Theory of Popular Resistance’, 145.

¹⁷⁷ Salmon, ‘An Alternative Theory of Popular Resistance’, 149.

¹⁷⁸ Salmon, ‘An Alternative Theory of Popular Resistance’, 150. St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, Chapter 13 was the central text in the controversy over the legitimacy of resistance in early modern

Skinner also considers the differences between Buchanan and the Huguenots in his conclusions on Buchanan's radicalism. Buchanan's account of the formation of the first political commonwealth in the state of nature emphasised that the whole people joined together; therefore they, rather than their representatives, were sovereign. In that case, they, the ordinary people, held the right of resistance. By this logic, Buchanan was able "to legitimate a highly individualist and even anarchic view of the right of political resistance."¹⁷⁹ Whatever examples Buchanan later gave concerning resistance by the nobility, this logic still stood, and would be used as an ideological resource for the future justification of resistance. Buchanan had inescapably admitted that the people could resist.

Modern translations of the *De Iure Regni* have tended to render the two expressions in which Buchanan endorsed tyrannicide by individuals as rhetorical questions, and this perhaps gives the impression of equivocation.

Now when a war has been undertaken against an enemy for a just cause, it is the right not only of the people as a whole but also of individuals to kill the enemy?" [*Bello autem cum hoste iusta de causa semel suscepto, ius est non modo universo populi sed singulis etiam hostem interimere?*] "Cannot any individual from the whole mass of the human race lawfully exact from him all the penalties of war?"¹⁸⁰

It is likely, however, that the question marks were added to aid the flow of the dialogue, rather than to suggest elusiveness on Buchanan's part. Mason, like Salmon and Skinner, regards the *De Iure Regni* as giving "an unequivocal endorsement of

Europe. Those who opposed all resistance to tyrannical rulers took the precept, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers," at face value – those who resisted would be damned. In contrast, those who argued that resistance against tyrannical rulers was legitimate insisted that St. Paul had only forbidden resistance against good and proper rulers, and had not specifically stated that tyrants should not be resisted. By this logic, tyrants could and should be resisted.

¹⁷⁹ Skinner, *Foundations*, II, 343.

¹⁸⁰ Buchanan, *De Iure Regni*, 152-3; G. Buchanan, *The Art and Science of Government Among the Scots, being George Buchanan's 'De Iure Regni apud Scotos'* ed. D. H. MacNeill, (Glasgow, 1964), 97. The standard translation of the *De Iure Regni* of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Philalethes translation, rendered this admission of popular rights of resistance as a statement rather than a question. "Now a Lawfull war being once undertaken with an enemy, and for a just cause, it is Lawfull not only for the whole People to kill that enemy, but for every one of them." G. Buchanan, *De Iure Regni Apud Scotos, Or, A Dialogue, concerning the due Priviledge of Government in the Kingdom of Scotland*, trans. Philalethes, (1680), 127; G. Buchanan, *De Iure Regni Apud Scotos*, trans. Philalethes, (London, 1689), 66; G. Buchanan, *De Iure Regni Apud Scotos*, trans. Philalethes, (Philadelphia, 1766), 104.

single-handed tyrannicide,” tyrannicide that was permissible “with no institutional checks on individual initiative.”¹⁸¹

Mason has attempted to resolve the apparent dichotomy between the “explosive and socially corrosive populism” of the *De Iure Regni* and the “aristocratic constitutionalism” of the *Historia*, in which the nobility were admired as agents and exemplars of resistance.¹⁸² He argues that the difference between the two texts was in their intention: the *Historia* was necessarily backward-looking, while the *De Iure Regni* was bolder and “looked to a brave new world of participatory popular politics.”¹⁸³ The *Historia* was descriptive, but the *De Iure Regni* could take the liberty of being imaginatively prescriptive, and this explains its more audacious stand. The role Buchanan assigned to the nobility in the historical examples he produced in the *De Iure Regni* may even have been intended to disguise “the full radical import of the theory they were intended to support.”¹⁸⁴

Williamson argues that the question of who could resist was not a quantitative judgement. It was not about the individual, the many or the few, but a qualitative judgement based on citizenship: the citizen or the citizens could resist. “Buchanan looked at the 1559-60 revolution and found Scotland to be a polis. In the end citizens were, quite simply, those who behaved like citizens.”¹⁸⁵ But here he appears to have opened up a paradox, at once suggesting that it was the act of resistance that created citizens, and that citizenship was a criterion for who could undertake resistance. He states “In 1559-60 and again in 1567 people from all over Scotland did indeed behave as though they were citizens pursuing the public good.”¹⁸⁶ But Buchanan in the *Historia* displayed a more definite view of who it was that had carried out resistance both in the Reformation and the deposition of Mary Queen of Scots – the nobility.

Mason has also discussed the question of Buchanan’s view of citizenship. He admits that Buchanan’s fondness for the nobility does constitute an anomaly in his thinking,

¹⁸¹ Mason, ‘Rex Stoicus’, 22; Mason, ‘People Power’, 179.

¹⁸² Mason, ‘People Power’, 181.

¹⁸³ Mason, ‘People Power’, 181.

¹⁸⁴ Mason, ‘People Power’, 172.

¹⁸⁵ McGinnis & Williamson, *The British Union*, 7.

¹⁸⁶ McGinnis & Williamson, *The British Union*, 6.

and argues that Buchanan saw citizenship “in *both* quantitative and qualitative terms.” He suggests,

If there is a criterion for citizenship, it is not wealth and property, but the powers of reasoning that Buchanan saw as necessary to control man’s self-serving appetites in the interests of the common good.¹⁸⁷

This consideration of Buchanan’s resistance theory makes it tempting to agree with Skinner that there is really no such thing as Calvinist resistance theory.¹⁸⁸ There were varying degrees of resistance theory and varying degrees of Calvinism in the wide array of theorists usually discussed under this umbrella term, which comprises individuals as diverse as Knox and Buchanan, as well as Althusius, Beza and Mornay. Calvin himself, of course, did not propound an activist stance on resistance, arguing in *Institutes of the Christian Religion* that prayer and endurance of persecution were to be practised instead of outright resistance.¹⁸⁹ What is commonly referred to as ‘Calvinist resistance theory’ had elements that were classical and humanist, Catholic and conciliar, and Lutheran as well as Calvinist. Skinner has argued that little of it is uniquely or “distinctively Calvinist.”¹⁹⁰ But what all of these positions have in common is the simple moral standpoint of the restraint of the passions, whether of the people, the nobility, the ruler, or the Pope.

In Buchanan too, shadings of all of these ideological positions are evident. Thus although religious feeling was absent from many of his writings, self-restraint was a constant, whether in his poems and history in the ‘mirror of princes’ genre, or his concern with active, virtuous nobles and citizens in his political theory and history. In a sense this moral imperative was Buchanan’s religion, a religion based on the commonwealth rather than the afterlife. Arguably Buchanan did endow the people with rights of resistance, but ultimately, the question of who exactly was permitted to resist by the logic of Buchanan’s words is not of the greatest importance here. The question is this: in later interpretations of, or extrapolations from Buchanan’s work, who did later users of Buchanan’s resistance theory *perceive* was allowed to resist?

¹⁸⁷ Mason, ‘People Power’, 178.

¹⁸⁸ Q. Skinner, ‘The Origins of the Calvinist Theory of Revolution’, in B. C. Malament (ed.), *After the Reformation* (Manchester, 1980), 324-5.

¹⁸⁹ R. Mackenney, *Sixteenth Century Europe: Expansion and Conflict* (London, 1993), 167-8.

¹⁹⁰ Skinner, ‘Origins of the Calvinist Theory of Revolution’, 325.

A Personal Religion?

In *Jephthes*, the Priest, a character whose opinions Buchanan certainly did not endorse, asserted,

True religion, true piety is not to worship God by a practice which
you have self-deceivingly established for yourself... but those which
the decrees of laws sent from heaven demand, and which ancestral
custom approves.

Jephtha, the character whose opinions are arguably closer to those of Buchanan, responded, “Whatever is performed with a sincere mind is welcome to God, and he always puts to our credit the gifts which issue from a pure heart.”¹⁹¹ This might be taken as a statement of commitment to Protestantism, for its courage in throwing off the shackles of Catholic custom in search of a purer faith. However, it might also be taken as a cautious endorsement of a more personalised religion. Such sentiments can also be seen in Buchanan’s poem *The Graven Image Speaks to the Pilgrims*. Denying idolatry, he affirmed,

To find Christ, look to the secret places of the soul, Or read what the
prophetic fathers have sung in their inspired verses, Or look around at
what the rich world holds everywhere.¹⁹²

Religious truth, he implied, was to be found in the Word, and in nature, but could also be a matter of personal instinct.

The questionable orthodoxy of some of Buchanan’s religious beliefs begs the question whether he was a freethinker. Such men did exist in sixteenth-century Europe. The anti-Trinitarian opinions of Michael Servetus (c. 1511-53) led to his execution for heresy in Geneva in 1553, partially at the behest of Calvin. The logician and eventual victim of the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre, Peter Ramus, (1515-72) has been described as “a declared if irregular Calvinist.”¹⁹³ The Italian philosopher and onetime Dominican friar Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) was executed for heretical ideas that combined an obsession with the religion of ancient Egypt with Copernican astronomy. Far from being regarded as a Catholic, Bossy argues, Bruno cannot even be considered as a Christian.¹⁹⁴ Hill has detected

¹⁹¹ Buchanan, ‘Jephthes’, in Sharratt & Walsh (eds.), *Tragedies*, 85.

¹⁹² Buchanan, ‘The Graven Image Speaks to the Pilgrims’, *Political Poetry*, 246.

¹⁹³ Salmon, ‘Cicero and Tacitus in Sixteenth-Century France’, in *Renaissance and Revolt*, 37.

¹⁹⁴ J. Bossy, *Giordano Bruno and the Embassy Affair* (New Haven, 1991), 148.

evidence of freethinking in Francis Bacon (1561-1626) and Sir Walter Raleigh, (1552-1618) in their interest in second causes. He has argued, “some of Raleigh’s writings... are more compatible with deism than Christianity.”¹⁹⁵ Raleigh even used the metaphor of winding up a watch to describe God’s role on earth, an image favoured by Newtonians and deists later in the seventeenth century.¹⁹⁶

It may be useful to consider Buchanan with reference to another sixteenth-century maverick, the French Franciscan monk, priest and philosopher Francois Rabelais, (1494?-1553) author of *Pantagruel* and *Gargantua* in the 1530s. Rabelais’s less than orthodox religious beliefs were, like Buchanan’s, labelled in many different ways, including atheism, rationalism, bawdy anti-clericalism, scepticism, and secularism.¹⁹⁷ Febvre discusses the intricacies of Rabelais’s thought: his devotion to Scripture; his attachment to Erasmian humanism and moralism; and his apparent rejection of other tenets of Protestantism such as justification by faith, its rising intolerance, and oppressive preoccupation with predestination. He concludes that it was perfectly possible for a well-educated and well-travelled man of the sixteenth century to assemble a personalised religion, based on many readily accessible and interchangeable beliefs.

For it is possible at certain moments to be, in all good conscience, mistaken about one’s true nature – to say and think one is an Evangelical when one is the father, creator, and most perfect adept of Pantagruelism.¹⁹⁸

Such a view avoids anachronistic labelling with terms such as ‘deist’ or ‘rationalist’, something that Febvre cautions against: “Wanting to make the sixteenth century a sceptical century, a free-thinking and rationalist one... is the worst of errors and delusions.”¹⁹⁹

Febvre asserts that while broad deviations from orthodoxy were possible in the sixteenth century, the ideological materials necessary to construct a systematic scheme of unbelief simply were not there. Challenging this view, Ginzburg argues

¹⁹⁵ C. Hill, *The Intellectual Origins of the English Revolution (Revisited)* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 154.

¹⁹⁶ Hill, *Intellectual Origins*, 162.

¹⁹⁷ Febvre, *Problem of Unbelief*, 3.

¹⁹⁸ Febvre, *Problem of Unbelief*, 305.

¹⁹⁹ Febvre, *Problem of Unbelief*, 462.

that although Febvre demonstrated the impossibility of atheism for Rabelais – one individual – he cannot extend the assumption about the impossibility of atheism in the mid-sixteenth century to an entire generation.²⁰⁰ He uncovers the mental universe of an Italian peasant named Menocchio, whose somewhat uninformed reading of religious texts led him to assemble his own version of the Christian faith inspired partially by anti-clericalism, partially by Lutheranism, and possibly, it is suggested, by Islam. Menocchio's beliefs featured cheese and worms as metaphors in an unholy-sounding account of the Creation, and led eventually to his execution for heresy in 1599. Ginzburg argues that Menocchio did not take these ideas directly from the books he read, but rather fermented them in his mind to produce a combination with "aggressive originality."²⁰¹

David Wootton also challenges Febvre's views on the limits of freethinking in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, pointing to Paolo Sarpi, (1552-1623) a Venetian who wrote against the background of the city's conflict with the papacy in the early seventeenth century, and who produced the monumental *History of the Council of Trent* in 1619. From the evidence of Sarpi's *Pensieri*, his private notebooks, Wootton argues, Sarpi can be seen "finding and forging all the arguments an atheist might need."²⁰² Sarpi is credited with believing in the possibility of a purely secular society, an audacious and downright dangerous belief in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century.²⁰³

None of this is to suggest that Buchanan was an atheist, or even a free-thinker to any great extent. Yet these examples do illustrate the diversity of religious ideas, even wild and unorthodox ideas, in the early modern period. Mason has argued that Buchanan may well have "dabbled (and probably much more than dabbled)" with unorthodox beliefs.

Given the religious climate of the 1530s and 1540s, and given the intellectual circles in which Buchanan moved, it is not surprising that he should be found testing – and transgressing – the bounds of theological orthodoxy.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁰ C. Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller*, trans. J. & A. Tedeschi (Baltimore, 1980), p. xxiii.

²⁰¹ Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*, 33.

²⁰² D. Wootton, *Paolo Sarpi: Between Renaissance and Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1983), 3.

²⁰³ Wootton, *Sarpi*, 3.

²⁰⁴ Mason, 'People Power', 166.

McFarlane has also argued, of Buchanan's time in Portugal, "Almost certainly he had dabbled in Lutheran doctrines."²⁰⁵ It seems there were few religious beliefs that Buchanan did not dip into.

Conclusions about Buchanan's faith may stem from his reputation as a pillar of the Reformation establishment in Scotland, Moderator of the General Assembly and tutor to James VI. He can easily be made to fit the mould of inflexible Calvinism. Williamson has argued that it would be a mistake "to discount Buchanan's religious commitments simply because his religion was a civil religion."²⁰⁶ But this is a significant point: that Buchanan's Calvinism was, to a considerable extent, a choice, compatible with his political views. Buchanan made a rational decision to choose Calvinism, whereas most other converts would claim that a Calvinist God had chosen them. This act of choosing did make Buchanan a committed Calvinist, but beneath this he may well have had subtle shadings of difference, his own personalised religion. His political theory had little reliance on 'the Word', and arguably the same might be said of his religious beliefs.

Febvre noted that it was Rabelais's orthodox Catholic opponents in the Sorbonne who tarred him with the brush of Protestantism.²⁰⁷ It may be argued that one of the principal reasons for the development of Buchanan's reputation as an unyielding Calvinist came through the efforts of his detractors. These could be Catholics, such as Winzet, Blackwood and Barclay, or simply cooler Protestants, such as James VI. Burns has argued "Despite the non-religious tone of the *De Iure Regni* Blackwood, Winzet and Barclay are at one in regarding it as essentially a product of the Protestant heresy."²⁰⁸ James VI's parliament of 1584 censured the *De Iure Regni* and the *Historia* as containing "syndrie offensiue materis worthie to be delete." Copies of the books were to be handed in to be "purgit of the offensiue and extraordinare materis specifit thairin, not meit to remane as accordis of treuth to the posteritie."²⁰⁹ In Europe too, Buchanan's works were promptly condemned by the

²⁰⁵ McFarlane, *Buchanan*, 81.

²⁰⁶ McGinnis & Williamson, *The British Union*, 5.

²⁰⁷ Febvre, *Problem of Unbelief*, 125.

²⁰⁸ J. H. Burns, 'Three Scots Catholic Critics of George Buchanan', *Innes Review*, i (1950), 94-5.

²⁰⁹ *Acts of the Parliament of Scotland*, (1814), III, 296.

Catholic authorities, proscribed first by the Portuguese Inquisition in 1581, and then denounced by Pope Sixtus V in 1590 and again by Pope Clement VIII in 1596.²¹⁰ Condemnations of Buchanan's works by such illustrious enemies of the Reformation would only intensify impressions of him as a fanatical Protestant, and following this, later generations of Calvinists were only too glad to embrace Buchanan as one of their own.

²¹⁰ McGinnis & Williamson, 'Introduction', *Political Poetry*, 15 footnote.

Chapter 2

Approaches to the Posthumous Reputation of George Buchanan

The death of George Buchanan in 1582 did not instantly affect or alter his reputation. Many individuals who had known him were yet living, and the controversies in which he had been engaged – particularly over the guilt or innocence of Mary Queen of Scots – rumbled on. One of the most well-known and important aspects of Buchanan's reputation was his influence, positive or negative, on the boy king, James VI. James never forgot the severity of his tutor towards himself and towards his mother, and as an adult and a powerful independent monarch, he sought to confront Buchanan's reputation.

In *Basilicon Doron*, written in 1598, James gave fatherly advice to his eldest son Henry. His dedication to Henry was not dissimilar to the dedications of the *De Iure Regni* and the *Historia* that Buchanan had bestowed upon James, but it was considerably warmer and more affectionate. James advised his heir to read history, particularly the history of Scotland, but to avoid the accounts of Knox and Buchanan, asserting, "If any of these infamous libels remaine vntill your dayes, vse the Law vpon the keepers thereof."¹

In *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*, published anonymously in 1598, James's engagement with Buchanan is evident even when his tutor's name is not cited. James raged against those who "leane to the extraordinarie examples of degrading or killing of kings in the Scriptures, thereby to cloake the peoples rebellion." He attacked the monarchomachs' usages of the Old and New Testament, including Romans 13, to justify resistance. He put forward a version of early Scottish history that was very different from that of his tutor, asserting that at the supposed founding of the Scottish kingdom in 330 BC, Fergus I, "made himselfe King and Lord" in opposition to "the false affirmation of such seditious writers, as would perswade vs, that the Lawes and state of our countrey were established before the admitting of a king."²

¹ James VI, 'Basilicon Doron', in J. P. Sommerville (ed.), *Political Writings* (Cambridge, 1994), 46.

² James VI, 'The Trew Law of Free Monarchies', in Sommerville (ed.), *Political Writings*, 71-3.

It has been suggested that Buchanan was an influence on a number of his contemporaries and near-contemporaries, including William Shakespeare. Norbrook has questioned how far Shakespeare's *Macbeth* engaged with Buchanan's view of history and politics, in what may have been an attempt to mediate between the competing views of Scottish kingship held by Buchanan, and James VI & I, Shakespeare's potential patron.³ Many prominent Scottish churchmen, historians and polemicists made use of Buchanan's name and work during James's reign, including John Spottiswoode (1565-1639), in support of James's Episcopising policies, as well as Andrew Melville, David Hume of Godscroft, (1558-1630?) and David Calderwood, (1575-1650) in opposition.

John Spottiswoode was a keen supporter of James's church reforms, and served as Archbishop of Glasgow from 1603, Archbishop of St Andrews from 1615, and as Moderator of the General Assembly at Perth in 1618, at which the Five Articles of Perth were approved and Episcopalian worship was imposed on the Church of Scotland. At James's behest, Spottiswoode undertook to write a *History of the Church of Scotland*, which was eventually published in 1655. His account of the early church and the Reformation of the 1550s and 1560s owed much to Boece and Buchanan. He followed the standard narrative of the sponsorship of Christianity by King Donald I, the Culdees, and the separateness of the Scottish church from the Church of Rome; but gave a positive account of the early bishop Palladius. In his account of the Scottish Reformation, Spottiswoode regularly cited, paraphrased, or silently appropriated Buchanan's account.⁴

The chief opponents of James VI's ecclesiastical policies were even keener to use Buchanan's ideas. As a fellow humanist, Andrew Melville endorsed Buchanan's ideas on resistance, and infused them with a greater apocalyptic dimension than had been present in Buchanan's writings. Melville was a friend and associate of Buchanan's late in his life and helped to supervise the publication of the *Historia*, and his own annotated copy of it is still in existence in St Andrews University

³ D. Norbrook, 'Macbeth and the Politics of Historiography', in K. Sharpe & S. N. Zwicker (eds.), *Politics of Discourse: The Literature and History of Seventeenth Century England* (Berkeley CA, 1987), 80-116.

⁴ J. Spottiswoode, *The History of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1847-51), I.

library.⁵ In addition, Andrew Melville's nephew James Melville, (1556-1614) recorded anecdotes of his meetings with Buchanan in his *Memoirs of his own life*.⁶

David Calderwood was another warrior for Presbyterianism in opposition to James VI, and he wrote *The History of the Kirk of Scotland* that covered the years down to 1625. Although his principal focus was on the personal reign of James VI, Calderwood prefixed his *History* with a preamble that regularly cited or paraphrased Buchanan, and gave what had become the standard account of the early kings and the early church.⁷ The Presbyterian humanist and neo-Latin poet David Hume of Godscroft, (1558-1630?) as a "self-conscious successor to Buchanan and Melville," also wrote a defence of Buchanan's *Historia* against the criticisms of William Camden's (1551-1623) *Britannia*.⁸

Camden's engagement with Buchanan is also worthy of note, as he is recognised as a very different historian from Buchanan, both in terms of methodology and allegiance. In terms of method, he emphasised the importance of objectivity and rejected the humanist contrivance of composing speeches for historical figures. Camden wrote in support of the reigns of Elizabeth and of James VI & I, and this ensured his involvement, voluntarily or otherwise, in the Marian debate. James took great exception to the French humanist Jacques-Auguste de Thou's (1553-1617) *Historia sui temporis*, which had the temerity to follow Buchanan's version of the deposition of Mary, and he demanded that Camden furnish de Thou with all the materials necessary for a 'correction' of his interpretation.⁹

These examples illustrate that numerous contemporaries and near-contemporaries of Buchanan and James VI influenced the creation and transmission of Buchanan's reputation, particularly through the Marian controversy. However, Buchanan's posthumous reputation was also strongly driven by his political theory, and in particular by his theory of resistance. In the centuries after his death, Buchanan's

⁵ McGinnis & Williamson, *The British Union*, 14.

⁶ James Melville's feelings towards Buchanan, however, were cooler than those of his uncle. J. Melville, *Memoirs of his own life* (Edinburgh, 1827), 262-3.

⁷ Calderwood, 'The Preamble', *The History of the Kirk of Scotland*, ed. T. Thomson, (Edinburgh, 1842), I, 1-55.

⁸ McGinnis & Williamson, *The British Union*, 19, 51.

⁹ Hay, *Annalists and Historians*, 134-5.

name and ideas would be most usable, and most contested, during times of revolution or when the question of resistance was at the forefront of political debate. Although the perceived tyrannous tendencies of James VI & I did not provoke violent resistance, the conduct of his immediate successor, Charles I, and of his eventual successors, Charles II and James VII & II, emphatically did. The usability of Buchanan's name and ideas followed the contours of such historical climaxes as the Covenanted revolutions in seventeenth-century Scotland; the revolutions against the Stuarts in seventeenth-century England; the debates over the rebellious heritage of Scottish Presbyterianism in the eighteenth century; the abstract theorising of resistance undertaken during the Scottish Enlightenment; the American Revolution; the era of the French Revolution; and a further burst of interest in Scotland's Covenanted past in the years after 1815. This analysis will concentrate most particularly on these peaks in engagement with Buchanan's works.

A number of routes of the transmission of Buchanan's reputation suggest themselves. Firstly, a Presbyterian or Covenanted strand; secondly, transmission through the canon of high political theory; and thirdly, a route that takes in Episcopalian, Catholic, Marian and Jacobite concerns. The intention is to focus on the first two of these, as a number of limitations on the third route suggest that, while it must be covered to some degree, it is a less profitable means of approaching Buchanan's reputation.

What has been clumsily entitled the Episcopalian, Catholic, Marian and Jacobite thread in Buchanan's reputation takes in a broad range of positions and opinions from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. What they have in common is their opposition to Buchanan: to his political principles in general, but above all to his defamation of Mary Queen of Scots. To expose Buchanan as a second-rate polemicist would go a considerable way towards demolishing the 'case for the prosecution' against Mary and to vindicate her reputation. In this sense, the attack on Buchanan focused on the episodes of his life that involved Mary, and might therefore be subsumed under the more convenient heading of 'the Marian debate'.¹⁰

¹⁰ I. B. Cowan has discussed the Marian controversy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including Buchanan's place in it where relevant. I. B. Cowan, *The Enigma of Mary Stuart* (London,

This attempt to denigrate Buchanan's reputation focused on two allegations, both of which involved Mary. Firstly, a rumour was circulated that Buchanan had repented of his treatment of Mary on his deathbed. Secondly, it was alleged that Buchanan's conduct in attacking Mary made him guilty of ingratitude for favours she had bestowed upon him.

The allegation of Buchanan's deathbed confession that he had maligned Mary originated as an instance of hearsay in William Camden's *Annals*. The Episcopalian bishop John Sage alleged that he had heard it from Lady Rossyth, who had heard it from one David Buchanan, who had allegedly been present at the death of George Buchanan. The controversy was to focus on the nature of this so-called evidence. Who was this David Buchanan? Was he a relative of George Buchanan? How old would he have been at the time of Buchanan's death in 1582? Was he a reliable witness? The case against Buchanan's repentance was strong, as his defenders could point to the diary of James Melville, who had visited Buchanan in the month in which he died and found him defiant and unrepentant. This debate raged throughout the eighteenth century, and it is notable that it was still going on more than 200 years after Buchanan's death.¹¹

The question of Buchanan's ingratitude to Mary stemmed from several favours he was alleged to have received from her, and whether, indeed, they were grants from her. These included the Principalship of St. Leonard's College, St. Andrews (although this was a gift of Buchanan's patron Moray, not of Mary herself), the fact that he was chosen to be tutor to Mary's son (again, Mary did not make this choice herself), and the pension Buchanan received from Mary. The allegation of

1971), Introduction. Mary's own reputation has been considered in J. E. Lewis, *Mary Queen of Scots: Romance and Nation* (London, 1998).

¹¹ On Buchanan's side in denying his repentance, see [J. Love], *A Vindication of Mr. George Buchanan* (Edinburgh, 1749), 9-44; [J. Man], *A Censure and Examination of Mr. Thomas Ruddiman's philological notes on the works of the great Buchanan* (Aberdeen, 1753), 54, 62-71. On the other side, asserting his repentance, see G. Mackenzie, *Jus Regium: Or, the Just and Solid Foundations of Monarchy In General, and more especially of the Monarchy of Scotland; maintan'd against Buchanan, Naphthali, Dolman, Milton, &c.* (Edinburgh, 1684), 102; G. Mackenzie M.D., *The Lives and Characters of the most Eminent Writers of the Scots Nation* (Edinburgh, 1722), III, 173; T. Ruddiman, *An Answer to the Reverend Mr. George Logan's late Treatise on Government* (Edinburgh, 1747), 309; T. Ruddiman, *Animadversions on a late Pamphlet, intituled, A Vindication of Mr. George Buchanan* (Edinburgh, 1749), 5-15; J. Whitaker, *Mary, Queen of Scots Vindicated* (London, 1787), III, 389-90.

ingratitude was further bolstered by speculation on the authenticity of the Casket Letters, and Mary's defenders were keen to name Buchanan as the supposed forger.¹²

The problem with exploring this thread of Buchanan's reputation is that it tends to follow a pattern of indiscriminate mud slinging of the 'oh-yes-he-did' followed by the 'oh-no-he-didn't' variety. Two more profitable lines of enquiry concerning the Marian debate can be suggested. One is the storm over Thomas Ruddiman's edition of the *Opera Omnia*, the complete works of George Buchanan, of 1715. A second, more broadly, would examine Jacobite uses of Scottish history. The Boethian and Buchananite account of early Scottish history dated the founding of the Scottish monarchy under Fergus MacFerquhard to 330 BC. This narrative counted forty kings between this Fergus I, and the 'second founding' of the Scottish kingdom under Fergus MacErch, the king they counted as Fergus II, around 500 AD. Both in the *De Jure Regni* and the *Historia*, Buchanan attacked the conduct of many Scottish monarchs, but he nonetheless established the longevity of the Scottish ruling line. This glorious heritage could be put to many ideological uses by later defenders of the Stuarts.

This mythical account of early Scottish history was vigorously attacked and defended from the sixteenth to at least the eighteenth century. Commentators from elsewhere in the British Isles, such as Humphrey Lhuyd, tried to disparage the antiquity of the Scottish monarchy to serve Anglo-Welsh claims for the precedence of their own national myths. In the eighteenth century, the Scottish Jacobite Father Thomas Innes attacked the Buchananite account because the early kings served claims that the Scottish monarchy was elective, and that tyrannical kings had been resisted and deposed. Innes argued that the antiquity of the Scottish monarchy could

¹² Dr. George Mackenzie provides the best example of allegations of ingratitude against Buchanan. These were levelled not simply at his treatment of Mary, but also his cheeky epigram directed at John Mair, despite Mair's considerable help in his education; and his insults to the kindly and decent monks with whom he lodged while confined by the Portuguese Inquisition. Mackenzie, *Lives and Characters of the most Eminent Writers*, 157, 162, 166. Again, as Buchanan's defenders sought to vindicate him from charges of ingratitude, his opponents continually tried to make them stick. [Love], *A Vindication of Mr. George Buchanan*, 57-72; Ruddiman, *Animadversions upon a Pamphlet*, 48-59. Even Adam Ferguson regarded Buchanan as having been ungrateful. A. Ferguson, *The Correspondence of Adam Ferguson* ed. V. Merolle (London, 1995), II, 437. Whitaker triumphantly concluded that Buchanan had been author not of the Casket Letters themselves – this apparently was the work of Lethington – but of the Sonnets that accompanied them. Whitaker, *Mary, Queen of Scots Vindicated*, I, 311-2; III, 56.

be better read into Pictish rather than Dalriadic king-lists, and that the Pictish monarchy was securely absolute, not elective. The historiographical and ethnographical reputation of the *Historia* has been examined in detail by Ferguson, but these debates also had a polemical dimension, particularly after 1689, which is worthy of attention as it illuminates more than simply Buchanan's reputation as a historian.¹³

A further channel in Buchanan's reputation which will not be examined in detail here concerns the reputation of his Psalm Paraphrases, their use as a staple teaching aid, and the controversy over their scholarly and aesthetic merits.¹⁴ This debate also crossed over with the Marian and Jacobite controversies, as Buchanan's supporters defended his Psalms against the attacks of William Lauder, (c. 1680-1771) a classical scholar and Jacobite.¹⁵ Lauder preferred the Psalms of Arthur Johnston, (1587-1641) a physician to Charles I who had been patronised by Archbishop Laud as a rival to Buchanan. In the years following the 1745 Jacobite rebellion, Lauder subtly shifted the emphasis of his attack on the detractors of the Stuarts, and forged evidence that John Milton had plagiarised *Paradise Lost* from seventeenth-century Latin poetry.¹⁶ These debates illustrate the extent to which Jacobites sought to attack the reputations of writers such as Buchanan and Milton, those whom they regarded as iconoclasts against the House of Stuart.

The Marian dimension of Buchanan's reputation was mediated primarily through the Continent, a trend begun in particular by Francophile Scots such as Adam Blackwood. By concentrating attention on the Atlantic World instead, with its intellectual communities of Scotland, England, Ireland, and the American colonies, the intention is to focus on the usability of Buchanan's resistance theory in different contexts. Most instances of engagement with Buchanan's ideas and citations of his name are to be found in Scottish sources. However, a number of valuable sources

¹³ Ferguson, *Identity of the Scottish Nation*.

¹⁴ In a letter to his mother in August 1811, Sir Walter Scott told of how he drilled his son on Buchanan's Psalms every Sunday. W. Scott, *Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. H. J. C. Grierson (London, 1932), II, 533.

¹⁵ For a bibliography of editions of Buchanan's Psalm Paraphrases and related controversial works, see D. Murray, 'Catalogue of Printed Books, Manuscripts, Charters, and other Documents', in *Glasgow Quatercentenary Studies, 1906* (Glasgow, 1907), 407-429.

¹⁶ P. Baines, *The House of Forgery in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Aldershot, 1999), 81.

from elsewhere in the Atlantic world are also taken into account. English parliamentarians and Whigs used Buchanan to justify resistance against Stuart monarchs in the seventeenth century. In the period after the Glorious Revolution, Ireland was in a unique position to experience sensitivities over the theory and action of resistance, as her two competing Protestant minorities, Anglican and Presbyterian, had very different views on the subject. While Irish Anglicans from Jonathan Swift to Edmund Burke were distressed by the question of resistance, Ulster Presbyterians inherited a tradition of resistance from their Scottish forebears. This, in turn, was transmitted to the American colonies through migration and, albeit only to a small extent, Buchanan's ideas on resistance fed into the ideology of the American Revolution.

However, the location of Buchanan's reputation in the Atlantic World involves more than simply pointing out usages of his name and ideas in Scottish, English, Irish, and American contexts. More broadly it will be questioned how Buchanan's reputation – particularly his reputation as a Scot – affected his inclusion in or exclusion from the canon of Atlantic political theory, a canon that was born out of resistance theory and only later became a revered institution of political wisdom enshrined in classic texts. A focus on resistance will allow Buchanan to be considered as both radical polemicist and highbrow political theorist, but will also illustrate the extent to which his posthumous reputation – unlike his writing – addressed its readers in English, the language of the Atlantic World.

Buchanan was known and admired as a Latinist and the Marian debate that raged before and after his death was conducted in Latin and French, as well as in English. In the Atlantic debate on resistance, in contrast, Buchanan was used and was known largely in English, even before the first English translations of the *De Iure Regni* and the *Historia* were published in 1680 and 1690 respectively. Users of Buchanan in the seventeenth century, such as the Scottish Covenanter Samuel Rutherford or the English regicide John Milton, read Buchanan in Latin, but quoted or paraphrased his ideas in English. The debates on resistance that coalesced into the canon of Atlantic political theory thus presented Buchanan to the reading public in the English language.

It is suggested that Buchanan never assumed a prominent place in the canon of early modern political theory alongside such ‘household names’ as Machiavelli, Hobbes and Locke and it must be questioned why, in the 250 years or so after his death, Buchanan did not come to be regarded as an author of ‘classic’ political theory. Indeed, how might this greatness be quantified or established? One reason for Buchanan’s failure to achieve this status was his appropriation by the Scottish Covenanters into their canon of resistance theory, a canon that was parochial rather than international, and a route to obscurity rather than canonical celebrity.

Post-modern approaches to history are particularly fruitful for illuminating reputations, by examining the ways previous generations have manipulated or airbrushed the past to suit their own needs. Cowan and Finlay have recently argued that in this way historians can learn much “by examining how certain icons change over time.” The past, they note, “has been whatever its makers wanted it to be.”¹⁷ This is an important point, suggesting that rewritten pasts, imposed pasts, or invented pasts, should not be dismissed as ‘wrong’ because they don’t fit a conception of empirical truth. Rather, these pasts can be embraced and regarded as worthy of study in themselves. Oz-Salzberger, who has studied the translation of historical and philosophical works of the Scottish Enlightenment into German, and their reception in Germany, has argued along similar lines. She has discussed what happens when the process of translation and reception ‘fails’, although she argues that this should not necessarily be seen in negative terms. Such ‘misreception’ is, she argues, “interesting, as part of a fruitful dialogue between two closely related cultures.”¹⁸

The reputation of George Buchanan in the centuries after his death was not made by his texts alone. Commentators in the field of politics have spilled a great deal of ink on what makes a text of political theory ‘great’ or ‘classic’, but they are in some ways limited by the confines of their field. Historians have more scope to consider the nature of reputations, and to explore the men and the myths, not merely the texts. Conal Condren, in *The Status and Appraisal of Classic Texts*, has tried to establish a

¹⁷ E. J. Cowan & R. J. Finlay, ‘Introduction’ in Cowan & Finlay (eds.), *Scottish History: The Power of the Past*, 1, 3.

¹⁸ F. Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Enlightenment: Scottish Civic Discourse in Eighteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford, 1995), 3.

methodology by which scholars can classify texts of political theory as ‘classic’ or ‘great’.¹⁹

Condren discusses the expectations and criteria by which a text – or the reputation of its author – can be judged.

We expect theses to be *original*, essays to make *contributions*, arguments to be *coherent*, concepts to be *unambiguous*. And what we deem ‘the great books’ of the past are commonly held, ideally, to be paradigmatic confirmations of these expectations.²⁰

Condren, however, goes on to demolish the importance of these categories. He dismisses originality as a criterion of greatness, pointing out that there have been numerous contexts in the history of political thought in which originality was not regarded as being important.²¹ To a considerable extent this is true of the early modern period, where political theories, and in particular theories of rights of resistance, had become resources to be recycled and reformulated by successive generations of users.

This mixing of theories in a pot of ideas should act as a warning against looking for complete consistency in political thought, as it is unlikely to be found. Theorists and polemicists blended systems of argument to justify different positions in different contexts in the early modern period and this could not be seamless. They would use whatever intellectual materials were available to make their point. Scott has made this point in relation to the seventeenth century Whig Algernon Sidney. Sidney, he asserts, was writing “in the heat of the political moment”, and his Whiggism spanned a period of extremes, from the attempt to use parliamentary tactics to secure the constitution, to discussions of insurrection and assassination. On these grounds, Scott warns, “We should face the essential indignity of the academic attempting to fit

¹⁹ C. Condren, *The Status and Appraisal of Classic Texts* (Princeton, 1985). Condren’s work follows on from Skinner’s methodological warnings on the risk of creating ‘mythologies’ in the analysis of political texts, and in particular, ‘classic’ political texts. Most significantly, he argues that historians of ideas should not indulge in the pursuit of chains of influence linking political theorists, or in suggesting that an earlier theorist may have ‘anticipated’ a later one, as such comments effectively debase the history of ideas to a “search for approximations to the ideal type.” Q. Skinner, ‘Meaning and understanding in the history of ideas’, *Visions of Politics: Regarding Method* (Cambridge, 2002), 63.

²⁰ Condren, *Classic Texts*, 3.

²¹ Condren, *Classic Texts*, 102-3.

the broad conventions and themes of intellectual history to the simple flight of a hand grenade.”²²

Condren rejects the notion that ambiguities in political theory are flaws, and that it is the job of modern commentators to iron them out. Rather, he recognises that ambiguities can be sophisticated mechanisms for addressing different audiences, a means of allowing everyone to read into the text whatever they want to find.²³ The representation of resistance theory as a bank of resources illustrates the flexibility of political argument in the early modern period. It necessarily involved the selection and privileging of some resources and the rejection of others, as well as the twisting of theories to make them say what the user wanted them to say.

Condren also considers the problem of ‘influence’. If a political theorist ‘influenced’ a number of others, or was copied by them, does this make his text a classic? Like Skinner, he warns against the pursuit of chains of ‘influence’ linking political theorists, or claims that some theorists have ‘anticipated’ ideas that were ahead of their time. He argues that such approaches give an excessively linear picture of the development of political theory, “rendering the tradition more uniform than close inspection reveals.”²⁴ Rather, modern commentators should take up a vocabulary of ‘usage’, looking to describe how one political theorist ‘used’ another, rather than how one political theorist ‘was influenced by’ another, as a means of illuminating some of the more creative usages to which texts have been put.²⁵

In short, Condren creates categories by which texts of political theory can be appraised – originality, coherence, ambiguity, influence – but then dismisses them as unsatisfactory. He complains that most formulations of the canon of classic political theory are flawed and synthetic, and he offers suggestions for new ways of approaching the problem. Here he admits the importance of reputations, arguing that

²² Scott, *Algernon Sidney and the English Republic, 1623-77* (Cambridge, 1988), 13.

²³ Condren, *Classic Texts*, 243.

²⁴ Condren, *Classic Texts*, 71.

²⁵ Condren, *Classic Texts*, 136. Oakley has endorsed Condren’s suggestion that the concept of ‘usage’ is preferable to ‘influence’, but he nonetheless argues that it is an inescapable fact that thinkers have influenced one another. “The influence concept,” he declares, has “an important and probably indispensable role to play in the history of ideas. It should be permitted to play it.” F. Oakley, “Anxieties of Influence’: Skinner, Figgis, Conciliarism and Early Modern Constitutionalism’, *Past and Present*, cli (1996), 110.

both the creations of the canon of political theory and of reputations are dialectic processes between ambiguous texts and exploitative users. “What then gives texts classic status? At its simplest, the intellectual communities that need them: they are fashioned as man’s gods and ancestors have been in his image and likeness.”²⁶

Beyond the appraisal of the text, the canonical status of a political theory can also be related to the ‘celebrity’ of its author. How far is the reputation of a political theorist made by his personal character, by the cause for which he argued or fought? The greatness of a political theory is more than just a definition of how much the text itself deserves our attention. Certain political theorists have enjoyed a celebrity beyond their texts: political theorists can be household names even in households where no one reads political theory. The development of pejorative associations of the names of Machiavelli and Hobbes is indicative of this.

The idea of ‘timing and luck’ has been proposed as an explanation for the prominence of certain texts, and the obscurity of others. Michael Levin has questioned why John Locke loomed so large in the political consciousness of the centuries following the publication of his *Two Treatises of Government*: “If Locke’s originality was limited and his intellect unexceptional, he nevertheless managed to obtain a tremendous reputation.”²⁷ Levin argues that Locke simply “had the good fortune to express reasonably commonplace ideas at the right time, that is when circumstances made men particularly disposed to accept them.”²⁸ Was Locke simply writing in the right place at the right time? Levin suggests, “The status of a political theorist may partially depend on a whole series of random factors, the significance of which is not usually taken into account.”²⁹

Although Harold Bloom is a literary commentator who is primarily concerned with the aesthetic qualities that define the Western canon of literature, his notion of the canon as a “survivor’s list” is a telling one.³⁰ He, like Levin, implies that those works that are accepted as canonical have not necessarily achieved that place on

²⁶ Condren, *Classic Texts*, 284.

²⁷ M. Levin, ‘What makes a Classic in Political Theory’, *Political Science Quarterly*, lxxxviii (1973), 465.

²⁸ Levin, ‘What makes a Classic in Political Theory’, 466.

²⁹ Levin, ‘What makes a Classic in Political Theory’, 470.

³⁰ H. Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (London, 1996), 38.

their merits. Rather, inclusion or exclusion might be brought about by a host of other factors. It is open to question how far literary theory can illuminate the canon of political theory. Literary theory is tormented by anxieties over the ‘opening up’ of the canon to previously marginalized texts, authors, and social groups, anxieties from which the canon of political theory has so far been spared.³¹ Nonetheless, parallels between the literary canon and the canon of political theory are worthy of attention. The same questions can be asked: how important is this question of texts ‘deserving’ to be in the canon? Are canons built on the intrinsic qualities of texts or on contingent factors? The concerns of inclusion and exclusion, of centre and margins are as pertinent in the history of the Atlantic World as they are in the canon of literature. Who are the gatekeepers of the canon?

One such factor not usually taken into account, but hinted at by Condren, is the reputation-maker, an agency by which reputations are created outwith the control of, indeed often outwith the life of, the individual concerned. Reputation-makers can be defined as individuals or groups that adopt a figurehead, such as a political theorist, for their cause, and treat that theorist as one of their own. This is one of the means through which the appropriation, selection, rejection, twisting and distortion of ideological resources can occur, and is a process that can strongly affect how future generations perceive the man or the text – indeed it is a process from which the reputation of the man or the text many never escape or recover from.

Blair Worden’s recent work identifies editors and users of political theory as reputation-makers. He examines the context of the period after the Glorious Revolution and recognises a desire on the part of radical Whigs to repackage a number of English republicans from the civil wars in the image of the tastes and concerns of their own time. Edmund Ludlow, one of the signatories of Charles I’s death warrant in 1649, wrote *Memoirs* that were published by the Whigs after his death. By comparing the published edition with an original manuscript of Ludlow’s *Memoirs*, Worden reveals a remarkable degree of alteration. The editor, whom Worden identifies as the deist controversialist John Toland, took remarkable liberties with the text, diluting Ludlow’s republicanism, excising his Puritanism almost

³¹ K. R. Lawrence, ‘Introduction: The Cultural Politics of Canons’, in Lawrence (ed.), *Decolonizing tradition: new views of twentieth-century ‘British’ literary canons* (Chicago, 1992), 1-19.

entirely, and moderating his voice and style to suit the literary tastes of the 1690s.³² Similar feats of editing, although not as extreme as in the Ludlow instance, were performed on works of John Milton and Algernon Sidney, who were also tamed and secularised for refined audiences who regarded the fanaticism of earlier in the seventeenth century as wholly unfashionable.³³

Aside from the efforts of editors, reputations could be made by users, by individuals or groups who sought to re-contextualise a historical source or figure to allow it to speak to a new generation, and in particular to speak the concerns of new causes. Toland's *Life of John Milton*, written against the background of the Standing Armies controversy of the 1690s, airbrushed out Milton's resistance theory and republicanism and emphasised his status as "a tolerant Protestant and writer of the national epic."³⁴ Worden discusses this tendency with regard to another seventeenth century republican, Algernon Sidney. Sidney's political theory, *Discourses Concerning Government* was published in 1698, and had undergone a process of somewhat creative editing, however his text was not imposed on in anything like the way Ludlow's was. The text of Sidney's *Discourses* was to be only one aspect of the transmission of his reputation, as its long and convoluted nature meant that Sidney, "became known, more than most other writers, through excerpts and quotations. He was read selectively."³⁵

Rather, Worden argues, Sidney's reputation was based on certain facets of his life, death and character that made him particularly suitable for appropriation. He could be made to stand for honour, incorruptibility and patriotism. The manner of Sidney's death – execution for treason following an unfair trial by the regime of Charles II – was a vital formative influence on his reputation. As the eighteenth century progressed, Worden argues, "Ever less about his life (as distinct from his death) was mentioned. He had become, for many who cited his example, more a symbol than a person."³⁶

³² B. Worden, *Roundhead Reputations: The English Civil Wars and the Passions of Posterity* (London, 2001), 39-121.

³³ Worden, *Roundhead Reputations*, 115-6, 122-80.

³⁴ N. Von Maltzahn, 'The Whig Milton, 1667-1700' in D. Armitage, A. Himy, & Q. Skinner (eds.), *Milton and Republicanism* (Cambridge, 1995), 250-3.

³⁵ Worden, *Roundhead Reputations*, 133.

³⁶ Worden, *Roundhead Reputations*, 176.

Was the reputation of George Buchanan affected by unfaithful editing? Not to a great extent – certainly Buchanan was not a victim of this process in anything like the way Ludlow was. Most translations of Buchanan's works from Latin into English were perfectly serviceable, and only a few impositions are to be found. Buchanan was not a victim of mistranslation of his texts, but arguably he was a victim of a form of mistranslation across contexts. Although users of Buchanan did not try to restyle his texts, they did try to remake Buchanan in their own image. And while the reputation-makers of Ludlow, Sidney and Milton secularised their ideas, the opposite process was at work with Buchanan. In the hands of the Scottish Covenanters, Buchanan, whose writings had a strongly secular cast, was given an extra injection of Calvinism.

Within fifty years of Buchanan's death, the Scottish Covenanters had appropriated his name and ideas. Involved in conflict with successive Stuart or Cromwellian regimes from the 1640s to the 1680s, they employed Buchanan as a principal source for the justification of resistance to tyranny. Buchanan, however, could be made to fit the Covenanters' needs only with a degree of distortion. The Covenanters tried to boost Buchanan's Calvinist credentials, introducing subtle changes in their citations of his work. They injected a vocabulary of covenants, of providence, and of apocalyptic speculation that was almost wholly absent from Buchanan's writing.

Mark Goldie has recently undertaken a fruitful approach to the study of reputations in *The Reception of Locke's Politics*. He has sought to allow contemporary reactions to John Locke's political theory to speak for themselves, reprinting pamphlets, sermons and political and philosophical texts in which Locke was cited, criticised, plagiarised or otherwise engaged with. In doing so, Goldie not only challenges a number of myths and presumptions concerning Locke himself, and how influential his political theory was, but also makes numerous illuminating observations on the nature and composition of the canon of political theory. It should be acknowledged that in many texts, Locke's presence was "evanescent," and such instances illustrate

“how Locke was used eclectically, and how other languages besides Locke’s are present as intellectual resources.”³⁷

Goldie’s selection of texts illustrates the process by which Locke’s *Two Treatises* became a classic in the canon of political theory, but he seeks to avoid any simplified and linear account of this process. The fact that the *Two Treatises* were admired does not necessarily mean they were read carefully or understood properly. Locke became “a tutelary deity, a name to be lazily incanted.” Goldie argues, “the stereotyping of Locke was a deliberate Whig tactic... a contrived act of forgetting, by which Locke’s less salubrious intellectual predecessors could be dispensed with.” The association of Locke with a modern, Protestant, enlightened England, was an attempt to break the link between Locke and earlier Catholic and Calvinist resistance theorists such as Mariana and Buchanan.³⁸

Goldie’s work is driven largely by the pursuit of citations, an approach that is successful due to the significant level of interest in Locke in the eighteenth century in particular. The reputation of Buchanan will also be charted through the compilation of an anthology of citations of his name and work, highlighting as many as possible. Superficially at least, the statures of political theorists might be ranked by counting the citations of their name and works by contemporaries and later generations. However, the flexible approaches taken by Condren, Worden and Goldie suggest that any approach to reputations must go beyond the search for citations.

It is not to be expected that the study of the reputation of George Buchanan would yield a continuous and coherent stream of citations from the late sixteenth to the early nineteenth century, spread across the Atlantic World of Scotland, England, Ireland, and America. Within this scope will be found absences, as well as presences of Buchanan, contexts in which his name was not mentioned nor his ideas used. These must be considered and explained just as much as the periods in which his name and works were debated. A fruitful approach to reputations can be found in

³⁷ M. Goldie, ‘A Note on the Selection’, in Goldie (ed.) *The Reception of Locke’s Politics* (London, 1999), I, p. xiii.

³⁸ Goldie, ‘Introduction’, *Reception of Locke’s Politics*, I, p. xxvi.

the exploration of contexts, and of the reputations of other political theorists, in particular those who enjoyed good and prominent reputations in the Atlantic World, such as John Locke and Algernon Sidney.

The American Revolution suggests itself as a good context in which to undertake such an exploration. For several decades there has been an ongoing debate over the ideological origins of the American Revolution, in which the names of Locke and Sidney appear continuously, and the name of George Buchanan barely at all. This is despite the fact that Buchanan, with his secular arguments rooted in reason and natural law, had put forward a political theory comparable to that of Locke. The usability of these sources, then, was not simply based on content, but on reputation, and the reputation of the Scottish tradition of resistance – of Buchanan bound up with the Covenanters – was not merely one of political radicalism, but of religious fanaticism. The latter proved to be the more damaging.

It must be admitted that users of political theory often misinterpreted theorists, sometimes deliberately, but we should not, as Steven Dworetz has done, argue that this “would reduce the citation to a worthless statistic.”³⁹ Although citations are problematic for the history of political theory in its purest sense, they are invaluable for the study of reputations. In this field, no citation or incidence of name-dropping is a worthless statistic, and equally the absence or marginalisation of certain names in certain contexts can be valuable for study. Exploring contexts, rather than counting citations or seeking shadowy evidence of ‘influence’, is a fruitful way to establish if Buchanan’s name and ideas were usable or unusable at certain times in the history of the Atlantic World.

At the close of *The Status and Appraisal of Classic Texts*, Condren makes a distinction between an authority and an emblem in political theory. An authority, he argues, is a text that “is part of a shared but contentious vocabulary,” a controversial and debated work that has found a place in public consciousness such as John Locke’s *Two Treatises of Government*. An emblem, on the other hand, is an author or text which is exploited, which is treated as “a badge of a cohesive group, an

³⁹ S. M. Dworetz, *The Unvarnished Doctrine: Locke, Liberalism, and the American Revolution* (Durham NC, 1990), 45.

abridgement of its values.” Condren makes the important distinction: “An authority, then, is fought for, an emblem has been captured.”⁴⁰ By treating Locke and his *Two Treatises* as an authority, and Buchanan and his works as an emblem, as property of the Covenanters, it is apparent why the former is a household name, and the latter is not. Buchanan’s longstanding association with the Covenanters led to his obscurity as a political theorist, his lack of celebrity, and his exclusion from the canon of ‘great’ or ‘classic’ political theory.

⁴⁰ Condren, *Classic Texts*, 256-7.

Chapter 3

George Buchanan and Covenanting Scholarship

Introduction

It might be expected that the usage of the ideas of the unfanatical Calvinist George Buchanan by the distinctly fanatical Covenanters would be problematic, and indeed, it will be argued that this was the case. Many examples can be produced of citations and silent appropriations of Buchanan by Covenanting theorists, particularly by those authors with scholarly pretensions, namely Rutherford, Brown, Steuart and Shields. Although the mere dropping of Buchanan's name and parroting of some of his ideas cannot be considered as evidence of serious engagement with his texts, the desire to do this is still indicative of Buchanan's stature in seventeenth-century Scotland.

The reaction of the opponents of the Covenanters to the name and works of Buchanan also gives an indication of his reputation. The *De Iure Regni* was denounced by a proclamation of the Privy Council in April 1664, which emphasised that the seditious nature of the text might "corrupt the affections of the subjects and alienat [sic] their myndes from their obedience to the lawes and his Majesties royall authority." It stipulated that any who were found in possession of a copy would be "proceidit against as seditious persons and disaffected to monarchicall government."¹ Buchanan's name it seems, and the text of the *De Iure Regni*, had become a touchstone for identifying opponents of the Stuart dynasty. In 1666 a minister, John Cruikshank was arraigned before the Privy Council for owning a copy of the *De Iure Regni*, and it has been suggested that there were further proceedings against it in 1671.²

The political thought of the Covenanters remains an under-studied field. The origins of the National Covenant of 1638 and the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 have been studied in some detail, as has the political thought of pre-Restoration

¹ *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, ed. P. Hume Brown, (Edinburgh, 1908), 3rd series, I, 527.

² Mann suggests that an allusion to proceedings against a pamphlet entitled 'Jus regni', may refer to the *De Iure Regni*. A. Mann, *The Scottish Book Trade 1500-1720: Print Commerce and Print Control in Early Modern Scotland* (East Linton, 2000), 180; *Register of the Privy Council of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1910), 3rd series, III, 282.

Covenanters such as Samuel Rutherford, and the aristocratic impulse behind the Covenanting movement manifested in Montrose and Argyll.³ But surprisingly, little work has been done on the political thought of the Restoration Covenanters. I. B. Cowan's *The Scottish Covenanters 1660-1688* is disappointingly scant on the subject of political thought.⁴ A few articles have dipped into this subject, and interest in this field has been further stimulated by Clare Jackson's recent work on royalist culture and ideology during the Restoration, which has also cast light on the Covenanters.⁵

Placing emphasis on the scholarly Covenanters is constructive not only because their works contain many citations of Buchanan, but also because they conveniently span the Covenanting period, illustrating its varying fortunes in the 1640s, the 1660s and the 1680s. Less attention will be paid to sermons of the Covenanting era, as their engagement with Buchanan was negligible, however they do provide useful comparisons with Covenanting scholarship.

Samuel Rutherford (1600-61) was a popular minister in the parish of Anwoth, and professor and eventual Rector in the University of St. Andrews. He distinguished himself by his staunchly anti-Arminian Calvinism, his membership of the Glasgow Assembly at the outset of the Covenanting era, and his uncompromising opposition to the Engagement in the late 1640s and into the 1650s. His writings included Latin treatises, pamphlets and sermons, but his most significant work was *Lex, Rex*, (1644) which has been seen as "the classic statement of Covenanting political thought."⁶ *Lex, Rex* was written at an optimistic juncture, when the struggle against Charles I

³ For example, J. Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (Cambridge, 1997); Cowan, 'The Making of the National Covenant'; E. J. Cowan, 'The political ideas of a covenanting leader: Archibald Campbell, marquis of Argyll 1607-1661', in R. A. Mason (ed.), *Scots and Britons: Scottish Political Thought and the Union of 1603* (Cambridge, 1994); E. J. Cowan, *Montrose: For Covenant and King* (Edinburgh, 1995); J. D. Ford, 'Lex, Rex iusto posita: Samuel Rutherford on the origins of government', in Mason (ed.), *Scots and Britons*; D. Stevenson, *The Scottish Revolution 1647-44: The Triumph of the Covenanters* (Newton Abbot, 1973); D. Stevenson, 'The "Letter on sovereign power" and the influence of Jean Bodin on Political Thought in Scotland', *Scottish Historical Review*, lxi (1982).

⁴ I. B. Cowan, *The Scottish Covenanters 1660-1688* (London, 1976).

⁵ I. M. Smart, 'The Political Ideas of the Scottish Covenanters 1638-88', *History of Political Thought*, i (1980); R. von Friedeburg, '"Self-Defence" and Sovereignty: The Reception and Application of German Political Thought in England and Scotland, 1628-69', *History of Political Thought*, xxiii (2002); C. Jackson, *Restoration Scotland, 1660-1690: Royalist Politics, Religion and Ideas* (Woodbridge, 2003).

⁶ J. Coffey, 'Samuel Rutherford and the Political Thought of the Scottish Covenanters', in J. R. Young (ed.), *Celtic Dimensions of the British Civil Wars* (Edinburgh, 1997), 75.

was going favourably, and the Westminster Assembly, of which Rutherford was a member, had begun to meet to discuss Presbyterian uniformity in the British Isles. It combined, as John Coffey has pointed out, a blend of secular natural law theory with stress on the Covenants and abhorrence of idolatry,⁷ an attempt to unite, it might be said, the spirits of Buchanan and Knox. Its central concern however, was very much idolatry.

John Brown of Wamphray (1610-79) wrote in the mid-1660s from a position of exile in the Netherlands. Ousted from his parish at the Restoration and briefly imprisoned, Brown had experienced the unexpected severity of the new regime. His *An Apologetical Relation of the Particular Sufferings of the Faithful Ministers and Professors of the Church of Scotland Since August 1660* was published in 1665, and displayed considerable engagement with Buchanan. James Steuart (1635-1713) lived in exile for much of the Restoration and was condemned to death in his absence, only to rise to the position of Lord Advocate following the Glorious Revolution. He was co-author with James Stirling of *Naphtali, or the Wrestlings of the Church of Scotland for the Kingdom of Christ* in 1667, a text that avoided giving citations of secular sources and concentrated principally on the fortunes of Presbyterianism from the Reformation to the era of the Covenanters. In his own right, Steuart was author of *Jus Populi Vindicatum, or, The People's Right to Defend Themselves and their Covenanted Religion, Vindicated* in 1669, in which he toned down the apocalyptic rhetoric of *Naphtali* and replaced it with political theory.⁸ Steuart frequently quoted Buchanan, usually on points of Scottish history, but more commonly cited Althusius on political theory, even on points in which Althusius was in agreement with Buchanan.

At the other end of the Covenanting spectrum, Alexander Shields (1660-1700) was both scholar and field preacher, writing in the last desperate phase of resistance in the 1680s. He led a colourful life: he was imprisoned on the Bass Rock in 1686 only to escape, conducted field meetings during 1688, and later sailed to Darien. Lynch describes him as, "More Buchanan-like than Buchanan himself" because he extended Buchanan's ideas on resistance and "cast doubt on the institution of the

⁷ Coffey, 'Samuel Rutherford and the Political Thought of the Scottish Covenanters', 75.

⁸ Von Friedeburg, 'Self-Defence', 256.

lesser magistrate as well as on monarchy.”⁹ *A Hind Let Loose* (1687) combined political theory and ecclesiastical history with typical Covenanting religious rhetoric and glorification of persecution and suffering. This text was markedly different – in terms of its greater radicalism and lesser standard of scholarship – from Rutherford’s work in the 1640s. Controversially admitted to the Presbyterian Church of Scotland after the Glorious Revolution, Shields remained for many a symbol of the Presbyterian tendency to rebellion. In 1692, Episcopalians published excerpts from *A Hind Let Loose* under the title of *The History of Scotch-Presbytery*, hoping that it spoke for itself as a “Just Account of the Principles, Practices and Behaviour of the Scotch Presbyterians.”¹⁰

⁹ M. Lynch, *Scotland: A New History* (London, 1991), 251.

¹⁰ A. Shields, *A History of Scotch-Presbytery: Being an Epitome of the Hind Let Loose* (London, 1692), 3.

The Problem of History

The Covenanters' appropriations from Buchanan's *Historia* were concentrated on specific 'golden ages' whose lessons were particularly useful for their purposes. However, the usefulness of Buchanan's version of Scottish history to the Covenanters can only be measured by the extent to which they saw history in Scottish terms. It will be argued that the Covenanters chose to deploy history only as one of many arguments in their case, and Scottish history as a whole, and these periods within it, did not have central importance in the Covenanting mental universe. Lynch stresses that the two main historical planks in Covenanting ideology were the account of the Kirk since the time of the Reformation, as provided by Calderwood among others, and the secular history of the monarchy and nobility in Buchanan's *Historia*.¹¹ This is to underestimate the usefulness of Buchanan's narrative of the early church, even if it required some twisting and modification to meet the needs of the Covenanaters.

The early Scottish Church, apparently governed by the virtuous Culdees without bishops, was a usable ideological weapon seized by the Covenanters in their struggle against prelacy. Knox's *History of the Reformation* did not cover this period, but Buchanan's *Historia* did. Indeed, when Knox's *History* was published in 1644, its editor, David Buchanan, felt it necessary to append a long introduction giving a narrative of early Scottish Christianity, a narrative based strongly on George Buchanan. While not strictly part of the canon of Covenanting works, the antipathy towards prelacy displayed in the long preface justifies its discussion here. David Buchanan undertook to narrate the ecclesiastical history of Scotland in the period before Knox took it up, with George Buchanan as his main resource. He agreed with all the central narratives of the *Historia*, citing it constantly in the margins: Christianity had arrived in Scotland through the disciples of St. John; had been augmented by refugees from the persecutions of Domitian; Palladius was the first bishop and Roman influence had arrived very late in Scotland; Donald I was the first

¹¹ Lynch, *Scotland: A New History*, 264.

Scottish king to embrace Christianity; and the Culdees had existed exactly as Buchanan described them.¹²

David Buchanan was not alone in mining the *Historia* for anti-prelatical arguments. Brown insisted, “Before this Palladius came Scotland never saw a prelate,” alluding not only to Buchanan but also to Bede, Fordun and Major.¹³ Steuart and Stirling used Buchanan’s version of the early Church to emphasise the differences between the practices of the early Church and those of their own time.¹⁴ Shields aimed to recast the Culdees not merely as proto-Presbyterians but as proto-Covenanters, and enlisted Buchanan in this attempt. He paraphrased the *Historia* in making much of the Culdees’ church government: “Their government also was that of the primitive order, without *Bishops*, with little vanity, but great simplicity and holiness.”¹⁵ He attempted to enlist the Culdees as vigorous defenders of their ecclesiastical establishment, who faced challenges similar to those of the Covenanters themselves. He asserted that the Culdees, “Did maintain the principle of resisting Tyranny; since there was never more of the practice of it, nor more happy resistances in any age, than in that.”¹⁶

It is remarkable that Shields should in this way combine Buchanan’s ecclesiastical with his political history. The implication that the ecclesiastical sphere itself had a hand in resistance was not to be found in Buchanan, who almost always made the nobility the agents of such change. Furthermore, Shields’ assertion sits uneasily with the Melvillian position that the ecclesiastical order should not interfere in the civil sphere.

From another perspective, Betteridge’s comments on John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* can illuminate the Covenanters’ hijacking of the Culdees. He shows how Elizabethan Protestants identified and appropriated the Lollards as their forerunners (Knox did the same in Scotland), by emphasising the similarity of their

¹² D. Buchanan, ‘Preface’, in J. Knox, *History of the Reformation of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1644), no pagination.

¹³ J. Brown, *An Apologetical Relation of the Particular Sufferings of the Faithful Ministers and Professors of the Church of Scotland, since August 1660* (Edinburgh, 1845), 17.

¹⁴ [J. Steuart & J. Stirling], *Naphtali, or the Wrestlings of the Church of Scotland for the Kingdom of Christ* (1667), 20-1.

¹⁵ A. Shields, *A Hind Let Loose* (Edinburgh, 1744), 23.

¹⁶ Shields, *Hind Let Loose*, 24.

aims and methods. “The Protestant historian produces pasts in which, not surprisingly, he finds himself.”¹⁷ This tendency can certainly be seen in the Covenanters’ appropriation of the history of the early Christian Church in Scotland, and their shaping of it to defend their own principles.¹⁸

The history of the Scottish Reformation was also a potent ideological resource for the Covenanting scholars. Narrated in different ways, and with different emphases by both Knox and Buchanan, Knox’s version was better suited to appropriation by the Covenanters. They aimed to prove that the Reformation had been Presbyterian from its very inception. Brown asserted that Knox, “Was never a friend to prelates or Prelacy.” The reformers specifically intended to institute a Presbyterian system because “They looked on it as the discipline of the ancient church,” and “Superintendents were only chosen for that present exigent.”¹⁹ *Naphtali* and *A Hind Let Loose* echoed this position.²⁰

It was also thought expedient to frame the first Reformation in comparable terms to the second: as a struggle of martyrdoms and Covenants. Shields played up the importance of the Covenants of the 1550s and 1560s, such as those in Edinburgh in 1557, and Perth in 1559.²¹ He questioned why the murder of archbishop Sharp by the Covenanters should be “condemned as horrid murder” when the positive example of the murder of Cardinal Beaton at the outset of the reformation went before it. “Of which fact, the famous and faithful historian Mr. Knox speaks very honourably, and was so far from condemning it...”²² Steuart argued in *Jus Populi Vindicatum* that whoever would condemn the recent actions of the Covenanters, would have to condemn the actions of 1638, and even “What was done at the

¹⁷ Bettteridge, *Tudor Histories of the English Reformations*, 27-8.

¹⁸ The Covenanters’ tendency to use Buchanan’s account of early Scottish history as a convenient introduction to their narratives can also be seen *A History of the Church of Scotland 1660-1679*, written around 1693 by the minister James Kirkton (1628-99). Kirkton was a Covenanter who spent much of the Restoration period in exile in Holland, before returning to become an influential member of the Presbyterian church after 1690. His account of early Christianity took the standard of emphasising Scotland’s separateness from Rome, the absence of bishops, and the proto-presbyterian virtues of the Culdees. J. Kirkton, *A History of the Church of Scotland 1660-1679*, ed. R. Stewart (New York, 1992), 1-2.

¹⁹ Brown, *Apologetical Relation*, 19-20.

²⁰ [Steuart & Stirling], *Naphtali*, 35; Shields, *Hind Let Loose*, 42.

²¹ Shields, *Hind Let Loose*, 34-5.

²² Shields, *Hind Let Loose*, 30.

beginning of the Reformation in the dayes of *Mr. Knox*.”²³ These examples serve to illustrate that narratives of the Scottish Reformation tended to rely on Knox rather than Buchanan.

Buchanan’s accounts of early kings censured, deposed and killed if they turned to tyranny were another staple of Covenanting scholarship. Brown reeled off what had become a familiar litany of names:

The parliaments of Scotland have regulated the actions of princes, and have censured and punished them for enormities. Let the lives of Thereus, Durstus, Luctacus, Mogaldus, Conarus, Constantine, Ferchard I, Ferchard II, Eugenius VII, Ethus, Donald VII, Cullen, and others recorded by Buchanan in his chronicles, be seen and considered, and the power of the parliaments of Scotland over their princes will easily appear.²⁴

The other scholarly Covenanters used these examples in similar ways.²⁵ The depositions of James III and Mary Queen of Scots were also regularly cited.²⁶

David Stevenson has outlined one way in which Buchanan’s history occupied a lesser place in Covenanting ideology. He argues that the Covenanters necessarily celebrated ecclesiastical over monarchical or dynastic history owing to the problems associated with the actions of Stuart monarchs.

Secular nationalism had previously been so closely connected with the dynasty and Scotland’s long, unbroken (though mythical) line of kings: as it was now the action of the dynasty which was giving rise to discontent, this was obviously inappropriate.²⁷

This was not to say that the Covenanters did not use the examples of the Stuarts’ supposed forebears, as they clearly did, mining the regnal histories for whatever useful arguments could be extracted. Rather it is the level of commitment they displayed to this line of argument that is questionable. The editorial line of Buchanan’s *Historia* was hardly complimentary to the Stuarts, but it was still

²³ [J. Steuart], *Jus Populi Vindicatum, or, The People’s Right to Defend Themselves and their Covenanted Religion, Vindicated* (1669), 75.

²⁴ Brown, *Apologetical Relation*, 71. See also 74-5, 81, 179.

²⁵ [S. Rutherford], *Lex, Rex, the Law and the Prince* (London, 1644), 450-1; [Steuart], *Jus Populi Vindicatum*, 137, 393-4; Shields, *Hind Let Loose*, 673.

²⁶ Brown, *Apologetical Relation*, 71-2, 81; Shields, *Hind Let Loose*, 38-40, 333.

²⁷ Stevenson, *The Scottish Revolution 1637-44*, 322.

organised around the history of that dynasty, and by establishing its lineage, it went some way to establishing its legitimacy.

Scottish history was a contested battleground during the Restoration, and the Covenanters could not be seen to leave the field to their enemies. Sir George Mackenzie's writings in the 1680s sum up the combination of dependence and loathing with which Episcopalians and later Jacobites were to regard Buchanan, describing him as, "One of the chief Ornaments and Reproaches of his native country."²⁸ *Jus Regium* (1684) attacked Buchanan's resistance theory and grouped him in the company of John Milton and the authors of *Lex, Rex, Naphtali*, and *Jus Populi Vindicatum*. However, the *Defence of the Antiquity of the Royal Line of Scotland* (1685) enlisted Buchanan in its cause. Asserting "the King of *Great Britain*, as King of *Scotland*, is the most ancient Monarch in *Europe*, the Line of other Kingdoms having been often interrupted, whereas ours never was," Mackenzie staunchly stood by the Buchananite myth of the founding of the Scottish kingdom in 330 BC.²⁹ Mackenzie was forced to defend Buchanan's reputation as a historian, asserting,

He was not so much a Favourer of Monarchy, to have allowed it the Advantage of so singular an Antiquity, if he had not found the same due to it from our Manuscripts and Records, beyond all Contradiction.³⁰

Thus Scottish history was a field that the Covenanters could not afford to ignore. If members of the Episcopalian establishment such as Mackenzie could enlist Buchanan in the defence of Episcopacy and the Stuart monarchy – the two things the Covenanters loathed most – then they would have to engage in the historical debate to retain Buchanan as one of their own. This engagement, however, would always be patchy and problematic. Also writing in the 1680s, Shields was an unequal adversary to Mackenzie. He continued to enlist history as the other Covenanters had done, merely as a supplementary argument. For if the Covenanters believed in Presbyterianism *jure divino*, why should they feel the need to add prescriptive arguments about Palladius and the Culdees to their case?

²⁸ Mackenzie, *Jus Regium*, 4.

²⁹ G. Mackenzie, *A Defence of the Antiquity of the Royal Line of Scotland*, in *The Works of that Eminent and Learned Lawyer, Sir George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh* (Edinburgh, 1722), II, 358.

³⁰ Mackenzie, *A Defence of the Antiquity of the Royal Line of Scotland*, 365-6.

Buchanan and the Covenanters had very different motives for writing history. For Buchanan it was a humanist exercise, to inculcate morality and provide an education in good citizenship. For the Covenanters, it was merely another of many strands of argument out of which they built their case, along with political theory, jurisprudence, theology and jeremiad sermonic style. For Buchanan, history was made by great men, but for the Covenanters, history was made by God, and the principal actors on earth were not great men, but the oppressed and persecuted, the poor suffering remnant. A comparison with Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* is useful in this context, as Foxe had also set out to redefine the historical hero, and challenge the humanist conception of history in the preface to the 1570 edition:

If men thinke it such a gay thyng in a common wealth to commit to history such old antiquities of things prophane, and bestow all their ornamentes of wyt and eloquence in garnishyng the same: how much more then is it meete for Christians to conserue in remembraunce the liues, Actes and doings, not of bloody warriours, but of mylde and constant Martyrs of Christ.³¹

This was a position the Covenanters would have agreed with and was, Betteridge argues, an attempt to write a history based not on the “gods and heroes” of the classical style, but of the “excluded and silenced”, their very exclusion making them worthy subjects.³²

However, if Buchanan was of questionable use to the Covenanters in their search for a history of the oppressed, Knox was also problematic. Knox offered himself as a principal figure of the Reformation, both as actor in the main events, and narrator of them in his *History*. Although Knox did consider persecution and martyrdom in the early parts of his history, the fact was that the Scottish Reformation did not furnish him with enough martyrs, and therefore he chose not to write a martyrology along the lines of Foxe.³³ The Covenanters' own time provided a richer harvest of martyrs, but they still found it difficult to reconcile martyrdom with some of the more active and civic aspects of their ideology that they had borrowed from Buchanan – an inevitable problem given their tendency to ‘pick and mix’ any arguments they found interesting and useful.

³¹ Foxe quoted in Betteridge, *Tudor Histories of the English Reformations*, 161.

³² Betteridge, *Tudor Histories of the English Reformations*, 161-2.

³³ K. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain 1530-1645* (Oxford, 1979), 126-7.

Steuart and Stirling expressed great faith in “the observable Providence of God” but this led to tension between their view of self-defence and martyrdom. While extolling self-defence in Buchananite terms as “The very first instinct of pure Nature, and spring of all motion and action,” they also praised the self-sacrifice of the martyrs of the reformation and of their own time who, “Under the dispensation and call of another providence, they did patiently and cheerfully upon the same motives, lay down their lives.”³⁴ *Naphtali* portrayed martyrdom as a sacrifice performed for the glory of God, not the preservation of the commonwealth. This exposes a contradiction in the Covenanter position, between the active nature of resistance and the passivity of martyrdom, making it difficult to celebrate the two together, and enlist the favour of God for two opposing methods, both intent upon glorifying Him.

The tendency of the Covenanters to emphasise providence at the expense of other historical causes has been discussed by S. A. Burrell. Protestant historians sought to understand why the national churches of Europe had continued for so long in error, so long under the yoke of Rome. Without consideration of political, social or economic causes, they could only conclude that this must be part of God’s plan.³⁵ This made history at once useful and useless, as it could provide no answers other than God. Burrell’s assertion that the early Covenanters such as Wariston and Rutherford believed that Scotland was the successor of Israel, a new chosen land destined to fulfil prophecy, has been discounted by Coffey.³⁶ But Burrell is right in saying that they did see the Old Testament experience of the Jews as relevant to a covenanted people who wished to avoid making the same mistakes.³⁷ Therefore, it was not only Buchanan’s lack of commitment to providential causation that set him apart from the Covenanters: even choosing to concentrate his efforts on writing the history of his own country, rather than on study of Scripture, marked him out as unusual.

³⁴ [Steuart & Stirling], *Naphtali*, 13-4.

³⁵ S. A. Burrell, ‘The Apocalyptic Vision of the Early Covenanters’, *Scottish Historical Review*, xliii (1964), 4.

³⁶ Burrell, ‘The Apocalyptic Vision of the Early Covenanters’, 16-7; Coffey, *The Mind of Samuel Rutherford*, 229.

³⁷ Burrell, ‘The Apocalyptic Vision of the Early Covenanters’, 17.

The lesson of the importance of upholding Covenants was to be found far more clearly in Old Testament Israel than in Scottish history, despite attempts to cast the first Scottish Reformation as a covenanted one. As Buchanan had showed no interest in religious covenants, he would consequently be excluded from this debate, or modified to fit it. Brown used examples from the history of the early Scottish kings to show the wrath that descended from God on kings or leading men who broke covenants, or, more loosely, any oaths or promises.

It is recorded by Buchanan, on the life of Gregorius, that the Britons, after they had made a peace with the Scots, did break their covenant, and invaded the Scots. But divine vengeance pursued them for this; for they were broken and defeated by Gregory.³⁸

Buchanan, however, rarely named divine retribution as the cause of events, and did not mention it in this case.³⁹ Therefore Scottish history could be used, and Buchanan's version could be made to fit the Covenanting mould, but only with a degree of distortion.⁴⁰

The Covenanters' apocalyptic world-view made the absorption of Buchanan's ideas into their tradition problematic, as such language and ideas were absent from Buchanan's work. Shields took dates from Buchanan's history and combined them with prophetic numbers to calculate the duration of the Antichrist's reign, and estimated its end in 1710. "For if it be certain, as it will not be much disputed, that Popery and Prelacy came in by *Palladius*, sent legate by Pope *Celestine*, about the year 450: then if we add 42 *months*, or 1260 *prophetic* days, that is years, we may have a comfortable prospect of their tragical conclusion."⁴¹ Shields' assumption that events in Scottish history could have world significance suggests an emphatically insular position. The Covenanters could use Buchanan's history to reveal God's providential plan, although Buchanan could never have intended such a usage, and they had to impose their own interpretation. Such an approach had the effect of

³⁸ Brown, *Apologetical Relation*, 179.

³⁹ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, I, 282.

⁴⁰ For statements of providential causation of the Reformation, the like of which are not to be found in Buchanan, see Brown, *Apologetical Relation*, 87; [Steuart and Stirling], *Naphtali*, 6. Shields asserted, "Thus, through the wisdom and power of God alone, even by the weakness of very mean instruments, against the rage and fury of the Devil, and of all the power of Hell, was this work of Reformation advanced and effectuated." Shields, *Hind Let Loose*, 37.

⁴¹ Shields, *Hind Let Loose*, 26.

compromising, indeed, of almost entirely eradicating, the civic and humanist dimension of Buchanan's account of history.

Katharine Firth has shown how history of itself was of questionable value to the Protestant apocalyptic mind unless it was coupled with revelation: "It was clear that historians could be liars; so any authority that history might have, it had by virtue of its correspondence with the principles of Scripture."⁴² History and Scripture could be mutually reinforcing, as history could demonstrate the fulfilment of prophecy. While Scripture could stand alone, history, by this reckoning, could not.

Rutherford's argument was, inevitably, backed up by an overwhelming appeal to Scripture. He had absolute belief in the accuracy of biblical history, seeing the Old Testament, as Coffey has argued, as "the ultimate political textbook."⁴³ Any engagement with Scottish history would necessarily come second to this. In any case, Buchanan's distancing and contextualising of biblical precepts was at odds with Rutherford's determination to apply them to his own present, as Coffey acknowledges: "Buchanan had used the tools of humanist exegesis to relativise the Bible stories, confining them to their distant historical context and taking away their power to provide precedents."⁴⁴

In the Covenanting sermons, present troubles and the recent past were privileged over any scheme of more distant history, and to a considerable extent this can also be seen in later Covenanting scholarship. The successes of 1638-47 could be contrasted with the despair of the Restoration period, and yet it was the latter that was considered more significant. Brown's *Apologetical Relation* set out to narrate the sufferings of the Church of Scotland 'Since August 1660'. Shields regarded the period from 1638-60 as achieving "the greatest height of purity and power, that either this Church, or any other did arrive unto," but he evidently took more satisfaction in the period after 1660. It was more glorious because all at once the Church was facing enemies that it had faced only one or two at a time in previous

⁴² Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain*, 248.

⁴³ Coffey, *The Mind of Samuel Rutherford*, 78.

⁴⁴ Coffey, *The Mind of Samuel Rutherford*, 80.

epochs of its history: Atheism, Popery, Prelacy, Erastian Supremacy and Tyranny.⁴⁵ He proudly asserted that the Church of Scotland deserved to be “inrolled [sic] in the catalogue of suffering Churches.”⁴⁶ This is comparable to the tone of the Covenanting sermons, for example Alexander Peden’s hope that, “The blood of the saints will be the seed of the church in after ages in Scotland,” and Richard Cameron’s assertion, “That the Church shall yet be more high and glorious.”⁴⁷ The Restoration was a golden age that the Covenanters characterised by suffering, the frowning, not the smiling of God’s providence upon them. In this respect, the mask of scholarship slipped, and the rhetoric began to sound more like that of the sermons.

This was not entirely to nullify the impact of Buchanan. In the narrative of early Scottish history, with the wealth of precedents that could be drawn from it, it was almost always Buchanan’s version that was followed. This was the case, partially, because the Covenanters far preferred Buchanan, with his Protestant pedigree, to Fordun, Bower and Boece, the medieval Catholics. Knox’s lack of interest in early Scottish history made it necessary to resort to Buchanan for narratives that could easily be shaped to fit the Covenanting mould. Yet however unsatisfactory Knox’s *History* was in some respects, it was his mindset that prevailed into the seventeenth century. Buchanan’s views merely contributed a small number of useful arguments out of an enormous mass of resources that the Covenanters plundered and put together to form their case.

⁴⁵ Shields, *Hind Let Loose*, 75, 109.

⁴⁶ Shields, *Hind Let Loose*, 19.

⁴⁷ A. Peden, ‘Sermon on Luke’, R. Cameron, ‘Sermon on Psalm xlii’, in J. Howie (ed.), *A Collection of Lectures and Sermons, Preached upon Several Subjects, mostly in the Time of the Late Persecution* (Glasgow, 1779), 531, 418.

The Problem of Social Leadership

The earliest phase of the Covenanting movement was an aristocratic one. As Cowan argues, the idea of the nobility as an entity separate from, and indeed a check on, the monarchy, was “the single greatest ideological force behind the covenanting revolution.”⁴⁸ This conception of the nobility was thoroughly Buchananite, and was an influence on two of the most notable Covenanting leaders. James Graham, (1612-50) Earl and later Marquis of Montrose, and Archibald Campbell, (1607-1661) Earl and later Marquis of Argyll, were first allies and then enemies, and both fought and died for their own vision of what the Covenants stood for.

Cowan has considered Buchanan’s influence on each of them. Montrose owned and cherished Buchanan’s works; and a number of his ideas, particularly on law, were “lifted straight out of Buchanan.”⁴⁹ For Argyll, Buchanan’s emphasis on the political lessons to be learned from Highland chieftains and Dalriadic kings was particularly relevant.⁵⁰ Neither Montrose nor Argyll had a particular interest in the popular bent of Buchanan’s resistance theory. Both were keen to preserve their patriarchal power as clan chiefs and, as Cowan notes, Argyll was determined that the second Scottish Reformation should avoid the popular excesses of the first.⁵¹

Buchanan’s ideas would be more useful to the scholarly Covenanters who would eventually make “even Buchananite resistance theory seem tame.”⁵² The crucial question in the theory of resistance was that of who could resist, and Covenanting ideology underwent a steady radicalisation in response to this question. In the 1640s Rutherford could cheerfully assert that ideally the nobility should resist, yet during the Restoration increasingly extreme theories and methods came to be justified, including assassination. The use of Buchanan by the Covenanters became increasingly awkward as the decades passed, as while the logic of the *De Iure Regni* allowed the people to resist, the narrative of the *Historia* suggested that it was the nobility who should undertake resistance.

⁴⁸ Cowan, ‘Political ideas of a covenanting leader’, 243.

⁴⁹ Cowan, *Montrose*, 14, 27.

⁵⁰ Cowan, ‘Political ideas of a covenanting leader’, 258.

⁵¹ Cowan, ‘Political ideas of a covenanting leader’, 259.

⁵² C. Kidd, *Subverting Scotland’s Past: Scottish Whig Historians and the Creation of an Anglo-British Identity 1689-c. 1830* (Cambridge, 1993), 54.

Rutherford's letters, particularly those written in the first burst of Covenanting enthusiasm early in 1638, contained a positive and optimistic view of the nobility, as he hoped to recruit powerful men to resist the Laudian innovations in worship.⁵³ In the mid-1640s, it was still easy to be charitable towards the nobility. In *Lex, Rex* Rutherford's denial of popular rights of resistance emphasised the importance of the community – not the rights of individuals: "The community keepeth to themselves a power to resist tyranny, and to coerce it."⁵⁴ In this way, argues Coffey, "*Lex, Rex* reinforces the position of the traditional ruling elite of Scotland."⁵⁵ Rutherford was at one with the standard position of Calvinist theorists including the Huguenots and Althusius: private individuals cannot resist, but this job should fall to the nobility, the estates or the inferior magistrates.⁵⁶

Rutherford plundered Buchanan's *Historia* for relevant examples of action by the nobility. He countered James VI's argument that the first king of Scotland, Fergus, conquered the kingdom, and based his absolute authority on this dominion. Citing Buchanan, as well as Fordun, Major, and Boece, he asserted that Fergus was freely elected by the Estates, and that he governed through regular parliaments.⁵⁷ He also cited the period after the return of Queen Mary when the nobility in Parliament, as was their duty, frequently reminded her of her responsibilities, and the customs and liberties of the kingdom. When she failed to uphold these, Rutherford contended, her deposition was a legitimate action of the nobility.⁵⁸ He defended the right of parliaments to convene without the summons or consent of the monarch, and rooted this in the recent case of the setting up of "Tables and Conventions in our Kingdome, when the Prelates were bringing in the grossest idolatrie into the *Church*."⁵⁹ As Ford argues, however, Rutherford fudged the issue of who exactly had set up this

⁵³ See for example S. Rutherford, 'Letter to Lord Loudoun' in D. Reid, (ed.), *The Party Coloured Mind: Prose Relating to the Conflict of Church and State in Seventeenth Century Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1982), 46.

⁵⁴ [Rutherford], *Lex, Rex*, 61.

⁵⁵ Coffey, 'Samuel Rutherford and the Political Thought of the Scottish Covenanters', 79.

⁵⁶ [Rutherford], *Lex, Rex*, 210.

⁵⁷ [Rutherford], *Lex, Rex*, 448-9.

⁵⁸ [Rutherford], *Lex, Rex*, 452-3.

⁵⁹ [Rutherford], *Lex, Rex*, 173.

provisional government, regarding this as evidence of his conscious avoidance of placing too much emphasis on the agency of the people.⁶⁰

Although *Lex, Rex* contained a positive appeal to the nobility, Rutherford's enthusiasm for their abilities receded soon after. With the Engagement of 1647 numerous members of the nobility appeared to be acting on their own secular interests and forsaking the godly and national cause of reformation – a tendency that later Covenanters would increasingly assign to them. Ultimately, Rutherford's view of the nobility was positive but cautious – they could be instrumental in glorious episodes of Scottish history, but could also be complicit in periods of decline.

The later Covenanters held an even more ambivalent view of the Scottish nobility. As the Restoration era progressed, it might be expected that many of the Covenanters would have lost faith in the nobility, as the godly party shrunk ever more. Yet Covenanted scholarship retained a comparatively respectful view of the nobility. Despite this an ideological shift is discernible: the nobility were increasingly abandoned as agents of change, and the godly were encouraged to act alone.

Steuart praised the conduct of the nobility in the late 1630s and early 1640s, "It is true, it was of great advantage unto the cause, that God stirred up the spirit of the Nobles to owne the same."⁶¹ He was generally respectful of nobility in the abstract, describing them as the "*Primores Regni* be vertue of their particular places and stations... and so are engaged beyond others, to see to the good of the Land, and of Religion."⁶² However, his main point was that although the leadership of the nobility in any resistance against the crown was welcome, it was not absolutely necessary, and the common people were entitled to act alone. On the nobility, he said, "The stresse of the lawfulnessse of that defensive warre, did not lye wholly upon their shoulders."⁶³ The nobility were by birth and education often more fitted to lead resistance, however this was by expediency not right. Steuart followed Knox's rather than Buchanan's version of the Scottish Reformation, arguing that the influence of the nobility was limited: "At the beginning of the reformation, there

⁶⁰ Ford, 'Samuel Rutherford on the origins of government', 287.

⁶¹ [Steuart], *Jus Populi Vindicatum*, 64.

⁶² [Steuart], *Jus Populi Vindicatum*, 64.

⁶³ [Steuart], *Jus Populi Vindicatum*, 64.

were but very few Nobles, who concurred, as Mr. *Knox* testified in his sermon *Nov. 7 1559.*” He cited the poor showing of the nobility at the iconoclasm riots of St. Giles day, and pointed out that only four nobles subscribed the first bond of December 1557.⁶⁴

The authors of *Naphtali* took a similar line, but posited resistance in religious rather than political terms. The resistance they considered was against the abominations of idolatry, blasphemy, perjury and heresy, and was framed specifically in the concerns of the Covenanting era. If the “Nobles and *Primores* of the Realme” should turn a blind eye to, or collude in these evils, then, “either the People or any part of them”, were entitled to “lawfully Defend themselves, and are mutually bound to assist and deliver one another.”⁶⁵

The authors of the 1660s cited Buchanan on his treatment of the Scottish nobility and its role in creating and censuring kings. Steuart, like Rutherford, regarded the founding of the kingdom under Fergus I as an important precedent. He asserted that Fergus did not conquer Scotland, but was invited from Ireland, according to the decision of the estates. He amassed authorities to support this claim: “All other historians, such as *John Fordon*, *John Major*, *Boethius*, *Hollanshade*, besides *Buchanan*, say, that he was freely chosen by the People.”⁶⁶ The wording here is significant – it suggests that Buchanan’s word alone would have been quite sufficient to prove this point, and that other authorities were only added to reinforce the clout of Buchanan’s words. This was to conveniently ignore the fact that Buchanan’s version of history was deeply indebted to both Fordun and Boece. Instead Steuart turned this on its head, to give the appearance that Fordun and Boece were independent authorities, backing up Buchanan’s version. The precedence given to Buchanan as a reformed author over earlier, but Catholic, scholars is indicative of his reputation and usefulness to the Covenanters.

Of the Covenanting scholars, Brown was probably the closest to Buchanan in ideological terms, and one of the most regular citers of his works. He quoted

⁶⁴ [Steuart], *Jus Populi Vindicatum*, 65-6.

⁶⁵ [Steuart & Stirling], *Naphtali*, 18.

⁶⁶ [Steuart], *Jus Populi Vindicatum*, 124.

extensively from Buchanan's speech made by Morton to Queen Elizabeth, justifying at length the action of the Scottish nobility against Mary.⁶⁷ But Brown's interest in the Scottish past was largely concerned with the polemical purpose it could serve in the Covenanters' present situation. He defended the actions of the Marquis of Argyll, who had been executed as a Covenanter in May 1661. Argyll was, he argued, a patriot noble, who had been instrumental in bringing Charles II to Scotland after the execution of his father. He was executed for collaboration with the Cromwellian regime, but this, argued Brown, was all a part of his effort to act as a member of the nobility should, to do what was best for Scotland, after he "Had fought in the defence of king and country till no more could be done."

As the Covenanters' struggle reached its most desperate phase by the late 1670s and 1680s, it was increasingly assumed that the majority of the nation was concurring either actively or silently in the tyranny of the Stuarts, and that only a small minority of loyal Presbyterians could see that resistance was necessary. Thus Shields found it necessary to defend the actions of this minority, such as the murder of Archbishop Sharp in 1679. He complained that "Such lawful, and (as one would think) laudable Attempts, for cutting off such Monsters of Nature," should be condemned as "horrid Assassinations."⁶⁸

Shields was forthright in allowing popular rights of resistance on the grounds of self-defence, asserting that there was: "no such restriction, that it must only be done by the conduct or concurrence of the *Nobles* or Parliaments."⁶⁹ Shields' endorsement of popular resistance was very different from the logic of Buchanan's resistance theory, as Buchanan's principal concern was always for the commonwealth. Shields's argument, in contrast, sought justification for the actions of a minority that claimed to be morally rather than practically righteous, guided by revelation and uncorrupted by worldly concerns.

Sermons by Covenanting field preachers were even more starkly critical of the nobility, a disparity that can be attributed to the different intended audience of the

⁶⁷ Brown, *Apologetical Relation*, 72.

⁶⁸ Shields, *Hind Let Loose*, 648.

⁶⁹ Shields, *Hind Let Loose*, 596.

sermons in comparison to the scholarly works. Many of the sermons contained a streak of social radicalism, an antipathy towards the nobility, those whom Buchanan saw as the proper defenders of Scottish liberties. Typical charges against them were their worldliness and self-interest, their refusal to make sacrifices to defend the Covenants. Alexander Peden associated the nobility with the malignant party, arguing that they only supported the Covenants “When the wind was fair; but whenever the storm began to blow in his face, all for the most part quited his back.”⁷⁰ Here Peden was rallying the common people by creating a ‘godly us’ and ‘malignant them’ dichotomy. He clearly believed that the people did not need the leadership either of the nobility or the most part of the ministry.

Donald Cargill appeared to delight in attacking the nobility, and excommunicated the king and numerous nobles including Lauderdale, Rothes, and Sir George Mackenzie at Torwood in 1680. He warned that the Lord “Is about to make a great change, he will take away kings, He will take away princes and he will take away nobles.”⁷¹

Richard Cameron also named and shamed those nobles who had not upheld the Covenants, and were chiefly responsible for Scotland’s plight, citing Lauderdale, Hamilton, the Duke of Monmouth and the Duke of York. In an unusually strong statement of rights of resistance in a sermon, and what appeared to be an advertisement for assassins, he urged “The Lord is calling men of all ranks and stations to execute judgement upon them.”⁷²

Historians have underestimated the differences between Buchanan’s resistance theory and that of the Covenanters, both scholars and preachers. Harvie has argued,

However wild the Cameronians’ Queensferry manifesto of 1650 [1680] sounded, with its call for tyrannicide and the creation of a Scottish republic, it was not eccentric but securely within a tradition of Scottish constitutional thought.⁷³

⁷⁰ Peden, ‘Sermon on Luke’ in Howie, ed. *A Collection of Letters and Sermons*, 534.

⁷¹ D. Cargill, ‘Torwood Excommunication and Lecture on Ezekiel’ in Howie, ed. *A Collection of Lectures and Sermons*, 450.

⁷² Cameron, ‘Sermon on Hosea’, in Howie, ed. *A Collection of Lectures and Sermons*, 368-70.

⁷³ The Queensferry Manifesto was a forerunner to the Sanquhar Declaration found in the possession of Donald Cargill when he was arrested. C. Harvie, ‘The Covenanting Tradition’, in G. Walker & T. Gallagher (eds.), *Sermons and Battle Hymns: Protestant Popular Culture in Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1990), 12.

But if the Covenanters' aims by 1680 were to serve God and ward off national apostasy, rather than to preserve the commonwealth, then can such thinking be regarded as 'securely constitutional'? The only consent that mattered had been given in 1638 and 1643: thereafter posterity was bound and the obligations of the Covenants were perpetual. If Buchanan's resistance theory took him beyond the mainstream of constitutional thought, then the Covenanters should be seen as having gone even further. By this reckoning, they can justly be accused of wildness and eccentricity.

The character of Alexander Shields both as a political theorist and as a field preacher suggests that Allan has overstated the extent to which he should be seen as "speaking in the voice of Cato as well as of Calvin."⁷⁴ Allan suggests that Shields had a sincere concern for the commonwealth: "The compelling Calvinist and humanist account had clearly led even this most furious and polemical of presbyterian Covenanters... to equate virtue with the stolid defence of the public interest."⁷⁵ But the very furiosity of Shields' devotion to the cause of the Covenants, and the narrowness of the Covenanting mind by 1687 should lead us to question the extent of any Cato-like attachment to the commonwealth. At least three of Shields' references to the word 'commonwealth' in *A Hind Let Loose* appeared inside citations of Ferne, Grotius, and Buchanan and these, as we will see, cannot be taken at face value as evidence of Shields' own convictions.⁷⁶

Allan argues that Shields had adopted the humanist concern for proper social leadership of the Scottish commonwealth, and that, "Learning was advertised by historians as the moral attribute which would equally become the minister or the layman."⁷⁷ But although Shields certainly had pretensions to high learning, these were not borne out by the quality of his scholarship.⁷⁸ By the late stages of the Restoration, the field preachers claimed to be the social leaders of the remnants of their flocks, and they placed little value on learning. Their vision, in which they

⁷⁴ Allan, *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment*, 96.

⁷⁵ Allan, *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment*, 97.

⁷⁶ Shields, *Hind Let Loose*, 603, 605, 673.

⁷⁷ Allan, *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment*, 109.

⁷⁸ See below, 'The Problem of Citations'.

were the persecuted elect and all malignants could, quite literally, go to hell, was not a vision of social leadership for a unified commonwealth.

Not only Shield's field sermons, but also *A Hind Let Loose*, are notable for their account of a divided nation, where the forces of good are in conflict with 'malignants' and 'the Antichrist'. In a lecture on the book of Revelations, Shields proclaimed the opposition of the Covenanters to "the Popish, Prelatick, and malignant faction," but also to those who had taken the Indulgence despite owing allegiance to the Covenants, and who were now "living under the shelter of a vassal of Antichrist."⁷⁹ If Scotland was not a Covenanted commonwealth, in the eyes of Shields and the later Covenanters, she was no commonwealth at all.

Von Maltzahn has found little evidence of humanist commitment in the ideas of the Restoration Covenanters. He notes that the resistance theory put forward in *Naphtali* was similar to that advanced by Milton in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, (1649) but observes, "In the Scottish Whigs' work, however, we find nothing like Milton's republicanism nor the humanism that informs it." He argues that the Scots, "did not propose commonwealth solutions in their revolt against the episcopal oppressors of their church, even as they cried up the strongest version of resistance theory."⁸⁰

Alexander Shields should be seen as a qualification of, not as an affirmation of, Allan's thesis that Calvinism and humanism "produced a convincing and unitary account of historical purpose," and "lay behind a consequent practice which both defined a social leadership in Scotland and instructed it enthusiastically in the particular ways of virtue."⁸¹ The tension in the Covenanters' view of the nobility was necessarily translated into ambivalence towards Buchanan's decidedly humanist examples, rooted as they were in action by the nobility, with less scope for resistance by a godly people. Buchanan's usefulness in this context waned particularly as the Covenanters' struggle reached its most extreme stage by the late 1670s and 1680s,

⁷⁹ A. Shields, 'Lecture on Revelations' in Howie, ed. *A Collection of Lectures and Sermons*, 555-6.

⁸⁰ Von Maltzahn, 'The Whig Milton', 233.

⁸¹ Allan, *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment*, 109.

and his rational and utilitarian basis for resistance was of questionable relevance to the fanatical minority.

The Problem of Citations

It can be questioned how far the scholarly Covenanters engaged with Buchanan, or even whether they read his work directly or absorbed it indirectly, as some mistakes and misinterpretations of Buchanan have crept through the Covenanting canon from one author to the next. For example, Buchanan dated the coronation of Fergus I in 330 BC, however David Calderwood's *History of the Kirk of Scotland* mistranslated it as 33 BC.⁸² He erroneously stated that the period in which the Scottish kingdom was elective was 1025 years, from 33 BC to around 992 AD, when Kenneth III introduced primogeniture.⁸³ Both Brown and Shields followed this error from Calderwood, and quoted this figure of 1025 years apparently without noticing the discrepancy in Buchanan and Calderwood's dates.⁸⁴ Shields, indeed, followed Calderwood's mistake, while claiming that his citation was from the life of Kenneth III in Buchanan's *Historia*.

Buchanan's habitual reticence in giving dates may have been one reason why such mistakes crept in, however not in this case, as Buchanan gave the exact year of Kenneth III's death as 994 AD.⁸⁵ This would put the period of elective kingship as Buchanan described it at closer to 1320 years than 1025. This example serves as a warning about the scholarly Covenanters, suggesting that they were not always so scholarly as they wished to appear, and may have borrowed citations from other sources. In this instance, either Brown and Shields took their citation of Buchanan from Calderwood, or, it is not too implausible to imagine, Brown copied from Calderwood and then Shields copied from Brown. Other instances of the problematic nature of citations in Covenanting scholarship will be considered, with the two very different examples of Rutherford and Shields.

Rutherford was arguably the most scholarly of the Covenanters. An assessment of the relative influence of Buchanan's thinking on Rutherford is not helped by the fact

⁸² Calderwood, *History of the Kirk of Scotland*, I, 7. Ferguson has also noticed this discrepancy and wonders if it is "simply a scribal error or possibly the first glimmer of a more sceptical approach to the remote unrecorded past." Ferguson, *Identity of the Scottish Nation*, 111.

⁸³ The modern equivalent of Buchanan's Kenneth III is Kenneth II. Calderwood, *History of the Kirk of Scotland*, I, 8-10.

⁸⁴ Brown, *Apologetical Relation*, 71; Shields, *Hind Let Loose*, 332.

⁸⁵ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, I, 311.

that Buchanan was one of over 200 authors cited in *Lex, Rex*, and was only cited twelve times.⁸⁶ Rutherford's eclectic citations included Greek and Roman philosophers and historians, particularly Aristotle and Plato; early Christian theologians; medieval conciliarists; Jesuits such as Molina, Bellarmine and Suarez; Protestant political theorists such as Beza, Hotman, Mornay and Althusius; and jurists and royalists such as Barclay, Blackwood and Grotius; as well as Knox and Buchanan. Calvin himself was cited only fourteen times.⁸⁷ Rutherford's tendency to pile up citations of authors of all periods, disciplines and persuasions is typical of his scholastic style, but begs the question of the extent to which he engaged with any of them individually. It is tempting to see this style simply as the indiscriminate use of arguments to persuade the reader, as it were, 'by numbers', the building of a wall of arguments of all shapes and sizes, regardless of whether they were compatible, or even contradictory.

Coffey has illuminated the apparently contradictory strands in Rutherford's words and actions, as a popular preacher and an academic, a man both cosmopolitan and parochial, radical and conservative, scholastic and humanist, capable of appropriating both apocalyptic and constitutionalist ideas.⁸⁸ He argues that the main problem with his combining of different styles and strands of argument was linked to the attempt to unite the nobility and the Presbyterian ministry, an alliance that was becoming increasingly untenable by the late 1640s.⁸⁹ By the early 1650s, the cracks in Rutherford's system were exposed, as the debate polarised between opposing opinions on whether more purging of 'malignants', or compromise for national unity and defence, was the best solution.⁹⁰ However, it can be argued that Rutherford's amalgamation of different strands of argument was not torn apart simply by the galloping pace of events, but that it had always been awkward.

A 'pick and mix' style of argument such as that employed by Rutherford and successive Covenanters contained inherent problems underestimated by Coffey, who

⁸⁶ Ford, 'Rutherford on the origins of government', 272.

⁸⁷ Coffey, *The Mind of Samuel Rutherford*, 75.

⁸⁸ Coffey, *The Mind of Samuel Rutherford*, 27-8.

⁸⁹ Coffey, 'Samuel Rutherford and the Political Thought of the Scottish Covenanters', 88.

⁹⁰ Coffey, *The Mind of Samuel Rutherford*, 251-2.

regards Rutherford's amassing of authorities as "genuine appreciation."⁹¹ He does not identify the imbalances of Rutherford's differing levels of engagement with his various strands of argument, instead complimenting these fusions as "multi-faceted," and "a careful synthesis."⁹² Arguably, it was far from simple for "Knox's concern for true religion" and "Buchanan's more secular natural-law arguments" to be "fused".⁹³ The grafting of Buchanan's narrative of Scottish history with Calderwood's is also described in terms of fusion, although Coffey admits: "The two forms of discourse in *Lex, Rex* – natural law constitutionalism and religious covenantalism – remained in tension."⁹⁴

In some ways, Rutherford's approach could work: for example seeking to blend the arguments of Buchanan and the Jesuit Suarez was not as difficult as it may have appeared. Both put forward a constitutionalist argument and agreed that resistance should generally be organised by the leading men of the commonwealth, as did Rutherford.⁹⁵ Ford has argued that Rutherford did not see the association of Calvinist and Jesuit opinions as problematic, rather seeing this as proof that they were self-evident and commonplace.⁹⁶ However, it could be argued that Rutherford did not regard engagement with Catholic sources as problematic because he did not really connect with them, rather plundered them for what applications he could find. In many important ways, Buchanan and Rutherford's ideas were incompatible, yet, as with the Catholic sources, this did not stop Rutherford from plundering Buchanan's works for whatever he did regard as useful. Buchanan's somewhat alternative religious views have been tacitly recognised by Ford, who pointed out that Buchanan "Had travelled further from his Calvinist roots than Rutherford was prepared to go."⁹⁷

Coffey argues that the examples drawn from Scottish history presented in Question 43 of *Lex, Rex* were intended to demonstrate that "Scottish historical practice is in

⁹¹ Coffey, *The Mind of Samuel Rutherford*, 62.

⁹² Coffey, 'Samuel Rutherford and the Political Thought of the Scottish Covenanters', 87, 90.

⁹³ Coffey, *The Mind of Samuel Rutherford*, 164.

⁹⁴ Coffey, *The Mind of Samuel Rutherford*, 187.

⁹⁵ D. Wootton, *Divine Right and Democracy: An Anthology of Political Writing in Stuart England* (London, 1986), 44-5, 50.

⁹⁶ Ford, 'Samuel Rutherford on the origins of government', 269.

⁹⁷ Ford, 'Samuel Rutherford on the origins of government', 273.

accord with the natural law principles he has uncovered”.⁹⁸ This is to suggest that these two lines of argument, the historical and the abstract, were in some way organically compatible and of equal importance. However, Rutherford’s appeal to Scottish history through Buchanan, Boece, Fordun and Major might better be seen as an afterthought, a supplementary argument slung in at the end to reinforce but not substantially add to the points he had already made.

Rutherford’s approach to his citations, as one of the earliest and most scholarly of the Covenanting political theorists, can be compared to that of the Restoration Covenanters. Von Friedeburg has noted Steuart’s unfaithful and inflated usages of the German authors Althusius and Arnisaeus in *Jus Populi Vindicatum*. He argues that in the specific context of the Holy Roman Empire, with its many layers of imperial, state and municipal government, theorists could, in qualified terms, admit rights of resistance against particular branches of the government, without risking the destabilisation of the government as a whole. “Because the German emperor was not sovereign in the English sense of the term, resisting him did not undermine order in the body politic.”⁹⁹ However, when such arguments were translated, or rather mistranslated into very different Scottish or English contexts in the seventeenth century, more radical meanings were extracted from them, and “substantially new claims about the body politic were produced.”¹⁰⁰

In order to defend the actions of the Covenanters who participated in the Pentland Rising, Steuart extrapolated from the minimal admission of rights of resistance on the grounds of self-defence made by the absolutist theorist Henning Arnisaeus (1575?-1632).¹⁰¹ Althusius had admitted rights of resistance on somewhat broader terms than Arnisaeus, and was “Steuart’s prime source of inspiration and authority.” But as Von Friedeburg notes, Steuart also had to inflate the theories of Althusius to make them fit the needs of the Covenanters and suit his argument that the people could resist tyranny on their own initiative, without the sanction of inferior magistrates.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Coffey, ‘Samuel Rutherford and the Political Thought of the Scottish Covenanters’, 80.

⁹⁹ Von Friedeburg, ‘Self-Defence’, 244.

¹⁰⁰ Von Friedeburg, ‘Self-Defence’, 244.

¹⁰¹ Von Friedeburg, ‘Self-Defence’, 260.

¹⁰² Von Friedeburg, ‘Self-Defence’, 259-61.

In the last principal work of Covenanting resistance theory, *A Hind Let Loose*, most of Shields' ideas came not from the rights of resistance canon as a whole, but more narrowly from the Covenanting canon, as Shields himself states in his discussion of defensive arms:

This Question is sufficiently discussed, by our famous and learned invincible Patrons and Champions for this excellent privilege of Mankind, the unanswerable Authors of *Lex Rex*, the *Apologetical Relation*, *Naphtali*, and *Jus populi vindicatum*. But because *it is easy to add to what is found*, I shall subjoin my mite; and their arguments being various, and voluminosely prosecute, and scattered at large through their books, I shall endeavour to collect a compound of them in some order.¹⁰³

Shields made a great number of citations of other works, including Althusius, Arnisaeus, Bodin, Barclay, Grotius and James VI. While he was clearly not as well read as Rutherford, he was as creative in his use of sources as Steuart. Closer investigation of *A Hind Let Loose* reveals a lesser engagement with weighty foreign authors than might have been assumed, for example Shields had appropriated a quotation of Althusius from *Jus Populi Vindicatum*.¹⁰⁴ Smart judges Shields as an unoriginal thinker, and uncovers evidence that he plagiarised from Edward Gee's *The Divine Right and Originall of the Civill Magistrate from God*. Gee was an English Presbyterian leader during the Interregnum, and his text was invaluable to Shields because "it contained the definitive presbyterian denunciation of political usurpation directed against Cromwell, and Shields' argument was that James VII and Charles II were not only tyrants but also usurpers."¹⁰⁵

Further examination of Shields' citations of Arnisaeus, Barclay, Bodin, Ferne and Grotius reveals them to have been plagiarised from Brown, as the same quotations that appear within a few pages of the *Apologetical Relation* are replicated within a few pages of *A Hind Let Loose*.¹⁰⁶ In some instances, quotations were copied word for word. In others, for example in the treatment of Ferne, Shields enlarged on a quotation given by Brown. Here it can be conjectured that Shields followed up the

¹⁰³ Shields, *Hind Let Loose*, 591.

¹⁰⁴ Shields, *Hind Let Loose*, 299.

¹⁰⁵ Smart, 'Political Ideas of the Scottish Covenanters', 188-9.

¹⁰⁶ Brown, *Apologetical Relation*, 84-6; Shields, *Hind Let Loose*, 603-5.

reference given by Brown to find the exact passage he required, rather than reading the whole text.

Conclusion

Deeper examination of the differences between Knox and Buchanan has further revealed the extent to which they occupied opposite poles in their treatments of Scottish history. To combine Knox and Buchanan was to try, as Rutherford did, to combine Biblicism, Covenantalism and Apocalypticism with Humanism and Ancient Constitutionalism, and this was problematic. Using Buchanan as a lens through which to examine the political thought of the Covenanters presents a picture of contradictions.

The Covenanters were torn between the impulse to fight for the Church they believed in and to die for it. It was assumed that victory would come through God and would not be a result of their actions, and this was to diminish the impact of their civic rhetoric. How concerned could they be for the welfare of a population that they regarded as unworthy of salvation, either from earthly tyranny or eternal torment? The Covenanters found themselves tied in knots in attempting to combine vigorous activism in defence of the commonwealth, with duty to God, submission to providence and the glory of martyrdom. In numerous cases, Buchanan's version was twisted to better suit Covenanting needs. Thus the Culdees were portrayed as activist defenders of the true religion with their own sufferings and sacrifices, and prophetic numbers were combined with dates from Scottish history.

The placing of a Protestant gloss on the history of Scottish Christianity was important, particularly if it could be made to be an activist and Presbyterian one as well, one that had precedents of Covenanting or banding, however loose. The Covenanters had good reasons to attempt to give the Scottish Kirk a more ancient history, to mask the novelty of Covenanting, and to show that the concerns of the seventeenth century were mature. However, the desire to appeal to antiquity illustrates the contradictions of the Covenanting mental universe: they were obsessed with their own recent history, but also believed that their struggle, and the Presbyterian system of church government, could be justified by more distant history. Yet beyond this, they believed that Presbyterianism, as the system of church government that God ordained, did not have to be justified by expediency or long usage. Buchanan was one of the sources into which the antiquity of the Scottish

Church could be read, but the Covenanters' commitment to historical argument was at best partial.

To some extent, the Covenanters did seek endorsement for their actions in Buchanan's ideas. They undoubtedly read and took an interest in Buchanan's texts – the mass of citations proves this if nothing else – and he was clearly of some use to them, a provider of many significant arguments for and examples of resistance. Yet to make Buchanan compatible with the Covenanting mindset was to wrestle with problems of history and political theory, of covenants, providence and social leadership, and the problem of citations. Arguments from Scottish history – and Buchanan's version of it – were supplementary rather than central in Covenanting ideology. As the Covenanters grew more insular and marginalized, continuing into the eighteenth century only in a stratification of small purist sects, Buchanan's sophisticated views became increasingly incompatible with their narrow-mindedness. Although Buchanan was appropriated by the Covenanting tradition at an early stage, he was never entirely at home in it. As it developed, the relevance of his works in it steadily diminished.

Chapter 4

George Buchanan and the English Revolutions against the Stuarts

Introduction

In 1683 the University of Oxford issued a decree attacking “Certain Pernicious Books and Damnable Doctrines,” the dissemination of which the University blamed for the recent supposed plots against the King’s life.¹ The decree set out to condemn a number of political propositions such as the idea that civil authority was derived from the people; that relations between monarchs and subjects were governed by contracts; and that wicked kings and tyrants could be resisted and killed, by either inferior magistrates or the people.² In doing this, the Oxford decree named a number of authors responsible for disseminating such ideas, including George Buchanan, as well as Knox, Goodman, Mornay, Rutherford, Brown of Wamphray, Steuart and Stirling, Milton, and Jesuit resistance theorists.

The issuing of these anathemas followed the discovery of the Rye House Plot, in which Whig radicals, having failed to exclude Charles II’s Catholic brother and heir James from the succession by parliamentary means, apparently plotted to assassinate both king and heir. Just as the Popish Plot of a few years earlier had been used by the political establishment to heighten fear of subversive Catholicism, the Rye House Plot was used to inspire fear of Whiggism, and, more generally, of continuing instability. The implication was that the ideas advanced by such authors as Buchanan and Milton were not merely to blame for the recent troubles attending the monarchy, but were to blame for all the English troubles of the seventeenth century, including the execution of Charles I.

The Oxford decree’s naming of Buchanan might suggest that he was a significant presence in the political discourse of seventeenth-century England and it will be questioned to what extent this was the case. Numerous English authors between the 1640s and the 1680s cited Buchanan, and this chapter will illustrate a number of these citations. However, the pursuit of citations does not give an adequate picture

¹ ‘The Judgment and Decree of the University of Oxford’, in Wootton (ed.), *Divine Right and Democracy*, 120-1.

² ‘Decree of the University of Oxford’, 121-5.

of the usage of Buchanan's name and ideas. The changing contexts of the English Revolution are investigated to highlight the needs of those who used resistance theory at various times. The legitimacy of resistance could be debated in moderate or radical terms depending on the needs of the moment, and the usability of Buchanan changed accordingly. The resistance theories used by 'the men of 1642' differed significantly from those put forward by the regicides of 1649, and differed again from the position taken by radical Whigs such as Locke and Sidney in the 1680s. Furthermore, changing relations between England and Scotland also affected the usability of Buchanan in England in this period. In 1642 the English parliamentarians were allied with and even dependent on a Scottish Presbyterian army. By 1649 however, English supporters of the regicide regarded Scottish Presbyterians with contempt, arguing, as exemplified in Milton's *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, that the Scots had turned their backs on their heritage of resistance by lamenting the execution of Charles I and installing his son on the throne.

Reluctant Resistance: the Men of 1642

It can be questioned how useful the ideas of Buchanan were to those whom Sanderson has described as “the men of 1642,” the moderate parliamentarians such as William Prynne, Philip Hunton and John Pym who were among the first to oppose the policies of Charles I’s government.³ William Prynne, (c. 1602-1669) the Puritan controversialist who was imprisoned by the regime of Charles I in the late 1630s, was one of few of the men of 1642 who cited Buchanan. In his *The Sovereigne Power of Parliaments and Kingdomes*, published in 1643, he cited the *Historia* to illustrate that the power of making peace and war resided not in kings themselves, but in their parliaments. He later cited the *De Iure Regni* to argue that a king could be resisted if he should “levie warre against his Subjects.”⁴ Nonetheless, Buchanan was only one of a myriad of authorities cited by Prynne, and was not a significant influence on Prynne’s thought, merely a resource to be exploited.

The parliamentarians’ resistance theory featured many arguments similar to those used by Buchanan and typical of existing resources for the justification of resistance, in which the exegesis of Romans 13 was privileged. As a Scottish Covenanter writing in support of the English parliamentarians, Samuel Rutherford had at length expounded the meaning of Romans 13 to admit rights of resistance, professing himself in agreement with Buchanan on the subject.⁵ Many English parliamentarians were to dwell similarly on the same passage, including Jeremiah Burroughs, William Prynne, Stephen Marshall and Henry Parker.⁶ Philip Hunton (c. 1604-1682), a clergyman, used Romans 13 extensively to argue that St. Paul had not meant to prohibit all resistance, and therefore that the community could resist the king.⁷ However, in his conventional use of Romans 13, Hunton was not arguing for popular resistance. He asserted that the community was not necessarily higher than the

³ J. Sanderson, *‘But the People’s Creatures’: The philosophical basis of the English Civil War* (Manchester, 1989), 14.

⁴ W. Prynne, *The Sovereigne Power of Parliaments & Kingdomes* (London, 1643), Part 1, 10; Part 3, 9.

⁵ [Rutherford], *Lex, Rex*, 265. Rutherford referred constantly to Romans 13, see for example *Lex, Rex*, 1, 112, 244, 265-7, 318-20, 350-5, 441.

⁶ Sanderson, *People’s Creatures*, 22-4.

⁷ P. Hunton, ‘A Treatise of Monarchy’, in Wootton (ed.), *Divine Right and Democracy*, 181.

power it had constituted over itself, and said that if the people were to be the judges of tyranny, they would “destroy the being of monarchy.”⁸

Nonetheless, Hunton appeared to argue for something resembling Locke’s later ‘appeal to heaven’ in the event of severe tyranny. He said there must be “an appeal made *ad conscientiam generis humani*”, whereby through the tyrannical actions of the monarch the people would be “unbound, and in state as if they had no government.”⁹ If the king was to attack another part of the constitution, such as parliament, then parliament would lead resistance to the king, but it would be down to the conscience of every individual to decide whether to join in or support this resistance: “Every person must aid that part which, in his best reason and judgement, stands for public good against the destructive.”¹⁰ Hunton therefore used Romans 13 to argue that it was parliament, as inferior magistrates, which should lead resistance to the king.

Similarly denying that the people could resist, Charles Herle, (1598-1659) a Presbyterian divine and regular preacher before the Long Parliament, took Romans 13 and I Peter 2 as his texts in *A Fvller Answer to a Treatise Written by Doctor Ferne*. He insisted that only the two Houses of Parliament could judge tyranny or lead resistance against it: “In this finall *Resolution* of the *State’s Judgement* the *People* are to *rest*.”¹¹ Therefore although many of the parliamentary theorists justified resistance in similar terms to Buchanan – particularly in their interpretation of Romans 13 – it cannot be argued with any confidence that they were drawing on Buchanan directly. Citations of Buchanan are rare among ‘the men of 1642’, and it is more likely that they were drawing upon a bank of resources for resistance, of which Buchanan was merely one part.

Those among the men of 1642 who argued in similar terms to Buchanan did so in order to reach less radical conclusions. The parliamentarians were not – nor could they risk being seen to be – as strident in their commitment to resistance as

⁸ Hunton, ‘A Treatise of Monarchy’, 187.

⁹ Hunton, ‘A Treatise of Monarchy’, 188.

¹⁰ Hunton, ‘A Treatise of Monarchy’, 211.

¹¹ [C. Herle], ‘A Fvller Answer to a Treatise Written by Doctor Ferne, Entitvled, The Resolving of Conscience Upon this Question’, in J. L. Malcolm (ed.), *The Struggle for Sovereignty: Seventeenth Century English Political Tracts* (Indianapolis, 1999), I, 227.

Buchanan. Buchanan's ideas might be useful so long as they were not taken to the lengths of his unrepentant and even gleeful assertion of popular resistance. The parliamentarians put forward a resistance theory that was apologetic and reluctant. As Sanderson argues, they were eager to use the theory of resistance by inferior magistrates to lead action against the king and to show that theirs' was "an ordered, constitutional resistance," resistance that was "clearly distinguishable from a rebellion of mere *private* men."¹² This qualifies the usefulness of Buchanan in this context, as he was not part of the 'inferior magistrates' tradition of resistance.

It is here that the limits of seeking citations of Buchanan's name, or evidence of his 'influence' on later thinkers are revealed. Such an investigation can yield a presence or an absence of Buchanan, but is blind to the needs and sensitivities of particular contexts. Burgess suggests, "Studying the re-emergence of resistance theory within puritan political thought... requires us to understand the conditions that activate a dormant body of discourse or theory."¹³ Contexts should be explored to explain why certain theories that had been lying 'dormant' were once again resorted to and became useful. Zaller has used a contextual approach in his examination of the changing definitions of tyranny and the tyrant during the English Revolutions. These in turn spawned different emphases and levels of radicalism in the political theory that polemicists put forward. For most of the 1640s, even, possibly, until as late as December 1648, it was a treasonous taboo to refer to Charles as a tyrant. To cast Charles as a biblical villain or even as Antichrist might spur on resistance against him, but such charges could not be made in a court of law. Therefore, the trial of Charles and the subsequent justification of his punishment had to treat the king "in the secular garb of the tyrant."¹⁴

¹² Sanderson, *People's Creatures*, 37.

¹³ G. Burgess 'Religious War and Constitutional Defence: Justifications of Resistance in English Puritan Thought, 1590-1643' in von Friedeburg (ed.), *Widerstandsrecht in der fruhen Neuzeit*, 185.

¹⁴ R. Zaller, 'The Figure of the Tyrant in English Revolutionary Thought', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, liv (1993), 600.

The Usage of Buchanan by the Regicides

Charles I was tried and executed in January 1649, and such an escalation of resistance made it probable that the men of 1649 would find more uses for Buchanan than the men of 1642. Buchanan had not only argued for resistance to monarchs through war or assassination, but had also given justifications of judicial proceedings against them, asserting in the *De Iure Regni*, “It was ancient practice that a king should stand trial before judges.”¹⁵

Buchanan was cited a number of times in an anonymous pamphlet called *The Peoples Right Briefly Asserted* which appeared in January 1649. The pamphlet cited Buchanan and Mornay on the need for kings to be restrained by law, and quoted Buchanan: “The Law is more powerful than the *King*, as being the Governor and Moderator of his lusts and actions.”¹⁶ Buchanan’s *Historia* was mined for the examples of “above a dozen *Kings of Scotland*,” including James III, who were held to account for their offences.¹⁷ The author appeared to argue for popular resistance, asserting, “The *People* of right have power to call in question, and punish a *King* for transgressing the *Law*.”¹⁸ However, it is likely that he used Buchanan simply to argue that stability could follow a righteous act of resistance, repeating Buchanan’s truism that timely interventions against kings were “a main Reason, Why the Crown of *Scotland* hath continued the longest of any Crown in one Family.”¹⁹ The author continued to keep to the ‘inferior magistrates’ tradition in asserting that Parliament had done right in resisting the king, and would continue to do right by trying and punishing him. “The Body of a People, represented in a Convention of elected Estates, have a true and lawful power to despose [sic] of things at pleasure, for their own Safety and Security.”²⁰

¹⁵ Buchanan, *De Iure Regni*, 137.

¹⁶ [Anon], ‘The Peoples Right Briefly Asserted’ in Malcolm (ed.), *The Struggle for Sovereignty*, I, 364-5. “The law, then, is more powerful than the king and is, as it were, the guide and governor of his desires and actions.” [*Lex igitur rege potentior est ac velut rectrix et moderatrix et cupiditatum et actionum ejus.*] Buchanan, *De Iure Regni*, 132-3.

¹⁷ ‘The Peoples Right Briefly Asserted’, 365-6.

¹⁸ ‘The Peoples Right Briefly Asserted’, 365.

¹⁹ ‘The Peoples Right Briefly Asserted’, 366.

²⁰ ‘The Peoples Right Briefly Asserted’, 362.

Although the regicides were committing the ultimate act of resistance in trying and executing the king, they wished it to be seen as a sober act of a righteous Parliament, and had no desire to endorse popular action or tyrannicide in Buchanan's terms. Another instance of citation of and engagement with Buchanan – indeed, probably the most interesting instance in this period – can be found in Milton. John Milton (1608-1674) was a tolerant Arminian Puritan, who became a Presbyterian in the 1640s and then leaned towards Independency. He served the cause of the Commonwealth, the window of republican government that followed the regicide but was eventually shut down by Cromwell. Milton's ideas were dominated above all by the importance he attached to freedom of choice, which led him to argue for divorce, and did not always sit well with his religious and political masters.

Milton's regicide texts, which included *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649); *Eikonoklastes* (1649); *A Defence of the People of England* (1651); and *The Second Defence of the People of England* (1654), used Buchanan in a variety of ways.²¹

Wolfe has argued that Buchanan's works were not a considerable influence on Milton, claiming that they "are sources in the most qualified sense." Although *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* bears some similarities to the *De Iure Regni*, Wolfe suggests, "There is more resemblance between the two works in their general ideas than there is in structure and tone."²² Arguably this vague claim deserves further investigation, and merits comparison of the ideas of Buchanan and Milton.

Citations of Buchanan feature regularly in Milton's regicide tracts, and Buchanan was also a presence in Milton's commonplace book, where entries had been made from the final three books of the *Historia*.²³ In *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* Milton drew examples from Buchanan's *Historia* of the Lords of the Congregation withdrawing their allegiance from Mary of Guise, deposing Mary Queen of Scots, and sending an embassy to Elizabeth to justify their conduct.²⁴ In *A Defence of the*

²¹ The analysis here will focus on the uses of Buchanan's resistance theory in Milton's regicide texts. On Milton's partial criticism of Buchanan's historical methods in the *History of Britain*, see Ferguson, *Identity of the Scottish Nation*, 128-133.

²² D. M. Wolfe, 'Milton's Anatomy of Kingship: Sources of *The Tenure*', in D. M. Wolfe (ed.), *Complete Prose Works of John Milton* (New Haven, 1953-82), III, 110.

²³ R. Mohl, *John Milton and his Commonplace Book*, (New York, 1969), 201-2.

²⁴ J. Milton, 'The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates', in M. Dzelzainis (ed.), *Political Writings* (Cambridge, 1991), 23-5.

People of England Milton returned to the example of Mary Queen of Scots, reminding his readers that the grandmother of Charles I had been “stripped of her kingdom and compelled to go into exile, and finally beheaded by protestants.”²⁵ *The Second Defence of the People of England* praised Buchanan, asserting that most poets, “Are bitterly hostile to tyrants, if I should list them from the first down to our own Buchanan.”²⁶

Was there any consistency in the way Milton used Buchanan, or did he simply use Buchanan as a resource as best served the needs of his argument at any given time? The antipathy towards the Scots that was so evident in *The Tenure* appeared to have cooled in the two *Defences*, written in the 1650s, where Milton reserved all his bile for that “empty windbag of a man,” his antagonist Salmasius.²⁷ In *The Tenure* Milton sought to justify the regicide and the new order, and to condemn the Scots for their supposed backsliding: fighting against the king, then seeking accommodation with him, then lamenting his execution. The title page confidently asserted, “They, who of late so much blame Depositing, are the Men that did it themselves.”²⁸ Milton confronted the Scots with the contention that by fighting against Charles they had contributed much to his eventual fate, “notwithstanding thir fine clause in the Covenant to preserve his person, Crown, and dignity.”²⁹ The Scots had been less squeamish about resistance in the 1560s, when Buchanan had confidently proclaimed its legitimacy. Martin Dzelzainis has argued that Milton relied upon Buchanan in *The Tenure* because it allowed him “to quote against the Scottish Presbyterians another Scotsman of unimpeachable authority.”³⁰

By holding up Buchanan as an example that the Scots should have followed, was Milton implicitly adopting the logic of Buchanan’s resistance theory? This is a possibility. Although Milton set out to defend the right of parliament – albeit a purged parliament – to proceed against the king, he went further than the ‘inferior

²⁵ J. Milton, ‘A Defence of the People of England’, in Dzelzainis (ed.), C. Gruzelier (transl.), *Political Writings*, 69.

²⁶ J. Milton, ‘A Second Defence of the People of England’, in Wolfe (ed.), *Complete Prose Works*, IV, pt. I, 592.

²⁷ Milton, ‘Defence of the People of England’, 67.

²⁸ Milton, ‘Tenure of Kings and Magistrates’, title page.

²⁹ Milton, ‘Tenure of Kings and Magistrates’, 27.

³⁰ M. Dzelzainis, ‘Milton, Macbeth and Buchanan’, *The Seventeenth Century* ix (1989), 61.

magistrates' line of argument that he might have been expected to use in this context. As Dzelzainis suggests, even his title, *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, menacingly hints that not only kings but also other magistrates, possibly parliaments, might be resisted if they failed to uphold their duties.³¹ An argument for popular resistance is discernible in *The Tenure*, where Milton argued that the power of kings and magistrates,

Was and is originally the peoples, and by them conferr'd in trust
onely to bee employed to the common peace and benefit; with liberty
therefore and right remaining in them to reassume it to themselves, if
by Kings and Magistrates it be abus'd; or to dispose of it by any
alteration, as they shall judge most conducing to the public good.³²

Dzelzainis suggests that *The Tenure* fudged the question of who could resist, "appearing implausibly to press the claims of both the individual *and* the magistrate."³³ It is possible that Milton put forward such an apparently radical popular argument in *The Tenure* as another means of embarrassing the Scots. However, this was a less than prudent tactic, and one that his employer, the Commonwealth regime, did not endorse. Milton performed a *volte face* later in 1649 in the second edition of *The Tenure*, where some of the radical populism of the first edition was excised and the distinction permitting resistance to the inferior magistrates but denying it to the private individual, was restored.³⁴

A Defence of the People of England put forward a different resistance theory to that of *The Tenure*, and relied on a slippery definition of 'the people'. Here Milton confined himself to the 'inferior magistrates' tradition of resistance theory, and praised the actions of Parliament in trying and executing the king. He argued that the purged Parliament acting in concert with the virtuous army were lawful 'higher powers' that had legitimately undertaken resistance. Milton reserved his wrath for those who should have joined in this resistance, such as aristocrats and members of the Long Parliament, attacking those who continued to press for negotiations with the king, even when it was clear that his tyrannous inclinations were incurable.

³¹ M. Dzelzainis, 'Milton's classical republicanism', in Armitage, Himy & Skinner (eds.), *Milton and Republicanism*, 20.

³² Milton, 'Tenure of Kings and Magistrates', 16.

³³ Dzelzainis, 'Introduction', in *Political Writings*, pp. xxiii-xxiv.

³⁴ Dzelzainis, 'Introduction', pp. xviii-xix.

Therefore, the lawful inferior magistrates who undertook the resistance were “the sounder part” of parliament, which allied itself with the army.³⁵

Dzelzainis has undertaken an examination of Milton’s language in the first *Defence*, including his regular use of expressions such as ‘the better part’, ‘the sounder part’, ‘the healthy and sound part’. These expressions were intended to justify the exclusion of the disaffected from the decision-making process concerning the king, and to allow the purged parliament to assert that its decisions were right and therefore ‘an act of the people’.³⁶ As Dzelzainis points out, such expressions as ‘the better part’ are to be found in the work of a number of early modern political theorists, including Buchanan. “Even Buchanan, whose commitment to radical populism is beyond doubt, insists on the primacy of those displaying the civic virtues.”³⁷ However, there was a clear difference here between the kind of resistance advocated by Buchanan and that advocated by Milton. For Buchanan, the qualitative distinction between citizens based on their civic virtue did not ultimately override the logic of what he said concerning resistance by the people or by individuals among them. In Milton this was not the case: Milton deliberately made this qualitative distinction to limit resistance to those he regarded as properly qualified. This represents a move away from his radical and popular position in *The Tenure*.

Milton’s *Second Defence of the People of England* took the same line as the first on the question of who could resist. Interestingly, Milton paraphrased Buchanan’s most forthright statement of popular resistance, but moderated it to soften the implication that individuals can resist.

Indeed, I am of opinion that one against whom we wage war is regarded by us (if we have the use of reason and judgment) as an enemy. But it has always been permissible to kill an enemy by virtue of the same right with which we attack him. Therefore, since a tyrant is not our enemy alone, but the public enemy of virtually the entire

³⁵ Milton, ‘Defence of the People of England’, 72.

³⁶ Dzelzainis, ‘Introduction’, pp. xxiv.

³⁷ Dzelzainis, ‘Introduction’, pp. xxiv. Buchanan made the qualitative distinction between citizens thus: “So if citizens are reckoned, not by number, but by worth, not only the better part but also the greater will stand for freedom, honour and security.” [*Itaque si cives non e numero sed dignitate censeantur, non solum pars melior sed etiam maior pro libertate, pro honesto, pro incolumitate stabit.*] Buchanan, *De Iure Regni*, 140-1. There has been considerable scholarly controversy over Buchanan’s exact meaning here. For a survey of the debate see F. Oakley, ‘On the Road from Constance to 1688: The Political Thought of John Major and George Buchanan’, *Journal of British Studies*, i (1962), 24-6; Burns, *True Law of Kingship*, 206-7.

human race, he can be killed according to the same law by which he can be attacked with weapons.³⁸

Milton echoed Buchanan in arguing that a tyrant was effectively 'at war' with his people, and that the normal rules of war applied, however he did not go on to say that any individual could kill this enemy.

Despite these areas where the thought of Milton appears to differ significantly from that of Buchanan, there were matters in which the two theorists were in agreement. As Dzelzainis argues, in the field of politics Milton tended to privilege reason over revelation: "The lawfulness of an action followed not from the expressed will of God, but from the fact that it was an intrinsically just and reasonable thing to do."³⁹ In this, Milton was in agreement with Buchanan. Milton's diluted resistance theory in the second edition of *The Tenure* and in his works of the 1650s can be put down to his need to buttress the legitimacy of the Commonwealth, which was both his government and his employer. As both the *Defences* were written in Latin, principally to convince a Continental readership of the legitimacy of the Commonwealth and the rectitude of its conduct, it is natural that they should be self-consciously moderate and avoid putting forward an extreme theory of resistance. Arguably it was in *The Tenure* that Milton put forward his own opinions on resistance theory, going further than the exigencies of the time demanded. There he put forward a theory of resistance similar to Buchanan's, which Dzelzainis regards as "individualist, even anarchic," and strongly secular.⁴⁰

Despite criticising him regularly throughout his works, it can be suggested that Milton had a grudging admiration for Buchanan. However, Wolfe is right in his estimation that Buchanan was not 'a source' for Milton. Milton showed himself capable of borrowing from a diverse assortment of resources, including the inferior magistrates tradition of resistance theory when the situation demanded it. Milton moulded his own theory of individualist resistance theory in *The Tenure*, where he jettisoned the contractarian theory of resistance beloved of Buchanan and boldly asserted that the ruler did not have to be a tyrant to be removed. However, as

³⁸ Milton, 'Second Defence of the People of England', 658.

³⁹ Dzelzainis, 'Introduction', p. xv.

⁴⁰ Dzelzainis, 'Introduction', p. xv.

Buchanan provided one of the only truly radical and popular theories of resistance in the monarchomach canon, he cast a long shadow for anyone else who wished to construct a similar theory. Milton was by no means a disciple of Buchanan, nor did he consume Buchanan's ideas with the same eagerness as the Covenanters, but arguably the similarities between the two should not be underestimated.

It is in the general outlook of the two men that most similarities can be found. Milton can be summed up as an Arminian Presbyterian humanist and Buchanan might be seen in similar terms, despite the fact that to apply the term 'Arminian' to a man writing between the 1560s and 1580s is anachronistic. Yet arguably the spirit of what was to become Arminian Presbyterian humanism existed in Buchanan's time, as a window of eclecticism before Calvinism narrowed and became doctrinaire in the seventeenth century. Both Buchanan and Milton, it seems, shared reservations about such rigid religion, and stood on the side of flexible humanism instead. Both shared a willingness to treat politics as a field where reason ought to be privileged over revelation, although Milton, more so than Buchanan, was willing to engage in biblical discussion and to invoke providence to justify his cause. Milton sympathised with the political aims of 'the Saints' who seized control of parliament and the army, just as Buchanan sympathised with the Lords of the Congregation. Yet both despaired of religious enthusiasm and intolerance, and produced political theory that was essentially secular.⁴¹

Milton's Arminianism implicitly agreed with Buchanan's vigorous humanism that men lived in the world as moral agents whose choices determined the course of their lives on earth, and, to some extent, their salvation. Both would have agreed that men were not *destined* to repeat the failings of Adam and Eve – but their inability to learn from this example and make the correct choices meant that this may well happen.⁴² To treat Milton, not as a disciple of Buchanan, but loosely as an intellectual successor nonetheless, neatly makes the important distinction between the flexibility of Buchanan's Calvinism compared to the growing rigidity of the faith in the first half of the seventeenth century. Such a distinction outlining the similarities of

⁴¹ Dzelzainis, 'Introduction', p. xv.

⁴² W. Cherniak, 'Christian Liberty in Marvell and Milton', in R. C. Richardson & G. M. Ridden (eds.), *Freedom and the English Revolution* (Manchester, 1986), 63-7.

Buchanan and Milton, further underlines the gulf between Buchanan and the Covenanters, despite the fact that it was the Covenanters who wished to be seen as Buchanan's intellectual successors.

The Attack on Resistance in Seventeenth-Century England

Goldie has argued that the three great climaxes of absolutist theorising were the first decade of the 1600s, when James VI & I took on both Protestant and Catholic resistance theories; the 1640s, in which royalists fought ideological as well as military battles with the parliamentarians, and the Restoration period between 1660 and 1688.⁴³ Although the intention here is to avoid delving too deeply into the reign of James VI & I, it is important to consider the genesis of resources to which later generations of royalists, Anglicans, and other opponents of resistance, were heavily indebted. As Goldie points out, a principal feature of the debate in the early 1600s was the charge that all resistance theory, even if it claimed to be authentically Protestant, was actually 'Jesuitical'. This was an idea that would remain useful to opponents of resistance throughout the seventeenth century, allowing those who were often accused of crypto-Catholicism to claim the Protestant high ground. This charge was made against the Scottish Covenanters as early as 1639 in a declaration which asserted that their "Maximes are the same with the Jesuites... taken almost *verbatim* out of *Bellarmino* and *Suarez*."⁴⁴

John Maxwell (1591-1647) was Bishop of Ross in the 1630s and one of Laud's Scottish collaborators who was instrumental in the compilation of the Prayer Book of 1637. As author of *Sacro-Sancta Regum Majestas* in 1644, the text that provoked Rutherford's *Lex, Rex*, Maxwell was one of the first to understand the real meaning behind Protestant and Catholic resistance theories: that even if the authors of these theories denied it, the logic of their arguments pointed to the sovereignty of the people. Maxwell attacked the English parliamentarians for their pretensions to moderation and their refusal to admit that popular sovereignty was the crux of their argument. He confirmed the contemporary view of Buchanan as one of the most

⁴³ M. Goldie, 'Restoration Political Thought', in L. K. J. Glassey (ed.), *The Reigns of Charles II and James VII & II* (Basingstoke, 1997), 19.

⁴⁴ [W. Balcanqual], *A Large Declaration concerning the Late Tumults in Scotland... by the King* (London, 1639), 3. The charge of the Covenanters' 'Jesuitical' tendencies can also be found in a tract written in 1640 and reprinted in 1684, and loaded with references to Knox and Buchanan, and Bellarmine and Mariana. [J. Corbet,] *The Epistle Congratulatory of Lysimachus Nicamor Of the Society of Jesu, to the Covenanters in Scotland* (Oxford, 1684).

radical resistance theorists, arguing that Buchanan was the only one who had admitted the full radical import of his ideas.⁴⁵

Peter Heylyn (1600-1662) was to take a different tactic in attempting to discredit the most radical resistance theories, particularly those of Buchanan, “A most fiery and seditious *Calvinist*.”⁴⁶ Heylyn was pro-divine right and vehemently anti-puritan, and edited *Mercurius Aulicus*, a royalist newspaper in Oxford during the 1640s. Many of his works were to be reprinted during the Restoration. Heylyn’s assault on Buchanan depended not on comparing him to Jesuit practitioners of resistance, but in showing him to have gone further than Calvin in his admission of popular resistance. Basing his conclusions on a long quotation from the *Institutes*, he argued, “These are the very words of *Calvin*, from which his followers and Disciples most extremely differ both in their doctrine, and in their practice.”⁴⁷ He asserted, “*Calvin* allows no case (for ought I can see) in which the Subject lawfully may resist the Sovereign.”⁴⁸ Calvin had admitted that popular magistrates such as the Ephori of Sparta or the Tribunes of Rome might restrain tyrannical kings, but Heylyn regarded Buchanan as a prime example of a resistance theorist who had gone too far: “That which *Calvin* doth ascribe to his *popular Magistrates*, *Buchanan* gives to the whole body of the people generally.”⁴⁹

Royalist opponents of resistance diverged sharply from the ideas of Thomas Hobbes, (1588-1679) despite the fact that they shared with him the opinion that monarchs or sovereigns should enjoy all-embracing power and could not be resisted. In *Leviathan*, published in 1651, Hobbes argued that political and social relations should be seen in terms of rational and secular self-interest. The people should subject themselves to one strong sovereign body or individual, surrendering personal freedoms and owing obedience to this Leviathan in return for safety and security.

⁴⁵ Wootton, ‘Introduction’, *Divine Right and Democracy*, 47.

⁴⁶ P. Heylyn, *Aerius Redivivus: Or, the History of the Presbyterians* (Oxford, 1670), 219.

⁴⁷ P. Heylyn, *The Stumbling-Block of Disobedience and Rebellion* (London, 1681), 651.

⁴⁸ Heylyn, *The Stumbling-Block*, 653.

⁴⁹ Heylyn, *The Stumbling-Block*, 683. Buchanan appears to have been one of Heylyn’s favourite adversaries. In another work he mentioned the *De Iure Regni* as well as the *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* as works that would limit the power of a king to “being a bare sound, and an emptie name.” Heylyn, ‘A Brief and Moderate Answer, to The seditious and scandalous challenge of Henry Burton’, in Malcolm (ed.), *The Struggle for Sovereignty*, I, 79-80.

Hobbes's *Leviathan* was not easily resistible, and could be challenged only on the grounds of self-preservation.⁵⁰

Leviathan is interesting from the point of view of Buchanan's reputation because it attacked, on separate grounds, the twin pillars of that reputation: the humanism which informed Buchanan's thought; and the struggles of Presbyterianism in the reigns of James VI & I and Charles I, with which Buchanan was associated. In a jibe against humanism, Hobbes alleged that reading of the classics was one of the causes of rebellion against monarchy.

From the reading, I say, of such books, men have undertaken to kill their Kings, because the Greek and Latine writers, in their books, and discourses of Policy, make it lawfull, and laudable, for any man so to do.⁵¹

Leviathan also featured "an all-out attack on the pretensions of Scottish presbyterianism," and Robertson regards this as an under-appreciated facet of the text.⁵² Hobbes took exception to Presbyterian views on the separate spheres of church and state, and argued instead that the sovereign had a significant role to play in his national church – he was its head, and he could appoint its pastors and interpret the Scriptures on its behalf. "*Temporall and Spirituall Government*," he argued, "are but two words brought into the world, to make men see double, and mistake their *Lawfull Sovereign*."⁵³

Hobbes was highly controversial in the second half of the seventeenth century, as his theory of sovereignty could buttress the claim of any strong governor, a Cromwell or a Stuart, regardless of whether they had a divine right to rule. He earned condemnation in the Oxford Decree alongside the resistance theorists he abhorred.⁵⁴ Despite this, it was probably Robert Filmer (d. 1653) who did most to discredit the idea of 'absolute monarchy', with its attendant principles of passive obedience and non-resistance. His *Patriarcha* had circulated in manuscript during the reign of

⁵⁰ T. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. R. Tuck (Cambridge, 1996), 150-1.

⁵¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 226.

⁵² J. Robertson, 'The Idea of Sovereignty and the Act of Union', in H. T. Dickinson & M. Lynch (eds.), *The Challenge to Westminster: Sovereignty, Devolution and Independence* (East Linton, 2000), 35.

⁵³ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 322.

⁵⁴ Hobbes was condemned for his *de facto* opinion, "Possession and strength give a right to govern, and success in a cause or enterprise proclaims it to be lawful and just." 'The Judgment and Decree of the University of Oxford', 123.

Charles I, and was to become indispensable to opponents and proponents of resistance alike when it was eventually published in 1680. Filmer argued that strong monarchs should govern, asserting that political relations were akin to familial relations, where first Adam and then all fathers were ‘rulers’ over their families. The people had no right of resistance, and parliaments existed only at the pleasure of kings, to give them counsel when required.⁵⁵ This went further than most royalists of the 1640s would have admitted. Henry Ferne, (1602-62) for example, the “most effective of Civil War royalist authors,” had insisted that monarchs could not be resisted under any circumstances, however he denied that ‘absolute’ was a synonym for ‘arbitrary’.⁵⁶ The problem with Filmer was his boast that absolute monarchy was also arbitrary, “and incompatible with the liberty which he despised and practically everyone else admired.”⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Sanderson, *People's Creatures*, 43-5.

⁵⁶ J. Daly, ‘The Idea of Absolute Monarchy in Seventeenth-Century England’, *Historical Journal*, xxi (1978), 239-40.

⁵⁷ Daly, ‘The Idea of Absolute Monarchy’, 245.

Buchanan, Grotius, and the Whigs of the 1680s

Two of the most significant political texts of the Atlantic World advocated resistance during the English revolutions: John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* and Algernon Sidney's *Discourses Concerning Government*. With a view to examining why Locke and Sidney enjoyed such high reputations in comparison to Buchanan, it will be necessary here to examine their thought. Both texts were written in the early 1680s, against the background of the Exclusion crisis. Both grounded their promotion of resistance theory against the dangers of Filmer's conception of absolutism. The context of Charles II's willingness to govern without parliaments, coupled with fears of what the succession of the Catholic Duke of York might bring, meant that Filmer's text acted as a catalyst for the Whig opposition: "Filmer's radicalisation of the theory of royalism might have been harmless enough had practical developments in England not made the threat of absolute monarchy quite real."⁵⁸

Algernon Sidney (1622-1683) was a republican from "a severely moral and religious aristocratic background." As Scott points out, his position as a younger son gave him a reason to loathe the rigid hereditary succession insisted upon by Filmer.⁵⁹ His political experiences further contributed to his ideas. He sat in the Long Parliament and the Rump and was present when Cromwell dissolved the latter in 1653. He immersed himself in the campaign to exclude the Duke of York from the throne from 1679, making successive failed attempts to win election to the Exclusion parliaments. Eventually he became involved in the shadowy Whig plots for armed resistance against Charles and James, and was tried for treason. Parts of his manuscript of *Discourses Concerning Government*, which he had written between 1681 and 1683, were used against him at his grossly unfair trial, and he was executed in December 1683.

John Locke (1632-1704) was a philosopher and political theorist whose works included the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, and the *Letters of Toleration*, as well as his *Two Treatises of Government*. His association with the Whig Earl of

⁵⁸ T. G. West, 'Introduction', in West (ed.), *Discourses Concerning Government* (Indianapolis, 1990), p. xviii.

⁵⁹ Scott, *Algernon Sidney and the English Republic 1623-1677*, 13-4.

Shaftesbury influenced his life and thought considerably: “Without Shaftesbury, Locke would not have been Locke at all.”⁶⁰ Locke wrote the *Two Treatises* approximately between 1680 and 1682, then spent the years from 1683 to 1689 in exile in Holland, following the death of his patron and the decimation of the Whigs’ political fortunes.⁶¹ Locke returned to England after the Glorious Revolution and the *Two Treatises* were published in 1689, but he was to spend the rest of his life denying that he was their author.⁶²

Locke’s ideas on resistance are particularly interesting because he appears to have arrived at them relatively late in his career. Twenty years before he wrote the *Two Treatises*, he produced *Two Tracts*, written between 1660 and 1662, in which his main purpose was to assert that the civil magistrate could impose religious forms concerning things indifferent. He insisted early on that he did not intend to meddle with the question “whether the magistrate’s crown drops down on his head immediately from heaven or be placed there by the hands of his subjects,” but argued that the supreme magistrate, “must necessarily have an absolute and arbitrary power over all the indifferent actions of his people.”⁶³ Here Locke used the expression “absolute and arbitrary” to signify a power that was total and unlimited, but benevolent nonetheless. The pejorative associations that had become joined to this expression by the 1680s and provoked by the publication of Filmer, help to explain Locke’s change of opinions, manifested in the *Two Treatises*.

The *Two Treatises* took a severe view of absolute monarchs, arguing that their subjects would be better off living in the state of nature where “Men are not bound to submit to the unjust will of another.”⁶⁴ Locke’s political theory hinged on his assertion that men were naturally in the state of nature until “by their own Consents they make themselves Members of some Politick Society.”⁶⁵ By giving this consent, the people signalled their desire to live in a better condition than the state of nature, and this was something that the political society must provide or it would be judged

⁶⁰ P. Laslett, ‘Introduction’ in Laslett (ed.), *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge, 1999), 27.

⁶¹ Laslett, ‘Introduction’, 47-51.

⁶² Laslett, ‘Introduction’, 6-7.

⁶³ J. Locke, ‘Two Tracts on Government’, in M. Goldie (ed.), *Political Essays* (Cambridge, 1997), 9.

⁶⁴ Locke, *Two Treatises*, 276.

⁶⁵ Locke, *Two Treatises*, 278.

a failure. In the *Two Treatises*, the words ‘absolute’ and ‘arbitrary’ had become pejorative terms:

This *Freedom* from Absolute, Arbitrary Power, is so necessary to, and closely joyned with a Man’s Preservation, that he cannot part with it, but by what forfeits his Preservation and Life together. For a Man, not having the Power of his own Life, *cannot*, by Compact, or his own Consent, *enslave himself* to any one, nor put himself under the Absolute, Arbitrary Power of another, to take away his Life, when he pleases.⁶⁶

Rights of resistance had become a vital part of Locke’s theory, an escape hatch for people who were not bound to tolerate tyranny. The people could choose to dissolve their government and constitute a new one as they saw fit.⁶⁷

Like Buchanan, Locke found it necessary to answer the inevitable objection that such a far-reaching right of resistance would result in anarchy.⁶⁸ The people were unlikely to desire change for its own sake, and would prefer the system of government they were accustomed to unless it became unbearable. After all, the many revolutions that had taken place in England “still brought us back again to our old Legislative of King, Lords and Commons.” Only after “a long train of Abuses, Prevarications, and Artifices,” would the people be roused from their natural conservatism: resistance would only be resorted to when it was absolutely necessary.⁶⁹

Historians have debated whether Locke’s resistance theory actually *encouraged* resistance, as Buchanan’s arguably did, or merely *admitted* it as a last resort. On the one hand, Locke’s admission that any individual could kill a tyrant on behalf of the community, is a radical one, and Locke’s friend James Tyrrell (1642-1718) had reservations about it. Goldie has argued that the *Two Treatises* were “a licence for tyrannicide,” but has qualified this view by adding that Locke’s defence of private

⁶⁶ Locke, *Two Treatises*, 284.

⁶⁷ Locke, *Two Treatises*, 412-3.

⁶⁸ Maitland made this objection to Buchanan in the *De Iure Regni*, and Buchanan charged him with “trying to support one tyranny with another.” While Buchanan was highly critical of “the tyranny of habit,” Locke used it to insist on the reasonableness of his resistance theory. Buchanan, *De Iure Regni*, 109.

⁶⁹ Locke, *Two Treatises*, 414-5.

property, and his distancing himself from popular rebels such as Spartacus, implies a desire to be seen as moderate and reasonable.⁷⁰

Did Locke really believe that the admission of resistance in theory meant it would never have to be put into practice? Or was his raising of inevitable objections to his position simply a pre-emptive answer to his critics? Marshall contends that Locke – as a man who had demanded non-resistance in the 1660s – did not perform a complete U-turn in the *Second Treatise*. Resistance was admitted as a means to preserve limited government by giving it good reason to stay within its legitimate bounds. The theory of resistance was thus intended to deter the practice of it.⁷¹ Locke, in fact “was in some ways close to being as conservative a revolutionary as a revolutionary could be.” Despite his admission of a theoretical right of resistance, he “probably wished to see no more change to English political life than the restoration of a trustworthy mixed monarchy with a still restricted franchise and religious toleration.”⁷²

Locke’s relative conservatism can also be seen in his treatment of the royalist theorist William Barclay (c. 1546-1608). Barclay was an opponent of Buchanan’s resistance theory who had been enlisted by James VI & I to support divine right and challenge papal claims of authority over temporal rulers. He argued that an inferior (the people) could never punish a superior (the monarch). However, he did make a small disclaimer, stating that in extreme cases of tyranny the whole people could defend themselves – but not to the point of attacking the king. Locke seized on this admission to argue that even a royalist theorist could not escape the argument that resistance to a tyrant could be necessary and correct. This was to assert the reasonableness of his own resistance theory, to, “make it appear that his radical doctrine is not far out of line with the most respectable absolutists.”⁷³

⁷⁰ Goldie, ‘Restoration Political Thought’, 31.

⁷¹ J. Marshall, *John Locke: Resistance, Religion and Responsibility* (Cambridge, 1994), 217.

⁷² Marshall, *John Locke*, 283. Most commentators now agree that Locke’s admission of resistance was cautious and qualified. See also J. Tully, ‘Locke’, in Burns & Goldie (eds.), *History of Political Thought*, 640-1; J. Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke: An Historical Account of the Argument of the ‘Two Treatises of Government’* (Cambridge, 1995), 183-4; C. Pateman, *The Problem of Political Obligation: A Critical Analysis of Liberal Theory* (Chichester, 1979), 76-7; C. D. Tarlton, ‘The Exclusion Crisis, Pamphleteering, and Locke’s Two Treatises’, in R. Ashcraft (ed.), *John Locke: Critical Assessments* (London, 1991), I, 154.

⁷³ Tully, ‘Locke’, 638-9. See Locke, *Two Treatises*, 419-25.

Sidney, in contrast, was more radical than Locke, both theoretically and stylistically. He agreed with Locke that magistrates are only properly so-called when,

They perform the work for which they were instituted; and that the people which institutes them, may proportion, regulate and terminate their power, as to time, measure and number of persons, as seems most convenient to themselves, which can be no other than their own good.⁷⁴

Sidney admitted radically popular rights of resistance: “He that has virtue and power to save a people, can never want a right of doing it.”⁷⁵ Sidney did not engage with the ‘inferior magistrates’ tradition of resistance theory. His attack on Filmer assumed there was a stark choice – either no one could resist or anyone could resist. The only form of resistance that he discussed was popular, and he put it simply: “Every man has a right of resisting some way or other that which ought not to be done to him.”⁷⁶

Sidney was considerably more willing than Locke to name his sources. Skinner has argued that Locke’s *Two Treatises* restated Calvinist resistance theory, however Locke did not name the expected Buchanan, Hotman or Mornay in the text.⁷⁷ Sidney, in contrast, wore his inspiration on his sleeve. Scott has identified the bank of resources on which Sidney drew in the *Discourses*, including Plato and Aristotle, Livy and Tacitus, Machiavelli, Huguenot resistance theories, Grotius, and George Buchanan.⁷⁸ Sidney regularly cited Buchanan, apparently regarding him as a foremost example of a Protestant resistance theorist. Early on in the *Discourses*, he defended Buchanan against the way Filmer had used him. He complained that Filmer joined, “the Jesuits to Geneva, and coupling Buchanan to Doleman, as both maintaining the same doctrine.”⁷⁹ Sidney was here defending Buchanan, and by extension himself, from the accusation commonly made since the reign of James VI

⁷⁴ A. Sidney, *Discourses Concerning Government*, ed. West (Indianapolis, 1990), 70.

⁷⁵ Sidney, *Discourses*, 227.

⁷⁶ Sidney, *Discourses*, 339.

⁷⁷ Q. Skinner, *Visions of Politics: Renaissance Virtues* (Cambridge, 2002), 253. At no place in the *Two Treatises* did Locke specifically cite Buchanan’s resistance theory. Buchanan’s name features in the text only inside the lengthy Latin quotations that Locke took from Barclay. See Locke, *Two Treatises*, 420-1.

⁷⁸ Scott, *Algernon Sidney and the English Republic*, 16-7.

⁷⁹ Sidney, *Discourses*, 9-10. ‘Doleman’ was the English Jesuit resistance theorist Robert Parsons, a near-contemporary of Buchanan. For another nearby mention of Buchanan in the *Discourses* see p. 11.

& I that all resistance theories were ‘Catholic’ in their nature, and served the interests of the counter-Reformation.

For the most part, it was Buchanan’s historical examples that Sidney made use of, such as the depositions of James III and Mary Queen of Scots as narrated in the *Historia*. Buchanan’s account of Morton’s embassy to Elizabeth to justify the deposition of Mary was, according to Sidney, “of such strength in itself as never to have been any otherwise answered than by railing.”⁸⁰ Sidney also cited the example of some of Buchanan’s mythical early kings: Durstus, Evenus III and Dardanus.⁸¹

But despite the fact that Sidney cited him regularly, Buchanan was not of great use to Locke and Sidney. Their debt to Grotius is more striking. In one place in the *De Iure Regni*, as we have seen, Buchanan insisted on the legitimacy of popular rights of resistance through a people being in a ‘state of war’ with their tyrannical ruler.⁸² Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) expounded this rough idea in significantly greater detail in *De jure belli ac pacis* in 1625. Grotius’ tone and overall conclusions were not as libertarian as those of Buchanan. A Dutch theorist of natural law and sovereignty, Grotius had written *De jure belli* partially to legitimate war and expansion for states. He argued that the best form of government was a strong sovereign state, whether this was a monarchy or not. The people and their liberties should be subordinated to their sovereigns in all respects but their personal survival, and Grotius therefore admitted rights of resistance on the grounds of self-preservation. He allowed for seven conditions under which the people might resist their sovereign, however these were exceptions to his general argument, not building blocks of it.⁸³ Despite this, a number of theorists in the seventeenth century seized upon Grotius’ examples and treated them as if they amounted to a fully-fledged theory of resistance.

Locke and Sidney were not the first to do this. Edward Sexby, (c. 1616-1658) a Leveller, is an unusual example of a polemicist who was willing to argue for popular rights of resistance in the 1640s and 1650s. He has been posited as the author of

⁸⁰ Sidney, *Discourses*, 292, 314-5, 546.

⁸¹ Sidney, *Discourses*, 550.

⁸² Buchanan, *De Iure Regni*, 153.

⁸³ H. Grotius, *De Jure Belli ac Pacis Libri Tres*, ed. J. Brown Scott, trans. F. W. Kelsey (Oxford, 1925), II, 156-9.

England's Miserie and Remedie, a tract of 1645 that Wootton has praised as “the first work to argue for the ultimate sovereignty of the people and to mean by the people ‘the multitude’.”⁸⁴ The tract’s radicalism stemmed from its hint that the House of Commons was as capable of tyranny as the monarchy, and its insistence that “princes, or what estate soever,” if they became tyrants, became also “*hostes humani generis*, enemies of mankind.” Sexby’s citations included Livy, Machiavelli and Buchanan, who was cited as “an author without reproach,” to support the assertion that supreme power resided in the people.⁸⁵

In the 1650s Sexby plotted against Cromwell’s life, was captured, and died in the Tower of London in January 1658. Before his capture he had, possibly along with a royalist, Silius Titus, written and distributed a tract called *Killing Noe Murder*, a bloodthirsty call to tyrannicide. Sexby cited Grotius to argue that a tyrant or usurper (Cromwell could be either or both) is “in the state of war with every man... and therefore everything is lawful against him that is lawful against an open enemy, whom every private man has a right to kill.”⁸⁶ This point could as easily have been taken from Buchanan. Like Buchanan, Sexby not only admitted resistance as a last resort, but actively encouraged it.

Grotius stands as an illuminating example of the twisting of sources to suit the needs of polemicists in different contexts. Properly considered, Grotius was an unlikely prophet of resistance. In the hands of polemicists of the seventeenth century, however, Grotius could be rebranded as a resistance theorist.⁸⁷ Locke and Sidney

⁸⁴ *England's Miserie and Remedie* has been variously attributed to Lilburne, Walwyn, Overton, Wildman and Sexby. Wootton argues for Sexby as the author because of the tract’s impressive scholarly style. Wootton, *Divine Right and Democracy*, 273.

⁸⁵ [Sexby], ‘England’s Miserie and Remedie’ in Wootton (ed.), *Divine Right and Democracy*, 277-8

⁸⁶ W. Allen, [E. Sexby & S. Titus], ‘Killing Noe Murder’ in Wootton (ed.), *Divine Right and Democracy*, 374-5.

⁸⁷ This was a development that the Covenanters had taken even further in their quest for useful arguments. Rutherford, with characteristic inconsistency, located Grotius with Barclay, Blackwood, “and all the Royalists,” but later treated him as a resistance theorist and listed the seven grounds under which he had permitted resistance to tyranny. [Rutherford], *Lex, Rex*, 51, 403. Similarly, Brown stated that Grotius was a theorist who in general “Denieth that the war of subjects against superiors is lawful,” yet, “Even he is forced to grant many things which serve abundantly to justify the practice of Scotland.” Brown, *An Apologetical Relation*, 85. It was in Shields’ *A Hind Let Loose* that Grotius began to be treated unproblematically as a resource for justifying resistance, in citations borrowed from Brown. Shields, *A Hind Let Loose*, 603, 605, 675. In 1689 an anonymous author, presumably presbyterian, published a series of excerpts and translations from *De jure belli ac pacis*, and again, treated Grotius as a resistance theorist. A Lover of the Peace of his Country, *The Proceedings of the*

wholeheartedly took part in this. Scott argues, “The extent to which Sidney imported into his own work Grotius’ political view in particular would be difficult to overstate.” By applying Grotius’ ideas on just war to relations within rather than between states, Sidney was able to argue that willingness on the part of a people to resist errant rulers was a vital means of securing justice.⁸⁸

Although Locke did not name Grotius as his source, the *Two Treatises* contain at least half a dozen references to the ‘state of war’ between tyrants and their people:

When a King has Dethron’d himself, and put himself in a state of War with his People, what shall hinder them from prosecuting him who is no King, as they would any other Man, who has put himself into a state of War with them.⁸⁹

Both Locke and Sidney, therefore, used the same application of Grotius’ ideas to build their resistance theory. However, Locke did not take the idea of the ‘state of war’ as far as Sidney. Although there are numerous similarities between Locke and Sidney, Sidney’s greater radicalism is evident. Scott regards Sidney as “the only theorist of this period to actually *justify rebellion*.”⁹⁰

Present Parliament, Justified, by the Opinion of the most Judicious and Learned Hugo Grotius (Edinburgh, 1689).

⁸⁸ Scott, *Algernon Sidney and the English Republic*, 20.

⁸⁹ Locke, *Two Treatises*, 424-5. For some of Locke’s other references to the ‘state of war’, see *Two Treatises*, 279, 412, 416, 419, 422.

⁹⁰ J. Scott, *Algernon Sidney and the Restoration Crisis, 1677-1683* (Cambridge, 1991), 262.

The Glorious Revolution and the Question of Resistance

The final great upheaval of the seventeenth century was the Glorious Revolution of 1688-9, a culminating point at which the bank of resources on resistance was again resorted to and augmented. In the breakdown of censorship following the flight of James VII & II from England, numerous texts on resistance from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were reprinted, reread and reconsidered. The first English translation of Buchanan's *De Iure Regni* had been produced in 1680 by Philalethes, and was to become the standard translation for the remainder of the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century. This translation was reissued in London in 1689, and was followed in 1690 by a translation of the *Historia*.⁹¹ Other reprints included Mornay's *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos* and Hunton's *Treatise of Monarchy*, both in 1689. Milton's *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* was reprinted twice, firstly as *Pro Populo adversus Tyrannos* in 1689, and secondly as *The Sovereign Right and Power of the People over Tyrants Clearly Stated* in 1691. *Killing Noe Murder* was also republished in 1689.⁹²

Goldie has undertaken an analysis of the corpus of theoretical and polemical works that were produced between 1689 and 1694. He concludes, "The conviction of historians in recent years that moderate rather than traditional whig or tory theories were dominant in the aftermath of the Revolution is dramatically confirmed."⁹³ Only slightly over half of the pamphlets examined admitted that resistance had taken place in 1688, whether this was resistance based on contract, or a more tentative argument for resistance based on extreme provocation. Only 10% of the pamphlets

⁹¹ G. Buchanan, *De Jure Regni Apud Scotos*, (1680); G. Buchanan, *De Jure Regni Apud Scotos*, (London, 1689); G. Buchanan, *The History of Scotland* (London, 1690). 'Philalethes', or 'lover of truth', was an enormously popular pseudonym in the early modern period, however the *Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous English Literature* fails to yield any clues as to the identity of the translator of the *De Iure Regni*. S. Halkett & J. Laing, *Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous English Literature*, new edition ed. J. Kennedy, W. A. Smith, & A. F. Johnson (Edinburgh, 1926-34).

⁹² M. Goldie, 'The Revolution of 1689 and the Structure of Political Argument', *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities*, lxxxiii (1980), 523.

⁹³ Goldie, 'The Revolution of 1689', 490. The supposition that the Whigs after the Revolution were touchy about the question of resistance, and afraid of any association with the ideas that were used to justify the regicide, has become something of a historiographical orthodoxy. For a recent dissenting opinion on this issue, see J. Rudolph, *Revolution by Degrees: James Tyrrell and Whig Political Thought in the late Seventeenth Century* (Basingstoke, 2002), Introduction.

used natural law to argue for resistance, including authors such as Defoe, Johnson, Locke and Tyrrell.⁹⁴

Kenyon argues that fear of republicanism and memory of the upheavals of the seventeenth century led the Whigs to this ambiguous stance. Any hint that the deposition of James had been an act of the people, or that the enthroning of William and Mary was an expression of the will of the people, might invite future challenges to the new regime. This was why “The Convention saddled itself and its successors with the unreal fiction of an abdication.”⁹⁵ In the reign of Queen Anne, the question of whether her title to rule was hereditary or parliamentary, and the increasingly imminent prospect of the Hanoverian succession, ensured that the debate over the Revolution remained fresh.

This nervousness on the part of the Whigs continued for at least twenty years after the sitting of the Convention, although in an act of uncharacteristic assertiveness, they found the courage to have the Oxford Decree burned in 1710. The Whigs’ embarrassment over the question of resistance is apparent in the reception of Locke’s *Two Treatises*, a subject that has been comprehensively covered by historians. Dunn notes, “The work which emerged anonymously from the presses in the aftermath of the revolution of 1688 enjoyed no great immediate éclat.”⁹⁶ Insofar as Locke enjoyed a good reputation, it was as a philosopher, not as a political theorist, and certainly not as a proponent of a radical reading of 1688.

The long and painful genesis of English Revolution principles in the years leading up to 1714 is also illustrated by the career of Benjamin Hoadly (1676-1761). As “an inveterate Whig polemicist” and “praetorian guard of ‘Revolution principles’” Hoadly earned considerable preferment in his long career, serving as bishop of Bangor, Hereford, Salisbury and Winchester.⁹⁷ In 1706 he published a work based on a sermon he had given a year earlier concerning his opinions on resistance. *The Measures of Submission to the Civil Magistrate* put forward a defensive and

⁹⁴ Goldie, ‘The Revolution of 1689’, 489, 508.

⁹⁵ J. P. Kenyon, *Revolution Principles: The Politics of Party 1689-1720* (Cambridge, 1977), 10.

⁹⁶ J. Dunn, ‘The politics of Locke in England and America in the eighteenth century’, in J. W. Yolton (ed.), *John Locke: Problems and Perspectives* (Cambridge, 1969), 56.

⁹⁷ Goldie, *The Reception of Locke’s Politics*, V, 144.

unconfident admission of rights of resistance. Hoadly still found it necessary to devote considerable space to a negative attack on patriarchalism, as if the combined efforts of Sidney, Locke and Tyrrell had not sufficiently deflated Filmer.⁹⁸ His rhetoric was careful and even cagey. Non-resistance, he said, “would appear, upon examination, to be a much greater opposition to the Will of God than the contrary.”⁹⁹ Resistance “in some cases might rather be inferr’d” from Scripture.¹⁰⁰ Hoadly was careful to deny that rights of resistance could encourage unnecessary rebellion, and at the only point where his tone was vehement and committed, his purpose was to deny that the resistance against Charles I had been legitimate: “Nothing can be a greater Scandal upon the memory of that King, than to suppose that the doctrine delivered in the foregoing sermon can justify, or excuse his Enemies.”¹⁰¹

Irish polemicists were among the most significant contributors to the debate over Revolution principles in the early eighteenth century, and they proved themselves most capable of exposing its fumbling contradictions and compromises. The Irish Jacobite Charles Leslie (1650-1722) was one of the earliest critics of the English Whigs and of Locke in particular. In 1705 he defended Filmerian patriarchalism and argued that the location of power in the people could never be the basis of a stable government. He associated the Whigs with the anarchic notions of Calvinist and Catholic resistance theorists, including Buchanan, Knox and Rutherford.¹⁰²

The Anglo-Irish bishop and philosopher George Berkeley (1685-1753) was a Tory who supported the Revolution, but his upholding of the doctrine of passive obedience in a series of sermons delivered at Trinity College in Dublin provoked suspicion that he was a Jacobite. He took Romans 13 as his text, but his sermon was striking in that his argument for passive obedience was based more on philosophical reasoning than on scriptural exegesis. He attacked the anarchic output of resistance theorists, claiming that by making the public good the only criterion of whether

⁹⁸ Kenyon, *Revolution Principles*, 64.

⁹⁹ B. Hoadly, *The Measures of Submission to the Civil Magistrate Consider'd* (London, 1706), 8.

¹⁰⁰ Hoadly, ‘A Defence of the Foregoing Sermon’ in *Measures of Submission*, 37.

¹⁰¹ Hoadly, ‘A Defence of the Foregoing Sermon’ in *Measures of Submission*, 115-6.

¹⁰² [C. Leslie], ‘The Rehearsal’, in Goldie (ed.), *The Reception of Locke's Politics*, II, 19-20.

resistance was permissible, they ignored the fact that resistance might be a sin against God.¹⁰³

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) was a satirist and a significant figure in the hierarchy of the Church of Ireland. He was another commentator on the development of Revolution principles in the early eighteenth century, discussing such issues as church and state, the matter of Ireland's constitutional relationship with England, and the unhappy question of the Union of Scotland and England. In *The Story of the Injured Lady*, written in 1707 but not published until 1746, he portrayed England as a deluded suitor who had rejected Ireland, a faithful potential partner, in favour of the undesirable and ungrateful Scotland. Scotland's objectionable qualities were unsurprising "considering what her Education hath been," and the slight to loyal Ireland was compounded by Scotland's Presbyterianism and "inveterate Hatred to the Church."¹⁰⁴

In *The Publick Spirit of the Whigs*, published in 1714, Swift again assailed the Union with Scotland, and attacked the English Whigs and their conception of Revolution principles. Far from regarding English Revolution principles as cautious, he perceived them as all too bold. Why, he demanded, was the question of resistance still so vehemently discussed, when it was expected that the Hanoverian succession would proceed smoothly upon the death of Queen Anne? Might the Whigs indulge their taste for anarchy by "introducing the Successor by *another* Revolution"? Why must the Whigs always talk of extreme necessity as a justification for resistance? "Should not these Gentlemen sometimes inculcate the general Rule of Obedience, and not always the Exception of Resistance?"¹⁰⁵

The Whigs' self-doubt is illustrated most clearly by their handling of Dr. Henry Sacheverell (1674-1724). His 5 November sermon in 1709, entitled *The Perils of False Brethren*, attacked toleration and occasional conformity and portrayed Protestant Dissenters as descendants of the regicides. He furthermore implied that

¹⁰³ G. Berkeley, 'Passive Obedience', in Goldie (ed.), *The Reception of Locke's Politics*, II, 215-6.

¹⁰⁴ J. Swift, 'The Story of the Injured Lady', in J. McMinn (ed.), *Swift's Irish Pamphlets: An Introductory Selection* (Gerrards Cross, 1991), 23.

¹⁰⁵ J. Swift, 'The Publick Spirit of the Whigs', in H. Davis (ed.), *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift* (Oxford, 1953), VIII, 45.

the Revolution had involved resistance and was therefore wrong. The Whigs, consequently, were determined to impeach him, but Sacheverell's trial became a test of their Revolution principles, and they won only the barest of victories. As Kenyon notes, the Whigs "had failed to establish their political orthodoxy; indeed, Sacheverell's trial had tarred them even more indelibly with the brush of republicanism and irreligion."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Kenyon, *Revolution Principles*, 146.

Conclusion

The contexts of the English revolutions against the Stuarts are interesting for the study of the reputation of Buchanan and of many other political theorists. The bank of resources for resistance of which Buchanan was a part was regularly plundered for useful arguments, as changing circumstances required varying degrees of resistance theory. In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries this bank of resources underwent considerable augmentation with the inclusion of texts that would become the resources of the future, such as Hunton's *Treatise of Monarchy*, Sexby's *Killing Noe Murder*, and, most particularly, Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* and Sidney's *Discourses Concerning Government*. During the seventeenth century, it can be argued, the bank of resources for resistance became a canon of political theory. This process gathered most pace in the 1680s, when the Oxford Decree named the company of men who would be principal members of this canon: Knox and Buchanan, the Scottish Covenanters, the English regicides and Jesuit resistance theorists. In 1684 the subtitle of George Mackenzie's *Jus Regium* proclaimed its opposition to this apparently cohesive group, "Buchanan, Naphtali, Dolman, Milton &c."¹⁰⁷ Most significantly, 1689 saw a revival of interest in the great texts of resistance, which would make them available to the next generation of political theorists.

In general, royalist and absolutist theorists were more willing to cite Buchanan's name negatively than proponents of resistance were willing to cite it positively, however there are exceptions to this. Sexby and Sidney cited Buchanan with the most enthusiasm, and they were among a small number of theorists who were willing to agree with Buchanan's views on popular tyrannicide. Furthermore, those who opposed resistance arguably used Buchanan more accurately, albeit less sincerely, than those whose aim was to legitimate resistance. Absolutists correctly identified the extremism of Buchanan's conclusions, whereas some resistance theorists tried to use his arguments for moderate ends. Theorists such as Barclay and Maxwell were right to single out Buchanan as one of the most radical defenders of the right of resistance, and were quick to see that throwing around Buchanan's name could be a good tactic to tar others with the same brush. Indeed, the negative

¹⁰⁷ Mackenzie, *Jus Regium*.

associations of Buchanan's name were probably second only to those of the Jesuit resistance theorists, such as Bellarmine and Suarez.

Buchanan was named as a malevolent influence by the Oxford Decree and Mackenzie in 1683-4, but was paid the compliment of translation and publication in 1680, 1689 and 1690. Yet it cannot be inferred that Buchanan was a significant or constant presence in the political discourse of the English Revolutions. To the parliamentarians who undertook the first civil war against Charles I, Buchanan could be used as a resource, but only to a limited extent. They were determined that parliament was the only legitimate agency of resistance, and this prohibited their use of Buchanan's violent rhetoric and radical populism. Buchanan was more usable in the context of the regicide, but again, with considerable qualification. Most theorists still believed it best to argue that the regicide was the work of inferior magistrates acting on behalf of the people. Milton's use of Buchanan in *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* was motivated above all by Buchanan's reputation as a Scot and a Presbyterian.

The most radical resistance theories of the English revolutions were produced during the 1680s, and therefore it is in this period that engagement with Buchanan can best be sought. However, this search is made problematic by the evidence that Locke and Sidney took their theory of resistance from Grotius' theory of the state of war. Can Buchanan's single sentence on this subject be taken as an anticipation of Grotius' doctrine? Could Buchanan then be posited as a significant influence on the political theories of Locke and Sidney, political theories which themselves went on to be very influential?

These questions serve to illustrate the problems inherent in a bank of ideas, where theorists of different persuasions and contexts could be appropriated, twisted, or subverted to meet contingent polemical needs, and where many possible lines of transmission could be suggested. Aside from Grotius, Locke also used Barclay, who was writing to answer Buchanan.¹⁰⁸ Locke himself, it is known, read Buchanan's *De*

¹⁰⁸ To add a further link to this chain, it might be noted that the passages of Barclay's *De regno* that Locke quoted in the *Second Treatise* borrowed significantly from Ninian Winzet's *Velitatio*, another attack on Buchanan's politics published in 1582. How far must the historian travel in the pursuit of

Iure Regni, although this was twenty years before the writing of the *Two Treatises* at a time when he was firmly opposed to rights of resistance.¹⁰⁹ Does this mean that Buchanan ‘influenced’ Locke? Did Locke react against Buchanan in the 1660s only to be inspired by him in the 1680s? These are pointless questions. Counting citations and searching for chains of influence is a less than satisfactory approach to reputations.

A sensible conclusion can be proposed. It would be too much to take Buchanan as the inspiration of Locke and Sidney – here the credit probably belongs to Grotius, if not Filmer – although Buchanan can certainly be considered as *an* indirect inspiration. Certainly, Locke and Sidney belong to the same tradition of political thought as Buchanan: all put forward a largely secular argument which by-passed the inferior magistrates tradition of resistance theory. The Oxford Decree was probably right in the way it named Buchanan. It did not suggest that his ideas were instrumental in inflaming the English revolutions, but situated him with a group of other theorists who collectively had acted as inspiration to the actors and thinkers of the time. It was the opponents of resistance, more so than the proponents of resistance, who assembled the group of names that would form the canon of resistance theory.

The conclusion that Locke was too hot to handle in the period after the Glorious Revolution is a sound one, and if this was true of Locke, it must also have been true of Buchanan. Sidney only became a resource for political theorists with the publication of his *Discourses* in 1698. The flurry of publications of Buchanan’s works in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution, along with other justifications of popular resistance in the works of Milton and Sexby, suggest a degree of interest in Buchanan and in the issue of resistance in general. But these theorists were largely unusable and unnameable by mainstream Whigs. Consciously or unconsciously the Whigs, whether the moderates or the radical 10%, were building a canon of political theory that ranged from the relative moderation of Hunton and Mornay, to the radical populism of Buchanan and Locke. As Goldie notes, and as the publications of 1689

influence? J. H. Burns, ‘George Buchanan and the anti-monarchomachs’, in N. Phillipson & Q. Skinner (eds.), *Political Discourse in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1993), 19-20.

¹⁰⁹ Marshall, *John Locke*, 236.

from the *Two Treatises* to the *De Iure Regni* show, radical resistance theories were a considerable presence in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution, however far they were from the mainstream.

Worden argues that the radical Whigs of the 1690s, led by John Toland were, through “skilful editing and marketing,” instrumental in the making of the canon, and in the making of the reputations of such civil war regicides and republicans as Ludlow, Milton, Harrington and Sidney.¹¹⁰ While Locke’s posthumous reputation as a political theorist had an inauspicious start, its development in the Hanoverian age was more promising. Hot on the heels of the formation of the canon of resistance theory, and alongside the rise of the cult of patriotism in Hanoverian Britain, came the formation of the English pantheon of libertarian heroes, and here Locke was to have a full place.¹¹¹

The composition of the English pantheon is discernible in the ‘political gardening’ undertaken by such opposing figures as the patriot Whig Viscount Cobham in opposition to Walpole, and the wife of George II, Queen Caroline, an establishment figure and an ally of Walpole. It has been suggested of Cobham’s project, “The gardens of Stowe began to acquire the dimensions of an overtly political landscape, an allegory of Patriot Whig principles.”¹¹² In the 1730s, work began on the neo-classical temples of Ancient Virtue, Modern Virtue, and the Temple of British Worthies, which included busts of such libertarian heroes as King Alfred, Queen Elizabeth, Shakespeare, Raleigh, Hampden, Milton, Newton, Locke and William of Orange.¹¹³ In competition with Stowe, Queen Caroline’s gardens in Richmond also featured a pantheon of sculpted heroes, including Newton and Locke, which reflected her considerable intellectual interests in latitudinarian religion and Newtonian science in particular.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Worden, *Roundhead Reputations*, 11.

¹¹¹ On the cult of patriotism in Hanoverian Britain, see L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London, 1992); C. Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth, 1725-1742* (Oxford, 1994); D. Griffin, *Patriotism and Poetry in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, 2002).

¹¹² Gerrard, *Patriot Opposition*, 36.

¹¹³ G. Bickham, *The Beauties of Stow* (Los Angeles, 1977), 38-44.

¹¹⁴ J. Colton, ‘Merlin’s Cave and Queen Caroline: Garden Art as Political Propaganda’, *Eighteenth Century Studies*, x (1976), 1-20.

Older commentators have argued that the reputation of Locke's political theory was at its height in the early eighteenth century, and then in decline as theories such as the original contract fell out of favour; however recent work has tended to suggest the opposite.¹¹⁵ Goldie insists that Locke "undoubtedly became a prominent and deeply contested presence after 1760."¹¹⁶ Goldie's work charts the progress of Locke's posthumous reputation in which his ideas entered the canon of political theory, and his name entered the pantheon of English libertarian heroes, however it cannot be stated that Locke's iconic status was attained on the basis of his texts alone. While the consolidation of this English pantheon took place within fifty years of the Glorious Revolution, it will be suggested that a pantheon of Scottish libertarian heroes was slower in coalescing, perhaps due to the continuing urgency of confessional and political debate in Scotland. As a result, Locke achieved the status of a national 'icon' considerably earlier than Buchanan.

¹¹⁵ H. V. S. Ogden, 'The State of Nature and the Decline of Lockian Political Theory in England 1760-1800', *American Historical Review*, xxxv (1940).

¹¹⁶ Goldie, *The Reception of Locke's Politics*, I, p. xxxv.

Chapter 5

George Buchanan in Scotland, 1688-1788

Introduction

It might be argued that the century after 1688 was, for Britain, a century of war, but not of revolution. Unless one includes the cultural, social and economic developments that historians have named as revolutionary, such as the ‘financial’ revolution, or the nascent ‘industrial’ revolution, only the American Revolution rocked the British Atlantic empire. The fact that Scotland was not an arena of revolution after 1689 was significant for the reputation of George Buchanan. His name and works had tended to be most usable, as we have seen, in revolutions and periods of high political tension, contexts where resistance was at the forefront of debate. After 1689, however, those who used Buchanan tended to do so cautiously, and in many cases were unwilling even to justify past resistance, let alone to exhort it in the future.

Although the English Revolution Settlement insisted that James VII & II had abdicated the throne, the Scottish Claim of Right of April 1689 made the unembarrassed admission that through his own actions, James, “hath Forefaulted the Right to the Crown, and the Throne is become Vacant.”¹ Yet just as the English Whigs were conscious of accusations that their past and principles were rebellious, the new Presbyterian regime in Scotland was sensitive to the decades of resistance that had preceded the Glorious Revolution. In the seventeenth century, Buchanan’s reputation was formed largely by the need to legitimate or to deny the right of resistance. However, his reputation in the eighteenth century was informed more by sensitivities concerning resistance, and the fear of appearing rebellious.

In the half-century after the Glorious Revolution, theorists and polemicists continued to pile up citations of Buchanan and debate his legacy. Both Presbyterians and Episcopalians cited Buchanan in their squabbles over the rebellious heritage of Scottish Calvinism. Episcopalians tried to dislodge the first Scottish Reformation from too close an association with the second, while Presbyterians continued to press

¹ *The Declaration of the Estates of the Kingdom of Scotland, Containing the Claim of Right, and the Offer of the Crown to their Majesties, King William and Queen Mary* (Edinburgh, 1689), 4.

for a view of continuity in the Scottish reformed tradition. During the Union debates, both proponents of the incorporating Union, as well as prominent opponents of it such as Andrew Fletcher, cited Buchanan. From 1715, the controversial publication of Buchanan's *Opera Omnia* by Jacobites overlapped with the Marian controversy and re-ignited interest in Buchanan. Although the ideology of Jacobitism is not strictly relevant to consideration of the Presbyterian streams of Buchanan's reputation, it cannot be ignored because of the extent to which it stimulated and provoked Whig polemicists.²

The second context that suggests itself as an avenue in the transmission of Buchanan's reputation in eighteenth-century Scotland is that of the Scottish Enlightenment. In general the literati were more interested in resistance as a philosophical debate than as a prescription for political action. However, a number of them praised Buchanan in generous terms. John Anderson, (1726-96) the Professor of Natural Philosophy at Glasgow University and founder of Anderson's College, regarded Buchanan as having anticipated the European enlightenment:

The outlines, for instance, of the excellent Treatises which have been lately written concerning Punishments are contained in Buchanan's short Remarks upon the Tortures that were inflicted on the Murderers of James the First.³

These comments anticipated ideas later expressed by Dugald Stewart (1753-1828), who compared Buchanan to such leading lights of the Enlightenment as Beccaria and Montesquieu. Although he admitted that the *De Iure Regni* was "occasionally disfigured by the keen and indignant temper of the writer," he argued that it bore "a closer resemblance to the political philosophy of the eighteenth century, than any composition which had previously appeared."⁴ William Robertson was effusive in

² As Colin Kidd's *Subverting Scotland's Past* has comprehensively covered much of the ground of the ideological landscape of eighteenth century Scotland, the aim here will be to concentrate tightly on Buchanan's legacy, and on citations of his name and work.

³ J. Anderson, 'Of the Propriety of Erecting an Obelisk in Honour of Buchanan: A Discourse read to the Literary Society in Glasgow College, November 1781', Strathclyde University Special Collections, Anderson Collection MS 25, 5.

⁴ D. Stewart, 'Dissertation: Exhibiting the Progress of Metaphysical, Ethical, and Political Philosophy, since the revival of letters in Europe', in Sir W. Hamilton (ed.), *The Collected Works of Dugald Stewart* (Edinburgh, 1854), I, 61-2.

his praise for Buchanan's Latin style, and affirmed that Buchanan's genius reflected "the greatest lustre on his country."⁵

These comments by members of the literati might suggest that George Buchanan was a relevant and revered figure at the time of the enlightenment in Scotland. Some historians have casually assumed that Buchanan was a significant intellectual forerunner of the literati. Norbrook describes David Hume as "Buchanan's disciple," and Robbins has suggested that Buchanan, more so than Knox, was a valued resource for eighteenth-century theorists:

Scots of the eighteenth century turned to Buchanan rather than to Knox when they sought encouragement and inspiration for liberal ideas. The father of the Presbyterian church continued to be a force, but the royal tutor, less important in everyday life and worship, had more adherents amongst the men of the Scottish enlightenment.⁶

However, to cite the praise that members of the literati bestowed on Buchanan is to exaggerate Buchanan's impact on their thought. Superficially at least, Buchanan's interests seem congruent with those of the literati. Civic humanism, Scottish and Highland history and the 'noble savage' were in vogue in enlightenment Scotland.⁷ However the literati of eighteenth-century Scotland regarded Buchanan as the product of a distant and barbarous age, sometimes praising him, often reproving of him, and often ignoring him entirely. David Hume and Adam Smith in particular, do not appear to have been concerned with Buchanan's political theory, or to have sought to react against it. Their denial of the existence of the original contract in government was directed more against Locke than against their countryman Buchanan.

One area in which Buchanan's diminishing relevance as a political thinker in eighteenth-century Scotland is brought into relief, is in the evolution of civic humanism. Fletcher's civic humanism, displayed late in the seventeenth century and

⁵ W. Robertson, *The History of Scotland during the reigns of Queen Mary and of King James VI* (London, 1827), II, 250.

⁶ Norbrook, 'Macbeth and the Politics of Historiography', 114; C. Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman: studies in the transmission, development and circumstance of English liberal thought from the Restoration of Charles II until the war with the Thirteen Colonies* (Cambridge, MA., 1961), 179.

⁷ L. McIlvanney, *Burns the Radical: Poetry and Politics in Late Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (East Linton, 2002), 30-1.

early in the eighteenth, was of a more sophisticated cast than Buchanan's. Fletcher did not share Buchanan's idealism about the capabilities of the Scottish nobility to selflessly run the commonwealth. Civic humanism underwent even more accelerated development during the Scottish Enlightenment, due in part to a fruitful synthesis with natural jurisprudence. As Oz-Salzberger notes, pure civic humanism found itself bound to denounce luxury and corruption, whereas "a modern onlooker would find consumption and refinement conducive to commercial prosperity and political stability."⁸ Hume was particularly critical of the naïve aspects of unenlightened civic humanism, and regarded it as productive of enthusiasm, which, along with superstition, was his greatest bugbear.⁹ He insisted that luxury was not necessarily a principal cause of corruption in a commonwealth and complained that civic humanism saw only the threats, and not the opportunities, of commercial society.¹⁰

The progress of Buchanan's reputation can also be sought in understandings of liberty in Scotland in the eighteenth century. The seventeenth century had been dominated by fear and loathing of 'popery and arbitrary government', and this idiom remained a vital part of political discourse until long after the evaporation of Jacobitism as a dangerous force. As the centenary of the Glorious Revolution approached, it can be questioned how far understandings of liberty had moved away from the fear of 'popery and arbitrary government' towards a more enlarged view of 'civil and religious liberty'.

'Civil and religious liberty' can be seen as a vague and widely acceptable definition of British liberty, rooted in Revolution principles, which privileged moderation rather than resistance, which was benevolent and reasonably tolerant, and which celebrated the mixed and limited monarchy that had been preserved in 1688. It was a view of British liberty shaved of the excesses that too great an enthusiasm for liberty might engender. However, the rhetoric of 'civil and religious liberty' was Janus-faced, capable of progressive and retrogressive uses. It could be deployed by

⁸ F. Oz-Salzberger, 'The political theory of the Scottish Enlightenment', in A. Broadie (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 2003), 169.

⁹ D. Hume, 'That Politics may be reduced to a Science', in E. F. Miller (ed.), *Essays Moral, Political and Literary* (Indianapolis, 1985), 27; K. Haakonssen, 'The Structure of Hume's Political Theory', in D. F. Norton (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hume* (Cambridge, 1993), 182.

¹⁰ Hume, 'Of Refinement in the Arts', in Miller (ed.), *Essays*, 269.

those who sought to emphasise their loyalty to the Hanoverian state, by English Protestant dissenters such as Joseph Priestley, or by the Moderate party of the Church of Scotland, led by William Robertson. Alternatively, there were many, particularly in Scotland, who regarded civil and religious liberty and the celebration of 1688 merely as a new expression of the old loathing of popery and arbitrary government. This backward-looking strand is particularly to be seen among the successors of the Covenanters in eighteenth-century Scotland, such as Seceders and Reformed Presbyterians. These sects found it difficult to reconcile themselves to a British constitution that they regarded as uncovenanted, erastian, and prelatical.

Did the self-professed heirs of the Covenanters seek to appropriate Buchanan's name and ideas in the way the Covenanters themselves had done in the seventeenth century? Arguably not. Most of their emphasis was placed not on the first reformation, but on the second reformation of the Covenanting era, most particularly on the Covenanters of the Restoration, and, even more narrowly, on the Cameronian martyrs of the 1680s. It is suggested that the enlightened strain of civil and religious liberty is a more fruitful route for the exploration of Buchanan's reputation. While Buchanan's ideas were not particularly relevant to the philosophy and political theory of the literati, they were of more interest to those members of the literati who wrote history, and in particular, the history of the first Scottish Reformation and the reign of Mary Queen of Scots. Most significantly, Robertson's revisionist history of the Scottish Reformation went some way towards separating the first Scottish Reformation from the second, and paved the way for an upturn in the fortunes of Buchanan's reputation.

As Buchanan's reputation in the eighteenth century was less controversial than formerly it had been, it admitted of more praise of his literary qualities and Latin style. Jacobites such as Patrick Abercromby and Father Thomas Innes could not avoid praising Buchanan for his Latin, even while they were attacking his politics, his partisanship, and, in the case of Innes, the factual basis of the *Historia*. Abercromby praised Buchanan as "an incomparable Scholar, an eminent Master of the *Belles Lettres* and *Latine* Tongue, a delicate Poet, a judicious Historian."¹¹

¹¹ P. Abercromby, *The Martial Atchievements of the Scots Nation* (Edinburgh, 1711), I, 183.

Innes, somewhat petulantly, observed that while Buchanan was a great poet and Latinist, “It had been happy for his own memory, and for his country, if he had kept himself within these his proper talents, and not meddled with politicks.”¹²

Samuel Johnson, not conventionally known as an admirer of all things Scottish, owned a copy of the *Opera Omnia*, published in 1715, and said in his 1775 *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* that Buchanan’s name “has as fair a claim to immortality as can be conferred by modern latinity, and perhaps a fairer than the instability of vernacular language admits.”¹³ The eccentric judge James Burnett, Lord Monboddo, (1714-99) extolled the *Rerum Scoticarum Historia*, professing that it was written “in such Latin, that I am not afraid to compare his stile with that of an Roman historian.” He added, “I hesitate not to pronounce that the stile of his narrative is better than that of Livy,” and Livy was one of Monboddo’s favourite historians.¹⁴ In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, such uncontroversial praise of Buchanan would grow, and he would come to be regarded as one of the Scottish heroes of civil and religious liberty, alongside such figures as William Wallace and Andrew Fletcher. In contrast, the Covenanters of the seventeenth century would not escape their fanatical reputation and achieve this status until the mid-nineteenth century.

¹² T. Innes, *A Critical Essay on the Ancient Inhabitants of the Northern Parts of Britain, or Scotland* (London, 1729), 315.

¹³ D. Greene, *Samuel Johnson’s Library: An Annotated Guide* (Victoria, B. C., 1975), 42; S. Johnson, *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland, 1775* (Menston, 1968), 6.

¹⁴ J. Burnet, Lord Monboddo, *Of the Origin and Progress of Language* (Edinburgh, 1789), V, 229-30.

Whigs and Jacobites, 1689-c. 1756

The ambivalence that Sir George Mackenzie had displayed towards Buchanan in 1684 was in evidence after 1688 when Jacobite ideology built not only on existing streams of Episcopalian and royalist thought from Scotland and England, but made use of Whig political theory and history as well.¹⁵ The decade after the Glorious Revolution witnessed an Episcopalian propaganda assault on the Presbyterians, charging them with a spirit of rebellion. Episcopalian controversialists such as Alexander Monro (d. 1698), who had been principal of Edinburgh University before the Revolution, and John Sage (1652-1711) the patristic scholar and later Episcopalian bishop, took an ambiguous stance towards Buchanan, and never made explicit the precise terms in which they used him. Surprisingly, it might seem, they did not treat Buchanan purely as a prophet of rebellion. Rather, both undertook to paint a positive picture of the first Scottish Reformation – a Reformation that they, as Protestant Episcopalians, also claimed as their own – in order to portray the Covenanting period negatively.

Monro argued that the Kirk was not properly Presbyterian at the time of the Reformation, but that *jure divino* Presbyterianism was an invention of the seventeenth century: “*Buchanan* tells us expressly, that our first Reformers were so far from being Presbyterians.”¹⁶ Sage similarly attacked the Covenanters for pretending “that our Reformers were of their Principles.”¹⁷ He used Buchanan, in a way that required little distortion, to argue that there were strong English and Anglican influences on sixteenth-century Scotland, and insisted, “The Compilers of that *First Book of Discipline*, were generally, to their dying day, of *Prelatical Principles*.”¹⁸ Counting Knox and Buchanan among the first reformers, Sage reserved his ire for Andrew Melville, the man whom he accused of properly bringing Presbyterianism to Scotland.¹⁹ Despite this, Monro still saw Buchanan as a prophet of rebellion alongside the Covenanters of the seventeenth century, including the *De*

¹⁵ See above, pp. 84-5.

¹⁶ [A. Monro], *The Spirit of Calumny and Slander... Particularly address'd to Mr. George Ridpath* (London, 1693), 8.

¹⁷ [J. Sage], *The Fundamental Charter of Presbytery, as it has been lately established in the Kingdom of Scotland* (London, 1697), 8.

¹⁸ [Sage], *Fundamental Charter of Presbytery*, 144.

¹⁹ [Sage], *Fundamental Charter of Presbytery*, 217-8.

Iure Regni in a list of quotations from Covenanting texts such as *Lex, Rex, Naphtali, Jus Populi Vindicatum* and the *Sanquhar Declaration*.²⁰

Whig and Presbyterian polemicists such as George Ridpath, (1660?-1726) a self-proclaimed guardian of Scottish Revolution principles, made a considerable effort to rebut the attacks of the Episcopalians. As Kidd argues, Presbyterian rhetoric in the period following the Revolution tended to be apologetic rather than triumphalist, and sought to sanitise the Presbyterian past.²¹ There was considerable reluctance to acknowledge the Presbyterian heritage of resistance – a heritage of which Buchanan was a part – and instead Scots Presbyterians tried to rebrand themselves and their history as a “civil religion,” one which posed no threat to the new post-Revolution order.²² Challenging the Episcopalians’ separation of the first and second reformations, Ridpath preferred to put forward an image of continuity, uniting Knox and Buchanan with Calderwood, Gillespie and Rutherford to demonstrate the sustained achievement of Presbyterian learning.²³

The most emphatic apologist for the Covenanters in eighteenth-century Scotland was Robert Wodrow (1679-1734), the church historian and minister in Eastwood. In *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland* (1721-2) he sought to challenge the perception of seventeenth-century Presbyterians as lawless and antinomian, and instead presented the Covenanters as early warriors for Revolution principles. Presbyterians, Wodrow argued, had contended and suffered for Revolution principles, “even before the revolution was brought about.” He insisted that the Covenanters had maintained their loyalty to the Stuart kings Charles II and James VII for as long as they could, before being provoked by extreme oppression, and he emphasised the loyalty of Presbyterians in his own time to the benevolent regime of George I.²⁴

²⁰ [Monro], *The Spirit of Calumny and Slander*, 76.

²¹ Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past*, 51.

²² Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past*, 60. See also C. Kidd, ‘Constructing a civil religion: Scots Presbyterians and the eighteenth-century British state’, in J. Kirk (ed.), *The Scottish Churches and the Union Parliament 1707-1999* (Edinburgh, 2001).

²³ [G. Ridpath], *An Answer to the Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence* (London, 1693), 47.

²⁴ R. Wodrow, ‘Dedication to the King’, *The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland from the Restoration to the Revolution*, ed. Robert Burns (Glasgow, 1828-30), I, p. xxxv.

The patriot and civic humanist Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun (1653-1716) also used Buchanan as a resource in this period. Fletcher, like Milton, was a tolerant humanist and a figure that the imagination easily links to Buchanan, as a fiercely independent-minded and somewhat cantankerous character. Fletcher's disposition appears similar to that of Buchanan, and Robertson's pen portrait of Fletcher could be applied to either of them: "If not an unbeliever, his cast of mind was resolutely secular. He combined severity in personal taste with cosmopolitanism of the intellect: he was a constant traveller and lifelong bibliophile."²⁵ In *A Discourse of Government with Relation to Militia's*, (1697) Fletcher asserted that the maintenance of a standing army in peacetime was one of the principal means by which a monarchy made the transition to tyranny.²⁶ He cited Buchanan as "the great historian," and paraphrased his account of the attempts by Mary of Guise and then Mary Queen of Scots to introduce mercenary soldiers and bodyguards in Scotland, in order to highlight the potential detriment of such schemes to native martial vigour.²⁷

However, Fletcher's humanism was more sophisticated and discriminating than his brief engagement with Buchanan suggests. Far from viewing the nobility as the guardians of Scotland's freedom, Fletcher effectively blamed them for her poverty and backwardness and argued that without far-reaching change, Scotland could not survive as an independent nation.²⁸ The nobility were the heroes of Buchanan's humanism, but the villains of Fletcher's.²⁹

Robertson argues that there were significant differences between Fletcher's realist approach and those opponents of the Union who continued to see Scotland's independence as inextricably connected to her martial identity and history.³⁰ Buchanan's *Historia* would be more useful to this latter group. Ridpath's *An Historical Account of the Antient Rights and Power of the Parliament of Scotland*, (1703) took a quotation from the *De Iure Regni* as an epigraph. The tract was

²⁵ J. Robertson, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the Militia Issue* (Edinburgh, 1985), 22.

²⁶ A. Fletcher 'A Discourse of Government with Relation to Militia's' in J. Robertson (ed.), *Political Works* (Cambridge, 1997), 3.

²⁷ Fletcher, 'A Discourse of Government with Relation to Militia's', 10-11; Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 388, 450. The fact that Fletcher did not cite Buchanan by name suggests that he could expect his readers to be familiar with Buchanan's narrative, and capable of recognising it at once.

²⁸ A. Fletcher, 'The Second Discourse concerning the Affairs of Scotland', in *Political Works*, 56-81.

²⁹ Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past*, 35.

³⁰ Robertson, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the Militia Issue*, 41.

dedicated to the Scottish Parliament, and warned it against accepting the Hanoverian Succession without limitations. Ridpath declared that his intention was to uphold the privileges and historic independence of the Scottish Parliament: “To vindicate the Memory of our noble Ancestors, who waded thro Seas of Blood, and gloriously ventured their Lives and Estates in Defence of their Liberty.”³¹

Ridpath put forward a Buchananite argument, insisting upon “the Power of the States to resist the Sovereign if he invade the Constitution.”³² He included a long quotation from Book Twenty of the *Historia* on Morton’s embassy to the English court to justify the actions of the Lords of the Congregation against Mary, and cited some of Buchanan’s early kings who became tyrants and were called to account by the Scottish Estates.³³ Buchanan was cited regularly throughout this tract to show that Kings of Scots could not make peace and war without the consent of the Estates.³⁴ Like Fletcher, Ridpath paraphrased Buchanan’s narrative of the attempts to compromise Scotland’s martial character by introducing a mercenary army.³⁵

A similarly chauvinistic assertion of Scottish independence can be found in James Anderson’s *An Historical Essay, Shewing that the Crown and Kingdom of Scotland is Imperial and Independent*, published in 1705. The antiquarian Anderson (1662-1728) was writing to answer the claim of the English Whig William Atwood (c. 1650-1712) that the Scottish crown was inferior and therefore subject to the imperial crown of England. This was a damaging claim, as it would have entailed automatic subjection on the part of Scotland to England’s decision on the succession, and would have meant that any Union could not have been a union of equals. With this in mind, the Scottish Parliament awarded Anderson funding to attack Atwood’s claims.³⁶

Anderson immediately identified Buchanan, along with the Declaration of Arbroath, as allies in his endeavour of rebutting Atwood. Buchanan was put to a number of

³¹ [G. Ridpath] *An Historical Account of the Antient Rights and Power of the Parliament of Scotland* (1703) pp. xvi-vii.

³² [Ridpath], *Historical Account*, 3.

³³ [Ridpath], *Historical Account*, 11-3.

³⁴ [Ridpath], *Historical Account*, 60-1.

³⁵ [Ridpath], *Historical Account*, 71-2.

³⁶ Kidd, *Subverting Scotland’s Past*, 45.

uses, firstly, as an authority on English history supported by Fordun and Boece.³⁷ Then, supported by Sir Thomas Craig and Sir George Mackenzie, Buchanan was called upon to demolish the “ridiculous Stories” of the English origin myth of Brutus, and the tales of King Arthur.³⁸ Buchanan was also cited for his assertion that if Scottish kings had ever done homage to English kings, it was not a gesture of deference to the English imperial crown, but was only for their lands in England.³⁹ Anderson used the Declaration of Arbroath to argue, in the same vein as Buchanan, that the Scots

Glory in their being a free People under the Government of a great Number of KINGS, of an uninterrupted Royal Race: and that they were blest with being among the first who embraced the Christian Faith.⁴⁰

Curiously, Buchanan’s chauvinistic *Historia* was also usable as a resource by some who favoured union between Scotland and England. Rather than asserting Scotland’s proud tradition of independence and martial prowess, *An Impartial Account of the Affairs of Scotland* revealed in its subtitle the aim of illuminating *Also some remarkable Instances that may give light into the Dependency of Scotland on the Crown of England*. Published in 1705, this tract was a translation of the *Historia*’s narrative of the Scottish Reformation and the deposition of Mary Queen of Scots, ending with the assassination of Moray. It highlighted the good relations between Scotland and England in this period and reminded the Scots that during their Reformation they had been “deliver’d from the Servitude of *France* by the *English* assistance.”⁴¹ Buchanan was not named as the author, presumably to hide the fact that the author was a Scot.

Kidd has illuminated further chauvinistic uses of Buchananite historiography in post-Revolution Scotland, in which both royalists and Whigs sought to defend the narrative of the founding of the Scottish kingdom in 330 BC, against the claims of English, Welsh and Irish historians who dated the founding closer to 503 AD.⁴² The

³⁷ J. Anderson, *An Historical Essay, Shewing that the Crown and Kingdom of Scotland is Imperial and Independent* (Edinburgh, 1705), 86-7.

³⁸ Anderson, *Historical Essay*, 159-60.

³⁹ Anderson, *Historical Essay*, 186.

⁴⁰ Anderson, *Historical Essay*, 262.

⁴¹ [G. Buchanan], *An Impartial Account of the Affairs of Scotland* (London, 1705), 300.

⁴² Kidd, *Subverting Scotland’s Past*, 27.

Jacobite Patrick Abercromby (1656-1716) carried on the work of Mackenzie's royalist reformulation of Buchanan's history. His combination of history and biography is striking for the way that it united Scottish Whig and Jacobite historians to assert the antiquity of the Scottish kingdom. Abercromby thus attacked Lhuyd, Camden, and Stillingfleet with the authorities of the Jacobites Sir George Mackenzie and Sir Robert Sibbald, and the 'whigs' George Buchanan and Sir James Dalrymple: "*Scots* Writers have maintain'd with their Pens the Rights and Territories, [that] *Scots* Heroes first gain'd, and then preserv'd with their Arms."⁴³

Thus when pride in Scotland's ancient heritage was at stake, the line between Whigs and Jacobites was blurred. George Mackenzie reinvigorated interest in the Declaration of Arbroath in 1680, a document that at once bolstered the Scottish monarchy by insisting on its ancient pedigree, and undermined it with the suggestion that a monarch's misconduct might lead to his or her deposition by the community of the realm.⁴⁴ This ambivalence towards Scotland's monarchical heritage can also be seen in the glowing eulogies produced in 1713 upon the death of the Lord Advocate and former Covenanter, James Steuart of Goodtrees. One beckoned forth Scotland's greatest poets to write his eulogy, as only they could do his life and achievements justice, and included the call, "*Buchanan* rise and write his *active Life!*"⁴⁵ Another expressed ambiguity towards Scotland's Stuart heritage, as James Steuart, as a Covenanter, had faced the persecution of the Stuart family during the Restoration, but his surname was still taken as an object of pride: "He was one sprung from an illustrious Stem, / Which did adorn their Ancient Royal Name."⁴⁶

1715 was a significant year for the reputation of George Buchanan, with the publication of the *Opera Omnia*, the complete works of Buchanan, by the Jacobite publishers Robert Freebairn and Thomas Ruddiman. Duncan suggests, "The two

⁴³ Abercromby, *Martial Atchievements*, I, 3.

⁴⁴ Mackenzie included the Latin text of the Declaration in *Observations upon the Laws and Customs of Nations, as to Precedency*. In 1689, an English translation of the Declaration appeared. George Mackenzie, *Observations upon the Laws and Customs of Nations, as to Precedency* (Edinburgh, 1680), 20-1; *A Letter From the Nobility, Barons & Commons of Scotland, in the Year 1320... Translated from the Original Latine, as it is insert by Sr. George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh in his Observations on Precedency, &c.* (Edinburgh, 1689).

⁴⁵ *To the Memory of Sir James Steuart*, (1713), Glasgow University Special Collections, Murray Collection, Mu29-f.26, 146 ESTC.

⁴⁶ *An Elegie, on the Much to be Lamented Death of Sir James Stuart of Goodtrees Her Majesty's Advocat*, (1713), Glasgow University Special Collections, Murray Collection, Mu29-f.26, 145 ESTC.

enormous folios of this publication represent probably the weightiest piece of literary editing ever undertaken in Scotland.”⁴⁷ Ruddiman (1674-1757) was a Tory, a Jacobite, and an Episcopalian who had a long career as a printer, and as Keeper of the Faculty of Advocates’ Library between 1730 and 1752. The printing work of Freebairn and Ruddiman overwhelmingly involved Scottish authors, and included Gavin Douglas’s *Aeneid* as well as the Jacobites Archibald Pitcairne and Patrick Abercromby. Kidd has illuminated the culture of Jacobite Latinity in the early eighteenth century, noting its centrality in the controversies between Presbyterians and Episcopalians. In this context, Latin learning could foster patriotic pride by allowing Jacobites to compare a heroic and martial Highland society with classical examples.⁴⁸ More importantly, however, the cultivation of Latin culture allowed Episcopalians to claim Buchanan, as a humanist of international stature, as one of *their* own, to emphasise the deficiencies in Presbyterian learning since the seventeenth century, and to blame the Presbyterians for the decline of humanism.⁴⁹

The *Opera Omnia* featured a *Praefatio* and *Annotationes* that appeared under the name of Freebairn, but were in fact written by Ruddiman.⁵⁰ The Jacobites had a number of motivations in this project, some of which appear to be mutually contradictory. One was to further the usages of Buchanan’s history for “the Jacobite appropriation of Scotland’s patriotic and martial past,”⁵¹ and another was “to exploit the negative associations of Buchanan’s ultra-whig reputation.”⁵² Whigs were quick to spot Jacobite bias in the editorial line of the *Opera Omnia*. Ruddiman had acknowledged his debt to numerous Scottish theorists and historians, but the inclusion of the Whig James Anderson, and of Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, ostentatiously described as *Cato nostri seculi*, was not enough to allay suspicion.⁵³ Also included were the names of prominent Jacobite sympathisers and enthusiasts,

⁴⁷ D. Duncan, *Thomas Ruddiman: A Study in Scottish Scholarship of the early Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1965), 62.

⁴⁸ C. Kidd, ‘The ideological significance of Scottish Jacobite Latinity’, in J. Black & J. Gregory (eds.), *Culture, Politics and Society in Britain 1660-1800* (Manchester, 1991), 114, 121-2.

⁴⁹ Kidd, ‘Scottish Jacobite Latinity’, 116-7.

⁵⁰ Duncan, *Thomas Ruddiman*, 45.

⁵¹ Robertson, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the Militia Issue*, 51.

⁵² Kidd, *Subverting Scotland’s Past*, 92.

⁵³ Ruddiman, ‘Praefatio’, *Opera Omnia*, I, pp. xiv, xxi.

including Dr. George Mackenzie; George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh; Robert Sibbald and Patrick Abercromby.⁵⁴

Furthermore, Ruddiman had taken issue with expressions of Buchanan's that emphasised his commitment to accountable and elective kingship, such as *electus est, suffectus est, populi suffragiis creatus*, and so on, and this seemed to demonstrate Ruddiman's sympathy for Jacobite pretensions to absolutism. Ruddiman believed that Buchanan's account of Scottish kingship was contrary to all of Scotland's historical chronicles and public records, and that Buchanan had sought to perpetrate this fraud in order to justify the deposition of Mary and her replacement with her son James, or possibly to support Moray's ambitions to the throne. Ruddiman insisted that Scotland's kings were made not by the suffrages of the people [*non populi suffragiis*] but by the right of blood [*sed sanguinis jure*].⁵⁵

In 1717 a club called the Associated Critics was formed to defend Buchanan's texts and reputation from the Jacobite threat. Its members included James Anderson, George Logan (1678-1755), and a number of professors of the University of Edinburgh, including Charles Mackie, the first professor of civil history. However, the club was less than successful, and this is not merely the opinion of George Chalmers, author in 1794 of a sympathetic biography of Ruddiman. He mocked the Associated Critics for their tendency to consider "Buchanan as infallible", but regarded them as "better warriors than editors."⁵⁶ McElroy regards the Associated Critics as not having had great impact or significance, principally because their intended new complete edition of Buchanan, with a full rebuttal of Ruddiman's editorial line, never came to fruition.⁵⁷ When Peter Burman was planning his Dutch edition of the *Opera Omnia* in 1725, he considered commissioning a new preface to incorporate the arguments of the Associated Critics. However, as Ruddiman later delighted in pointing out, Burman grew tired of waiting for their response, and eventually went to press with Ruddiman's own original preface and notes.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Ruddiman, 'Praefatio', I, p. xiv.

⁵⁵ Ruddiman, 'Praefatio', I, p. xi.

⁵⁶ G. Chalmers, *The Life of Thomas Ruddiman* (London, 1794), 76-8. Chalmers, Ferguson argues, "hated Buchanan with a depth of loathing that only a true Marian can know." Ferguson, *Identity of the Scottish Nation*, 276.

⁵⁷ D. D. McElroy, *A Century of Scottish Clubs 1700-1800* (Unpublished Thesis, 1969), 52.

⁵⁸ Ruddiman, *An Answer to the Reverend Mr. George Logan's late Treatise on Government*, 66-8.

The debate over the *Opera Omnia* climaxed in the 1740s and 1750s, when Ruddiman, now an old man, continued to vigorously defend his edition against the allegations of the Whigs. George Logan complained that Ruddiman's treatment of Buchanan was based on hatred and a desire "to reproach him, because of the active Hand he had in bringing about the Change, both in Church and State, at the Reformation."⁵⁹ In 1749 John Love dedicated his *Vindication of Mr. George Buchanan* to the Revolution Club of Edinburgh and cast Buchanan as a founder of Revolution Principles.⁶⁰ The *Vindication* featured fawning praise of Buchanan and "his never enough to admired Works," but had little constructive to add to Buchanan's reputation. It only poured further oil on the burning questions of whether Buchanan was guilty of ingratitude to Mary Queen of Scots, and whether he repented of his treatment of her on his deathbed.⁶¹

In 1753, James Man attacked not only the *Praefatio* and the *Annotationes*, but also the integrity of Buchanan's texts as they appeared in the *Opera Omnia*. He claimed that Ruddiman had over-corrected the *Historia* by basing his amendments on a manuscript of Buchanan's that was only an early draft of the work. Here again, the debate was not about resistance or the challenge of the forty kings, but was a more pedantic controversy about the order and timing of Buchanan's writing of the twenty books of the *Historia*, and the signification of certain Latin words.

In Ruddiman's responses to these various charges, the propensity of both sides to fudge the issue of the forty kings is further revealed. He professed that he agreed that the forty kings were fabulous. "Yet granting it to be true..." he was quite willing to launch into the debate anyway, on whether Fergus I made himself king of Scotland, or was chosen, whether he was an absolute or a limited monarch, and whether the succession was hereditary or not.⁶² Ruddiman complained of the attitudes of his antagonists, men to whom, "Buchanan's Dictates must pass for

⁵⁹ G. Logan, *The Finishing Stroke: Or, Mr. Ruddiman Self-Condemed* (Edinburgh, 1748), 72.

⁶⁰ [Love], *A Vindication of Mr. George Buchanan*, pp. iv-v.

⁶¹ [Love], *A Vindication of Mr. George Buchanan*, 4.

⁶² Ruddiman, *Answer to the Reverend Mr. George Logan*, 45-6.

Oracles.”⁶³ His impatience with the constant squabbling over the *Opera Omnia* led him to declare,

I confess that when I wrote these Notes, I had a better Opinion of *Buchanan* than I now have; for then I charitably thought that *Buchanan* had suffered himself to be imposed upon, and that he verily believed all the ill Things he wrote of *Q. Mary* to be true.⁶⁴

Although Whigs and Presbyterians spent decades attacking Ruddiman’s editorial method in the *Opera Omnia*, it should be pointed out that Buchanan’s texts themselves were properly replicated to the satisfaction of most historians: Robertson, for example, regards the edition as “Scrupulous.”⁶⁵ Even George Logan, the self-proclaimed defender of Buchanan’s Whig reputation in the first half of the eighteenth century, had to admit that Buchanan’s texts within the *Opera Omnia* were “most correct.”⁶⁶ Duncan agrees, arguing that although Ruddiman was eager to contest the accuracy of Buchanan’s facts in the notes, he did not impose his views on the texts. If anything, he suggests, both Ruddiman and his opponents were in some respects wrong in their treatment of Buchanan’s texts. If Ruddiman placed too much reliance on the Edinburgh University manuscript of the *Historia*, then Man was equally wrong in insisting on using the original 1582 edition with its many typographical errors.⁶⁷ On the whole, the *Opera Omnia* is a perfectly serviceable edition, and any errors or impositions are minor and do not significantly alter Buchanan’s meaning. Rather, it was principally the *Praefatio* and *Annotationes* with their royalist and absolutist tone, which were at issue.

Ultimately the controversy over the *Opera Omnia* was a parochial one, which amounted to little more than an outbreak of pedantic Latin translation and personal mud slinging. It did not affect Buchanan’s reputation in the long term, or even penetrate beyond a narrow circle of Scottish, indeed Edinburgh-based, intellectuals. In these long debates over Latin minutiae and the questions of whether Buchanan repented on his deathbed or was guilty of ingratitude to Mary, the issue of resistance

⁶³ T. Ruddiman, *Anticrisis: or, a Discussion of a scurrilous and malicious Libel, published by one Mr. James Man of Aberdeen* (Edinburgh, 1754), 22.

⁶⁴ Ruddiman, *Animadversions*, 36.

⁶⁵ Robertson, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the Militia Issue*, 51.

⁶⁶ G. Logan, *A Treatise on Government; Shewing That the Right of the Kings of Scotland to the Crown was not Strictly and Absolutely Hereditary*, (Edinburgh, 1746), 21.

⁶⁷ Duncan, *Thomas Ruddiman*, 105-6.

was far from prominent, and was only raised in a few instances. In one example, Ruddiman repeated the typical charge that the origins of resistance theory were Catholic rather than Calvinist, and continued the now established tradition of linking the first and second reformations, from Buchanan and Knox to Rutherford, Steuart and Shields, as a period of continuous rebellion.⁶⁸

The appropriation of Buchananite history by both Whigs and Jacobites might have been dealt a serious blow in 1729 by the publication of Father Thomas Innes' (1662-1744) *A Critical Essay on the Ancient Inhabitants of the Northern Parts of Britain, or Scotland*. A Jacobite himself, Innes enclosed a copy of his *Critical Essay* with a letter to the Old Pretender in October 1729, in which he argued that Buchanan's *De Iure Regni* and *Historia* had a lot to answer for. These texts were to blame for "all the rebellions in the last age in that kingdom." Buchanan's principles, "joined to the fanatical spirit of the time" had led the execution of the Pretender's grandfather, Charles I, and the deposition of his father, James VII and II. He complained, "since the *Revolution*, these wretched libels of *Buchanan* are become as classic authors."⁶⁹

The object of the *Critical Essay* was to attack Boece and Buchanan and their versions of the foundation of the Scottish kingdom in 330 BC, with the forty succeeding kings down to the reign of Fergus MacErch. According to Innes, Boece had been taken in by the spurious source of Veremundus, and had been led to fill in the gaps in Fordun's king-lists with these forty mythical kings. Buchanan had further elaborated on this narrative because it furnished him with many examples of kings who were resisted and deposed. While Boece had merely been credulous, Innes charged that Buchanan had deliberately followed him despite knowing that the early part of his history was false, "He made it his business to make it be believed by posterity; and all this with a premeditated design to render our kings accountable, and liable to be punished by their subjects."⁷⁰ He also accused Buchanan of having known that all the charges he made against Mary Queen of Scots were false.⁷¹ Innes argued that it was in Pictish king-lists that the antiquity of Scotland could be found

⁶⁸ Ruddiman, *Answer to the Reverend Mr. George Logan*, 61-2.

⁶⁹ T. Innes, 'Copy of Mr. Thomas Innes' Letter to the King' in *The Miscellany of the Spalding Club* (Aberdeen, 1842), II, 355.

⁷⁰ Innes, *Critical Essay*, I, 366.

⁷¹ Innes, *Critical Essay*, I, 362.

and celebrated, and these kings were absolute monarchs.⁷² In this, Ferguson charges, Innes himself yielded to credulity, as his Pictish lists were “of dubious authenticity and most dreadfully mangled.” In the *Critical Essay*, “Pictomania was called into existence to shore up Mariolatry.”⁷³

Innes’s arguments might have constituted a damning blow to Buchanan’s reputation. Yet to what extent was this the case? Even modern commentators have been unwilling to accept Innes’s critique. Ferguson agrees that Innes was right to debunk the myth of the forty kings, but consistently praises Buchanan’s insights into Scotland’s Celtic origins, and explains away his mistakes. He argues that Buchanan was not entirely cynical in his appropriation of the forty kings. They were, after all, “in the received tradition of Scottish historiography.” If Fordun could be trusted, then there had been a Fergus I, and if this were true, then “a certain number of reigns must have come between Fergus I and Fergus II.”⁷⁴ Rather, Ferguson argues that many of the merits of Buchanan’s historical scholarship have been overlooked.⁷⁵ In the first half of the eighteenth century too, the extent to which Innes’s critique of Buchanan was taken up was limited. Buchanan’s version of Scottish antiquity remained too useful, both to Whigs and Jacobites, to be abandoned. As Kidd argues, “Only with the collapse of dynastic politics would whig literati eventually take on board Innes’s scepticism about the traditional framework of Scottish history.”⁷⁶

⁷² Ferguson, *Identity of the Scottish Nation*, 189.

⁷³ Ferguson, *Identity of the Scottish Nation*, 190-1.

⁷⁴ Ferguson, *Identity of the Scottish Nation*, 86-7.

⁷⁵ Ferguson, *Identity of the Scottish Nation*, 90.

⁷⁶ Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past*, 79.

Contract and Resistance: Buchanan and the Political Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment

While Buchanan appeared to delight in the justification and even encouragement of resistance, gleefully bringing forward proofs of its legitimacy, the literati of the Scottish Enlightenment tended to regard resistance as a philosophical problem to be debated. The question in the eighteenth century was not so much ‘who can resist?’ as ‘under what extreme circumstances might it be permissible to resist?’ Where members of the literati admitted resistance, they generally did so abstractly, calmly, and with little expectation that it might actually take place. To take such a position was one of the luxuries of life in post-Revolution Britain.

Buchanan’s *De Iure Regni* had put forward a solidly contractarian view of political obligation and resistance. In his account of the transition from the state of nature to a state of society, Buchanan suggested that government arose when the people voluntarily appointed a leader and submitted to him, but only insofar as his rule was for their benefit. The people must have some protection from the risk of tyranny, and the perception of government by contract allowed an escape hatch. Buchanan declared, “There is, therefore, a mutual pact between a king and his subjects.” [*Mutua igitur regi cum civibus est pactio.*]⁷⁷ If a king turned tyrant, he forfeited his right to the people’s obedience, and could be resisted. Buchanan’s contractarian view of political obligation, therefore, was broadly in line with the opinions of the English theorists of resistance of the seventeenth century, such as Milton, Sidney, and Locke.

The quantity of political theory written during the Scottish Enlightenment was slight, but political observations often emerged in other genres, particularly moral philosophy.⁷⁸ The intellectual bases of sixteenth and seventeenth-century resistance theory, such as Romans 13 and Roman law maxims such as *salus populi*, continued to be of interest to some members of the literati, although others attacked them. A split can be identified between members of the Scottish Enlightenment who held to the revolutionary Whig tradition, such as Francis Hutcheson, and those who opposed

⁷⁷ Buchanan, *De Iure Regni*, 152-3.

⁷⁸ Oz-Salzberger, ‘The political theory of the Scottish Enlightenment’, 163.

it philosophically, such as David Hume and Adam Smith. Knud Haakonssen has justified setting Hume and Smith apart from the rest of the literati on account of their views on the reality of the 'original contract' in government.⁷⁹

The main problem in assessing the reputation of George Buchanan in the context of the Scottish Enlightenment is the need to separate what is Buchananite from what is Lockean. The propensity of some historians to treat Buchanan and Locke as the same, or to argue that Buchanan's ideas were disseminated 'via' Locke, is flawed. McIlvanney, has a tendency to do this, suggesting, "The contractarian ideas of the Scottish theorists found eloquent expression in Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*," and that Whig tracts in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution contained "A radical Buchananite or Lockean version of 'revolution principles'".⁸⁰

In terms of abstract political theory, Locke and Buchanan were not significantly different. However, in the context of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, debates on allegiance and resistance were not carried out in abstract terms. Reputation was all-important, and while Locke was perceived as a spokesman of the Glorious Revolution, Buchanan was tainted by association with the Covenanters, and stood for vulgar Whiggism and an age of fanaticism. Locke represented an admission of rights of resistance that, although radical in itself, was more qualified and cautious than that put forward by Catholic and Calvinist monarchomachs in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Whatever abstract similarities might have existed between Buchanan and Locke were subsumed beneath this gulf in acceptability.

Philosophers such as Gershom Carmichael, Francis Hutcheson and Thomas Reid accepted a broadly Lockean view of the original contract. Carmichael, (1672-1729) the first Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow University from 1727, was a significant figure in importing the political and philosophical thought of Locke into the Scottish academic context.⁸¹ As early as the session of 1702-03, he used Locke

⁷⁹ K. Haakonssen, *Natural law and moral philosophy: from Grotius to the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1996), 6.

⁸⁰ McIlvanney, *Burns the Radical*, 24-5.

⁸¹ J. W. Cairns, 'Legal Theory' in A. Broadie (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment*, 228.

in his lectures, and aimed to answer critics such as Pierre Bayle who were sceptical that original contracts could have existed in distant history.⁸² Carmichael argued that original contracts had existed, and that governments must have derived their authority from an exchange of promises.

Francis Hutcheson (1694-1746) was a pupil of Carmichael, and succeeded him as Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow in 1729. He was a liberal Calvinist, and was tried and acquitted by the Presbytery of Glasgow for contravening the Westminster Confession of Faith in 1738. However, Hutcheson's political views, expressed in his *Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, (1747) owed more to the traditional spirit of combative Calvinism. He was the most radical of the Scottish contractarians: "We find in Hutcheson's political philosophy a radicalism, uncommon at the time, which often goes far beyond anything that can be found in his more cautious Scottish successors."⁸³ Hamowy has emphasised that Hutcheson shared much with Locke and, in terms of political thought, shared little with later philosophers among the literati.⁸⁴

Like his predecessor Carmichael, Hutcheson believed that the original contract had existed in history.⁸⁵ In a Lockean vein, he argued that no man could be subjected to the will of another without his own consent.⁸⁶ As he insisted that the origins of political power were not in force, in paternalism, or in direct revelation from God, then, "It must therefore remain that some *deed* or *contract* of a people must be the sole natural origin of all just power."⁸⁷ In such a system, any failure of the ruler to uphold his trust must result in the forfeiting of his power, and must allow resistance against him.

As the end of all civil power is acknowledged by all to be the safety and happiness of the whole body; any power not naturally conducive

⁸² J. Moore & M. Silverthorne, 'Gershom Carmichael and the natural jurisprudence tradition in eighteenth-century Scotland', in I. Hont & M. Ignatieff (eds.), *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1983), 74-9.

⁸³ T. D. Campbell, 'Francis Hutcheson: 'Father' of the Scottish Enlightenment', in R. H. Campbell & A. S. Skinner (eds.), *The Origins and Nature of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 1982), 168.

⁸⁴ R. Hamowy, 'Jefferson and the Scottish Enlightenment: A Critique of Garry Wills's *Inventing America: Jefferson's Declaration of Independence*', *William and Mary Quarterly*, xxxvi (1979), 510.

⁸⁵ Moore & Silverthorne, 'Gershom Carmichael', 86.

⁸⁶ F. Hutcheson, *A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, ed. Bernhard Fabian (Hildesheim, 1969), 144.

⁸⁷ Hutcheson, *Short Introduction*, 285.

to this end is unjust; which the people, who rashly granted it under an error, may justly abolish again, when they find it necessary to their safety to do so.⁸⁸

Like Locke, Hutcheson was careful to insist that the right of resistance should only be exercised in cases of extreme necessity, when it would be more dangerous to remain under subjection than to challenge it. Like Locke, he was adamant that the people would only be roused by extreme provocation, and were 'unlikely to resist unless it was for a good reason. He insisted that his doctrine did not tend to "excite seditions and civil wars."⁸⁹ Hutcheson's doctrine of resistance, therefore, was qualified, as Locke's was, but not to the same extent, and this gives him some title to be regarded as both Lockean and Buchananite.

Thomas Reid (1710-96) succeeded Adam Smith as Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow in 1764. Little can be found of Reid's political views in his philosophical works, and evidence must instead be sought in fragments from his papers and lectures, which may never have been intended for publication. Haakonssen has recently organised texts from Reid's manuscripts, and collated his lecture notes from his time at Glasgow, mostly from the late 1760s and early 1770s.⁹⁰ Reid's commitment to contractarianism was partially motivated by a desire to counter Hume's scepticism of the reality of the original contract.⁹¹

Like Carmichael and Hutcheson, Reid contended that a ruler voluntarily "engages or contracts to do the duty of a king." The nature of the contract must necessarily admit the possibility of resistance.⁹² He commented on Hume's essay *Of the Original Contract*, suggesting that Hume's views were unsurprising given "The Sentiments which Mr Hume has on many occasions expressed of the claims of the house of Stuart."⁹³ He implied that disagreement with the principle of the original contract was tantamount to opposition to the Glorious Revolution. Reid's views on resistance

⁸⁸ Hutcheson, *Short Introduction*, 302.

⁸⁹ Hutcheson, *Short Introduction*, 303-5.

⁹⁰ K. Haakonssen, 'Introduction', in K. Haakonssen (ed.), *Practical Ethics: Being Lectures and Papers on Natural Religion, Self-Government, Natural Jurisprudence, and the Law of Nations* (Princeton, 1990), 86.

⁹¹ Haakonssen, 'Commentary', in *Practical Ethics*, 406.

⁹² Reid, *Practical Ethics*, ed. Haakonssen, 239-40.

⁹³ Reid, *Practical Ethics*, 242.

were generally cautious, despite his admission, “Where Resistance is necessary to save a Nation from tyranny it is not onely Lawfull but laudable & glorious.” He admitted that passive obedience was still “due wherever the publick good requires it,” and that “The Evils arising from Resistance” might be “greater than those that arise from Suffering.”⁹⁴

As McIlvanney has overlooked the differences between the associations of Buchanan and Locke, he may have exaggerated the radicalism of members of the literati. He confidently ascribes Hutcheson’s views to Buchanan, which is certainly accurate to some extent – Hutcheson was the most ‘Buchananite’ of the literati, although his political views should also be seen as Lockean. However, his suggestion that Thomas Reid, “gave an annual sanction to Buchananite resistance theory in his Glasgow lectures,” is arguably an overstatement, as Reid’s admission of resistance was qualified, and in this sense was more Lockean than Buchananite.⁹⁵

David Hume (1711-76) and Adam Smith (1723-90) differed substantially from the contractarian views of Hutcheson and Reid, and from the antiquated arguments against indefeasible hereditary right that Lord Kames had rehearsed in *Essays Upon Several Subjects Concerning British Antiquities*.⁹⁶ Hume’s political ideas can be extracted from the *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40) and the *Essays, Moral and Political*, and Smith’s political principles, insofar as he articulated them, can be found in reports of his *Lectures on Jurisprudence* from Glasgow in the sessions of 1762-3 and 1766.⁹⁷

Hume and Smith admitted rights of resistance but believed that most past reasoning on the subject was mistaken. They were concerned with demolishing the idea that allegiance to government was a product of a contract between the ruler and the ruled.

⁹⁴ Reid, *Practical Ethics*, 252-3.

⁹⁵ McIlvanney, *Burns the Radical*, 30.

⁹⁶ As Kames was one of the most forward-thinking members of the literati, it is somewhat surprising to find him rehearsing the debate between obedience and resistance in terms very like those of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, producing a statement of what looks like vulgar Whiggism. H. Homes, Lord Kames, ‘Appendix Touching the Hereditary and Indefeasible Right of Kings’ in *Essays upon Several Subjects Concerning British Antiquities* (London, 1993).

⁹⁷ It must be noted that these were based on students’ notes and were not published, nor intended for publication, during Smith’s lifetime. The two reports have been published as, and are commonly cited as, LJ(A) and LJ(B) respectively. A. Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, ed. R. L. Meek, D. D. Raphael, & P. G. Stein (Indianapolis, 1982).

Hume asserted that allegiance was a product of self-interest, not an obligation based on consent.⁹⁸ Smith argued that allegiance was based on natural human respect for authority combined with general interest.⁹⁹ Both admitted that resistance must be legitimate simply because it was rational, a given under natural law: “There are some things which it is unlawfull for the sovereign to attempt and entitle the subjects to make resistance.”¹⁰⁰ Hume conceded that theorists of the original contract had been almost right, having, “Intended to establish a principle, which is perfectly just and reasonable; tho’ the reasoning upon which they endeavour’d to establish it, was fallacious and sophistical.”¹⁰¹ The treatment of resistance in Hume and Smith suggests that in their opinion, the question did not require a great deal of energy and ink spilled in its defence, because it was not expected that it would be needed very often.

With which authorities were Hume and Smith engaging when they wrestled with the topics of contract and resistance? Smith cited Locke and Sidney as the main proponents of contract theory, and cited Locke several times while disproving it.¹⁰² In his discussion of tyrannicide Smith treated the issue as a straightforward distinction between the ancients and the moderns, between a time when republican manners dominated and tyrannicide was celebrated; and a time when monarchical manners ruled and tyrannicide was decried. There is no sign of engagement with Buchanan, and Smith did not, in this discussion, regard tyrannicide either positively or negatively: it was merely a contingent product of manners.¹⁰³

Hume was notoriously reticent in naming his authorities, as he admitted in the *Treatise of Human Nature*.¹⁰⁴ In his *Essay Of the Original Contract*, (1748) he gave his only direct citation of Locke.¹⁰⁵ Arguably Hume was engaging primarily with Locke, not with his fellow countryman Buchanan. Locke was a significant target,

⁹⁸ D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford, 1978), 542-51.

⁹⁹ Smith, [LJ(A)], 318.

¹⁰⁰ Smith, [LJ(A)], 320.

¹⁰¹ Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, 549.

¹⁰² Smith, [LJ(A)], 316, 323.

¹⁰³ Smith, [LJ(A)] 292.

¹⁰⁴ Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, 546.

¹⁰⁵ Hume, ‘Of the Original Contract’, in Miller (ed.), *Essays*, 487; Goldie, *The Reception of Locke’s Politics*, II, 338. Locke was also briefly mentioned in the essay ‘Of Civil Liberty’, in which Hume complained of his inelegant writing style. Hume, ‘Of Civil Liberty’, in Miller (ed.) *Essays*, 91.

well known in eighteenth-century Britain and therefore worthy of attack.

Haakonssen suggests that although Locke had a limited role in the justification of the Glorious Revolution in England, interest in his ideas was greater in Scotland for a number of reasons. Broadly, there was a keen interest in natural law, and, more narrowly, there was more interest in theorising over an abstract contract than in England, where ideas of the historical ancient constitution prevailed.¹⁰⁶ It is safe to assume that Locke was the main target of both Hume and Smith.¹⁰⁷ An attack on Locke was also, indirectly, an attack on Scottish contractarians such as Hutcheson and Buchanan, however neither Hume nor Smith particularly engaged with or sought to disprove Buchanan.

Hume was certainly familiar with Buchanan's ideas.¹⁰⁸ His opinion of Buchanan is elusive, but might be hinted at through the impatience he displayed towards civic humanism. In Hume's forays into literary criticism, such as *Of Civil Liberty*, Buchanan is never discussed, nor is any Scottish author. Unlike a number of other members of the literati, Hume had no interest even in the literary merits of his fellow Scotsman. While Hume would have seen Buchanan as an unsophisticated humanist and a vulgar Whig, the very fact of Buchanan's Scottishness may have been a further factor in Hume's lack of interest in him. It can be surmised that Hume would not have taken too kindly to being named as "Buchanan's disciple."¹⁰⁹

It is in *Of Passive Obedience*, written at the time of the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745-6, that some engagement with Buchanan can be conjectured. Hume was careful at this time to put forward unimpeachable post-Revolution orthodoxy, and again gave a cautious admission of resistance, confessing,

¹⁰⁶ Haakonssen, 'Commentary', *Practical Ethics*, 410.

¹⁰⁷ Dunn has noted, interestingly, that the critiques Hume and Smith made of the theory of the original contract were based on misunderstandings of Locke's text, although "each certainly mounts an intellectually and polemically effective enough critique of vulgar Whig shibboleths." J. Dunn, 'From applied theology to social analysis: the break between John Locke and the Scottish Enlightenment', in Hont & Ignatieff (eds.) *Wealth and Virtue*, 129.

¹⁰⁸ Hume's involvement in the Marian controversy would have made some acquaintance with Buchanan unavoidable, particularly as he inclined to the anti-Marian side and enjoyed tormenting his colleague at the Advocates' Library, the devoted Jacobite and Marian antiquarian Walter Goodall. In a letter to William Robertson of January 1759 on this subject, when Robertson's *History of Scotland* was at the press, Hume cited Buchanan alongside Calderwood and Spotiswoode. D. Hume, 'Letter to William Robertson', in J. Y. T. Greig (ed.), *The Letters of David Hume* (Oxford, 1932), I, 293; L. L. Bongie, 'The Eighteenth Century Marian Controversy and an Unpublished Letter by David Hume', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, i (1963-4).

¹⁰⁹ Norbrook, 'Macbeth and the Politics of Historiography', 114.

I shall always incline to their side, who draw the bond of allegiance very close, and consider an infringement of it, as the last refuge in desperate cases, when the public is in the highest danger, from violence and tyranny.¹¹⁰

It is tempting to speculate that Hume was directing his attention towards Buchanan and the monarchomachs of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, not Locke. He attacked “the *tyrannicide*, or assassination, approved of by ancient maxims,” which “is now justly... abolished by the laws of nations, and universally condemned as a base and treacherous method of bringing to justice these disturbers of society.”¹¹¹ Hume was emphasising, as he also did in *That Politics may be reduced to a Science*, that he and his time did not approve of the heroes of resistance that Buchanan and Buchanan’s time had venerated. Buchanan had famously asserted that those who committed tyrannicide should be rewarded, but Hume was sceptical that such actions were for the public good. The virtue of such Roman heroes as Cato and Brutus was unquestionable, but their actions served, “only to hasten the fatal period of the Roman government, and render its convulsions and dying agonies more violent and painful.”¹¹²

To return to *Of Passive Obedience*, Hume differentiated, in what is clearly a reference to the resistance theory of the Calvinist and Jesuit monarchomachs, between the type of resistance that, “a philosopher reasonably acknowledges, in the course of an argument,” and that endorsed by “a preacher or casuist, who should make it his chief study to find out such cases, and enforce them with all the vehemence of argument and eloquence.”¹¹³ It should be clear then, that Hume was not here engaging with Locke. Locke, at this time, was still believed to have written the *Two Treatises* after the great watershed of 1688-9, and this, however distastefully his resistance theory may have been regarded, gave him a veneer of respectability.

Locke’s ‘Appeal to Heaven’ had always sounded considerably more positive and glorious than any sordid “tyrannicide or assassination, approved of by ancient maxims.” This was the sort of action that Calvinist preachers and Jesuit casuists

¹¹⁰ Hume, ‘Of Passive Obedience’, in Miller (ed.), *Essays*, 490.

¹¹¹ Hume, ‘Of Passive Obedience’, 490.

¹¹² Hume, ‘That Politics may be reduced to a Science’, 30.

¹¹³ Hume, ‘Of Passive Obedience’, 490-1.

were guilty of, and although Buchanan was neither, his reputation did situate him with this company. He was one of those resistance theorists who pressed the issue “with all the vehemence of argument and eloquence.” In this essay, then, Hume was engaging with the different levels of resistance theory, contrasting his own eminently sensible concession of resistance with the anarchic enthusiasm of earlier theorists. Locke, implicitly, was hanging somewhere in between, both as revolutionary and philosopher, advocate of far-reaching popular resistance, and spokesman of a fundamentally decent and moderate Revolution. In this instance, Hume saved his ire for the older theorists of resistance.

Although it might appear that there was a simple distinction between ‘radical’ contractarians such as Hutcheson and Reid, and ‘conservative’ sceptics of the original contract such as Hume and Smith, such a polarisation cannot hold. Contractarianism was not necessarily an article of faith for Whig thinkers in the context of the Scottish Enlightenment, and this disjunction has problematised the categorisation of members of the literati. This is apparent in the example of John Millar, (1735-1801) who held the chair of Civil Law at Glasgow between 1761 and 1801, and, as a member of the London and Glasgow Societies of the Friends of the People, supported the early stages of the French Revolution in the belief that it was a constitutional revolution comparable to the Glorious Revolution in Britain.¹¹⁴

Although Millar admitted rights of resistance in *An Historical View of the English Government*, (1787) he denied the existence of the original contract.¹¹⁵ He argued that the creation of a new educated middle class was one of the benefits of commercial society, and that men of this class should be enfranchised as a vital way of resisting the rise of sinister political influence, patronage, and corruption.¹¹⁶ While Robbins and Pocock have seen Millar as a Real Whig or Commonwealthman who continued to use virtue and corruption as his principal organising categories, he has also been seen as a scientific Whig who challenged the shibboleths of vulgar

¹¹⁴ J. D. Brims, *The Scottish Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution* (University of Edinburgh Ph.D., 1983), I, 88.

¹¹⁵ McIlvanney, *Burns the Radical*, 35; Haakonssen, *Natural law and moral philosophy*, 164.

¹¹⁶ Brims, *The Scottish Democratic Movement*, I, 93.

Whiggism and was attuned to the challenges and opportunities of liberty and economics in a commercial society.¹¹⁷

The civic humanism of the eighteenth century was considerably more sophisticated than that of the age of Machiavelli and Buchanan, as Andrew Fletcher had demonstrated before the blossoming of the Enlightenment. Civic humanism remained a strong discourse in the Scottish Enlightenment, but it was by no means hegemonic. Adam Ferguson (1723-1816) has been seen as “arguably the most committed civic thinker of the Scottish Enlightenment.”¹¹⁸ A number of the ideas he expressed in the *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, published in 1767, reaffirmed the austere message of Buchanan’s *Historia*, in which the nobility sought to protect Scotland’s martial values from the lethargy or excessive ambition of its monarchs. Ferguson’s reservations about the rise of commerce echoed those of Buchanan, writing two hundred years earlier. His aim was to warn of the potential for wealth and passivity to corrupt a commercial society and reverse its progress, noting, “The boasted refinements, then, of the polished age, are not divested of danger.”¹¹⁹

However, it can be questioned whether Ferguson’s civic humanism owed much to Buchanan. These Buchananite opinions, or “Scottish Machiavellism,” were somewhat outdated in the mid-eighteenth century.¹²⁰ Like Hume and Smith, moreover, Ferguson rejected the contractual account of political obligation, and the idea that the legitimacy of government rested on popular consent. As Hamowy notes, “Despite long sections of the *Essay* dealing with despotism, Ferguson did not even raise the idea of revolution as a possible solution to even the most entrenched tyrannies.”¹²¹ In general, Ferguson believed that obedience should be the rule, and

¹¹⁷ Robbins, *Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman*, 215; J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, 1975), 502-3; P. Stein, ‘Law and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Thought’, in N. T. Phillipson & R. Mitchison (eds.), *Scotland in the Age of Improvement* (Edinburgh, 1970), 162; Haakonssen, ‘Natural law and moral philosophy’, 157.

¹¹⁸ F. Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Enlightenment*, 4.

¹¹⁹ A. Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, ed. F. Oz-Salzberger (Cambridge, 1995), 219.

¹²⁰ Oz-Salzberger, ‘The political theory of the Scottish Enlightenment’, 168.

¹²¹ Hamowy, ‘Jefferson and the Scottish Enlightenment’, 509.

should be maintained in cases where rights were violated, unless the depredations became so great that resistance became absolutely necessary.¹²²

McIlvanney has challenged the view that eighteenth century Presbyterians were afraid of or embarrassed by their radical heritage, and has argued that many embraced the Buchananite tradition, with its admission of popular rights of resistance. He points to a continuing radical thread in the Scottish Enlightenment in which 'polite' Presbyterians such as Hutcheson, Smith, Reid and Witherspoon, "did not hesitate to affirm the traditional Presbyterian right of resistance." He suggests, "it would be a mistake to conclude that Buchananite civic humanism as a political discourse had become defunct or outmoded in Enlightenment Scotland."¹²³

McIlvanney's view can be disputed, however, as we have seen that the admissions of the right of resistance made by Hutcheson, Smith and Reid contained significant qualifications, suitable for a 'polite' age. As we will see, the argument for resistance put forward by the Scot John Witherspoon, in the context of the American Revolution, was also couched in moderate terms.¹²⁴ Evidence suggests that eighteenth-century Presbyterians in Scotland, Ulster and America were sensitive about their radical past. Civic humanism as a whole was not defunct in the context of the Scottish Enlightenment, but it had undergone significant change since the time of Buchanan, and even since the time of Fletcher. Buchananite civic humanism was outdated in Enlightenment Scotland because its knee-jerk reaction to the prospect of commercial society was a negative one, whereas members of the literati could regard this development as an opportunity, not solely as a threat.

Even as one of the most steadfast civic humanists of the literati, Ferguson expressed a less than positive attitude towards Buchanan. In a letter to the Scottish Member of Parliament Andrew Stuart, (1724?-1801) he wrote:

I have many times attended Buchanan: but notwithstanding his Latin never could get through. I am well pleased with the knock you have given him. His fine genius and wonderful possession of a dead Language never can atone for malice or indifference to truth.¹²⁵

¹²² Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Enlightenment*, 104.

¹²³ McIlvanney, *Burns the Radical*, 30-1.

¹²⁴ See below, pp. 208-9.

¹²⁵ Ferguson, *Correspondence*, II, 437.

Ferguson referred to a recent controversy over the genealogy of the House of Stuart to which Andrew Stuart had contributed. In 1797, Andrew Stuart had succeeded to the property of Sir John Stuart of Castlemilk, and was keen to assert that his was the head branch of the Stuart family.¹²⁶ His genealogical researches had also shed light on the origins of the House of Stuart, and he rejected the myth that the Stuarts were descendants of Bancho, the Thane of Lochaber murdered by Macbeth in the eleventh century. To discard the ancient origins of the Stuarts was to cast aside the Boethian and Buchananite version of the Scottish royal line with its hundred-plus incumbents of the throne. By Buchanan's reckoning, James VI had been the 108th of a long line of related monarchs. By Andrew Stuart's reckoning, James VI was only the 16th generation of the Stuarts.

Andrew Stuart rejected the "fabulous stories" of Boece and Buchanan, and set about correcting them on a number of points.¹²⁷ In 1799, Sir Henry Steuart (1759-1836) responded to these claims to assert that Andrew Stuart was falsely trying to raise his own position in the Stuart lineage.¹²⁸ A debate about precedence in the Stuart line was of immediate contemporary relevance, and could bestow noble titles and even property. It was over this that Andrew Stuart and Henry Steuart were squabbling. While Andrew Stuart discredited Buchanan's version of the Scottish royal line, this had not been his principal aim. Stuart's aims were pragmatic rather than ideological, unlike those of the Jacobites earlier in the eighteenth century. However, it was this side-effect of giving a 'knock' to Buchanan that Adam Ferguson pronounced himself pleased with.

¹²⁶ The death of the Young Pretender in 1788 left his brother, Cardinal Henry, as the last of his line, ensuring the extinction of the Royal Stuarts.

¹²⁷ A. Stuart, *Genealogical History of the Stewarts, from the Earliest Period of their Authentic History to the Present Times* (London, 1798), 2, 63-4.

¹²⁸ [H. Steuart], *The genealogy of the Stewarts refuted, in a letter to Andrew Stuart* (Edinburgh, 1799), 4.

Civil and Religious Liberty

In a speech to the General Assembly in May 1779, William Robertson, (1721-93) leader of the Moderate party of the established Church of Scotland, protested that for his pains in advocating Catholic relief, “I have been represented as an enemy to the religion and liberties of my country.” He complained that his family had been upset, his home attacked, and threats had been made against his life in the “general alarm” that had spread in Scotland at the prospect of Catholic relief. What a narrow-minded nation Scotland must be, he mused, if the prospect of a small measure of toleration for Catholics could arouse such feeling against a loyal Protestant and Whig such as himself.¹²⁹

At the same time, the Reformed Presbytery, the separatist sect whose members professed themselves to be the heirs of the Covenanters of the 1680s, protested against the prospect of Catholic relief in Scotland. In Canada, the Quebec Act of 1774 had provided for a Catholic establishment within British dominions, and now Britain was at war with her Protestant American brethren, while penal laws were being relaxed in England and Ireland. The Reformed Presbyterians insisted that Catholic Relief went against the principles “both of our first, and advanced Reformation,” and any loyal Protestants “who are acquainted with the sentiments of the deservedly famous *John Knox* and *S. Rutherford*,” would know this. They testified against “the malignant infection of the doctrine of an almost infinite toleration, which seems to be a leading doctrine in this licentious age.” And in an indirect attack on Robertson, they lamented,

Some of the most respectable doctors of this time, and ministers of the church of Scotland, seem to be so far sunk in these evil principles, and lost to the true principles of the Reformation.¹³⁰

The English origins of the progressive view of civil and religious liberty can be found among rational dissenters such as Joseph Priestley (1733-1804). In 1771 his *An Essay on the First Principles of Government, and on the Nature of Political, Civil, and Religious Liberty* was dedicated to the Earl of Buchan, the eccentric and

¹²⁹ W. Robertson, ‘Speech on Roman Catholic Relief’, in J. Smitten (ed.), *Miscellaneous works and commentaries* (London, 1996), 144, 152, 157.

¹³⁰ Reformed Presbytery, *Testimony and Warning against the blasphemies and idolatry of Popery* (Edinburgh, 1779), 67-8.

liberal Scottish peer. Priestley argued that the purpose of government was to encourage progress, and that this would best be brought about in a situation where people had the maximum amount of political, civil, and religious liberty. Government, therefore, should be minimal, and in particular, there was no longer any need for civil regulation of religious matters. He discussed the question of Catholic relief, admitting that he understood how the experience of history had led many Protestants to regard the repression of Catholics as “a dictate of self preservation.” However he argued that toleration should be extended to the small Catholic population in Britain.¹³¹ As was to become typical of this new strain of civil and religious liberty, Priestley praised the British constitution as one of the best in the world, but suggested that it may have a small number of defects which ought to be repaired.¹³²

However, there continued to be many, particularly in Scotland, who regarded civil and religious liberty and the celebration of 1688 merely as a new expression of the old loathing of popery and arbitrary government. An anonymous tract of 1768 represented the era of the Covenanters as the most “noble stand made for civil and religious liberty.”¹³³ Its author did not heap generous praise upon the British constitution, instead complaining that a “Jacobite and Popish faction” prevailed during the reign of Queen Anne and imposed on Scottish Presbyterians the “accursed yoke of patronage.”¹³⁴ This had led to many evils, particularly the ascendancy of the Moderate party under William Robertson, who had reconciled themselves to patronage and approved of the type of ‘enlightened’ minister often chosen by patrons. These ministers, the author complained, “Endeavour to make the doctrines of Christianity, agreeable unto, and founded upon principles of common sense; that is, in other words, a system of morality.”¹³⁵ He lamented that the type of ministers beloved by the Moderates “have not the deepest regard for that old musty book, the Confession of Faith, compiled, as they say, by a set of men whose heads were filled with enthusiasm and fanaticism.”¹³⁶

¹³¹ J. Priestley, *An Essay on the First Principles of Government, and on the Nature of Political, Civil, and Religious Liberty* (London, 1771), 130-3.

¹³² Priestley, *Essay on the First Principles of Government*, 250-1.

¹³³ *An Essay on Civil and Religious Liberty* (Glasgow, 1768), 19.

¹³⁴ *Essay on Civil and Religious Liberty*, 21.

¹³⁵ *Essay on Civil and Religious Liberty*, 30-1.

¹³⁶ *Essay on Civil and Religious Liberty*, 25.

It can thus be seen that under the name of ‘civil and religious liberty’ there were two streams of thought. One, represented by Priestley and Robertson, was enlightened, tolerant, and full of praise for the British constitution. The other, however, regarded civil and religious liberty simply as a synonym for the old fears of popery and arbitrary government. This more backward-looking strain of thought is particularly to be seen among the successors of the Covenanters in eighteenth-century Scotland, many of whom found it difficult to reconcile themselves to a British constitution which they regarded as uncovenanted, erastian, and prelatical. The author of *An Essay on Civil and Religious Liberty*, it can be conjectured, falls under this grouping.

As the leader of the Moderate party within the established Church of Scotland, and as principal of Edinburgh University, William Robertson was one of the most influential figures in the Scottish Enlightenment. The Moderates stood for a polite and enlightened brand of Presbyterianism, reconciled to patronage on pragmatic grounds, in the interests of stability in church and state. Robertson, as Brown argues, directed the Church courts “to take a more tolerant and open-minded view of cultural developments,” and encouraged clergymen who engaged in literary pursuits.¹³⁷ This position made Robertson and the Moderates unpopular with their more evangelical brethren within the established church, as well as with the Covenanting sects.

Robertson’s progressive view of civil and religious liberty is evident in *The History of Scotland during the Reigns of Queen Mary and of King James VI*, published in 1759; in his agitation for Catholic Relief in 1779; and in his sermon on the centenary of the Glorious Revolution of November 1788. In his *History of Scotland*, Robertson sought to set the upheavals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in context in order to counter the charge that the Scottish Presbyterian Church was, and always had been, inherently rebellious. As Kidd argues, Robertson’s defence of the established church “cleverly combined an apology for the past, a distancing of the

¹³⁷ S. J. Brown, ‘William Robertson (1721-93) and the Scottish Enlightenment’, in S. J. Brown (ed.), *William Robertson and the Expansion of Empire* (Cambridge, 1997), 7.

Church from its embarrassing heritage, and a defence of the core values of the Scottish Reformation.”¹³⁸

The first reformation, according to Robertson, was moderate and reasonable. He reserved his antipathy for the Covenanting era, which he regarded as having its origins in banditry.¹³⁹ Robertson’s intent was, “to account for the eagerness and zeal with which our ancestors embraced and propagated the protestant doctrines.”¹⁴⁰ He wished outbreaks of excessive religious ardour to be set in their proper context, and to demonstrate that, on the whole, the reformation had been restrained and rational. From the martyrdom of Patrick Hamilton until the late 1550s, he argued, Scottish Protestants endured great persecution without resisting. The murder of Cardinal Beaton was, he said, an act of private revenge, not the work of the Protestant party as a whole.¹⁴¹ The iconoclasm riot in Perth, supposedly incited by John Knox, was not proof of a Protestant tendency to enthusiasm and rebellion. The riot “must be regarded merely as an accidental eruption of popular rage,” and it had rightly been “censured by the reformed preachers.”¹⁴² In Robertson’s account, the reformation was an important step forward in the progress of civil and religious liberty: “Together with more enlarged notions in religion, the reformation filled the human mind with more liberal and generous sentiments concerning civil government.”¹⁴³

Like Buchanan, then, Robertson saw the first Scottish Reformation in civic terms. In a number of places, furthermore, he silently appropriated Buchanan’s accounts of the main protagonists of the Scottish Reformation, with enlightened asides that expressed the judgement of his age on the sixteenth century. Robertson praised Moray in similar terms to which Buchanan had praised him in the *Historia*, and scoffed at the idea that Moray could have had ambitions to the throne.¹⁴⁴ His account of Mary of Guise was also similar to Buchanan’s: she was judged as a woman who had great qualities that were unfortunately misused because of her

¹³⁸ C. Kidd, ‘The ideological significance of Robertson’s *History of Scotland*’, in Brown (ed.), *William Robertson and the Expansion of Empire*, 136.

¹³⁹ R. J. Finlay, ‘Keeping the Covenant: Scottish National Identity’, in T. M. Devine & J. R. Young (eds.), *Eighteenth Century Scotland: New Perspectives* (East Linton, 1999), 125.

¹⁴⁰ Robertson, *History of Scotland*, I, 126.

¹⁴¹ Robertson, *History of Scotland*, I, 138.

¹⁴² Robertson, *History of Scotland*, I, 148.

¹⁴³ Robertson, *History of Scotland*, I, 152.

¹⁴⁴ Robertson, *History of Scotland*, I, 164-5; Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 449, 572-3.

attachment to the interests of her family in France.¹⁴⁵ He broadly agreed with Buchanan's account of Darnley's unfortunate combination of haughtiness and weakness, of Bothwell's boldness and ambition. He cleared Moray of any of guilt in the murder of Darnley, judging instead that Bothwell was the guilty man, and he pronounced the Casket Letters to be genuine.¹⁴⁶

Despite some agreement with Buchanan's account of the Scottish Reformation, however, Robertson's engagement with Buchanan was ambiguous. He not only attacked Buchanan along with Boece and Mair for their credulity in their accounts of the early Scottish kingdom, but also criticised Buchanan for faults common to most historians of the reign of Mary Queen of Scots:

Truth was not the sole object of these authors. Blinded by prejudices, and heated by the part which they themselves had acted in the scenes they describe, they wrote an apology for a faction, rather than the history of their country.¹⁴⁷

One sense in which Robertson's scholarly outlook was emphatically not Buchananite was his antipathy towards the nobility in Scottish history. As John Robertson suggests, "his tone was judiciously hostile to the anarchic behaviour of the great nobility."¹⁴⁸ Again, to regard the feudal nobility of Scotland as an obstacle to liberty was to definitively reject the Buchananite view that the nobility were the guardians of Scottish liberty. The nobility were not the great patriots that the Buchananite tradition proclaimed them to be, they were greedy and self-interested, and in many cases their support for the first Reformation and for the early stages of the Covenanting movement was motivated by their desire to preserve and extend their independence from the monarchy. It was only through the progress that came with the Glorious Revolution and the Union of 1707 that the power of the nobility was curbed, and the liberties of the Scottish people extended.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Robertson, *History of Scotland*, I, 190-1; Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, II, 430.

¹⁴⁶ Robertson, 'A Critical Dissertation concerning the murder of King Henry, and the Genuineness of the Queen's Letters to Bothwell' in *History of Scotland*, II, 255-311. However, in opposition to Buchanan's account, Robertson did undertake to rehabilitate the reputation of Archbishop Hamilton, whom he believed had been unjustly treated by contemporary historians. Robertson, *History of Scotland*, I, 139.

¹⁴⁷ Robertson, *History of Scotland*, I, p. cxxvii. Robertson regarded early Scottish history as, "a region of pure fable and conjecture," which "ought to be totally neglected, or abandoned to the industry and credulity of antiquaries." Robertson, *History of Scotland*, I, 4-5

¹⁴⁸ Robertson, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the Militia Issue*, 79-80.

¹⁴⁹ R. Sher, '1688 and 1788: William Robertson on revolution in Britain and France', in P. Dukes & J. Dunkley (eds.), *Culture and Revolution* (London, 1999), 98-9.

The enlightenment historians of the age of the Stuarts in Scotland such as Robertson and Hume saw themselves as superior to past historians. They wrote with an air of self-congratulation and looked back on earlier Scottish historians “with a mixture of despair and pride.”¹⁵⁰ William Robertson questioned the reliability of Buchanan and Knox’s accounts of the Scottish Reformation: “The ardour of their zeal as well as the violence of their prejudices, rendered their opinions rash, precipitate and inaccurate.”¹⁵¹ Knox was also treated in ambiguous terms: an enlightened age might criticise his excessive zeal, but Robertson admitted that his zeal was necessary for advancing the work of Reformation.¹⁵²

By producing insights into the contingent historical conditions of the first Scottish Reformation, the politics, personalities and society of the time, Robertson went some way towards dislodging it from its close association with the second reformation, and to breaking a link that had been significant in the making of Buchanan’s reputation. His empirical investigation demonstrated that there were disjunctions between the eras of Knox and Buchanan; the era of Melville; and the time of the earlier and later Covenanters. Robertson understood that the conditions of churches and states alike were products of variable historical factors, not only of God’s plan, and put forward a view of historical causation that accommodated providence and free will.¹⁵³ As Westerkamp argues, “The moderates needed to believe that human beings were active participants in the world, not the passive recipients of grace.”¹⁵⁴ The enquiring character of the Moderate mind went some way towards breaking the myth of a continuous Presbyterian tradition in Scotland.

The ministers of the Enlightenment felt free to pursue truth and salvation through their reason; they used their intellects, and they knew that the legend of a single reformed tradition from John Knox to *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* had few bases in fact.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ Allan, *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment*, 149, 176.

¹⁵¹ Robertson, *History of Scotland*, I, 310.

¹⁵² J. H. S. Burleigh, ‘The Scottish Reformation as seen in 1660 and 1760’, *Records of the Scottish Church History Society*, xiii (1957-59), 254.

¹⁵³ Kidd, ‘The ideological significance of Robertson’s *History of Scotland*’, 139-141.

¹⁵⁴ M. J. Westerkamp, *Triumph of the Laity: Scots-Irish Piety and the Great Awakening, 1625-1760* (Oxford, 1988), 84

¹⁵⁵ Westerkamp, *Triumph of the Laity*, 107

According to Robertson, civil and religious liberty had begun to blossom in the era of the Scottish Reformation, albeit only tentatively, but its progress was subject to retardation in the seventeenth century, “a situation no less fatal to the liberty than to the taste and genius of the nation.”¹⁵⁶ However, the progress of liberty accelerated in 1688 and again in 1707, so that Robertson could celebrate the centenary of the Glorious Revolution with hyperbolic rhetoric. In 1689, said Robertson, “The Sceptre was placed in the hands of Sovereigns who had no title to sway it, but what they derived from the people.” Anyone who studied the British constitution might admire it as “the most perfect production of political wisdom” and recommend it “as a model for the imitation of mankind.”¹⁵⁷

Robertson’s interpretation of Scottish history, then, criticised Buchanan as a historian and sought to excise his radical resistance theory from the Presbyterian tradition. In doing so, however, he also “undermined Scotland’s status as a specially Covenanted nation, a vital base of national whig-presbyterian identity.”¹⁵⁸

Robertson’s work actually had positive consequences for Buchanan’s reputation, as his emphasis on the differences between the first and second Reformations went some way towards breaking the link between Buchanan and the Covenanters, a connection that had dominated Buchanan’s reputation since the time of Rutherford.

There were Presbyterian groups within eighteenth-century Scotland who could not endorse the uncovenanted constitutional changes of 1689 and 1707, and instead regarded any ‘progress’ brought about since then as ‘deformation’ from the golden age of the Covenants. The Covenanters of the eighteenth century fit broadly into two groups, the Cameronians or Reformed Presbyterians, and the Seceders, although these organisations also generated numerous splinter groups. The Seceders of 1733 had split into two groups, Burghers and Antiburghers, in 1747, and, by 1806, into four groups. The Cameronians, who split from the established church before the Glorious Revolution, had constituted themselves into the Reformed Presbytery in 1743, but also spawned numerous other, even more radical groups, including the

¹⁵⁶ Robertson, *History of Scotland*, II, 254.

¹⁵⁷ Robertson, ‘Sermon on the Centenary of the Glorious Revolution’, in Smitten (ed.) *Miscellaneous works and commentaries*, 178, 183.

¹⁵⁸ Kidd, *Subverting Scotland’s Past*, 194.

Russelites, the Harlites, the Howdenites and the Wilsonites.¹⁵⁹ However, the bitter differences within the ranks of the Seceders and Reformed Presbyterians paled in comparison to their opposition to one another. In the second half of the eighteenth century, debate raged over which of these two groups had a better claim to be the heirs of the Covenanters, most particularly the Covenanting martyrs of the 1680s. In this dispute, ‘Seceders’ would refer to themselves as such, as if they were a cohesive group, and this perceived cohesion stemmed from the gulf they felt between themselves and the Reformed Presbyterians.¹⁶⁰

The Reformed Presbyterians, as the more uncompromising of the two sides, remained aloof from the Hanoverian church and state that they condemned as prelatical and erastian. John Fairly (1729-1806) insisted that their principles were “agreeable to the word of God, right reason... and to the principles and practice of our reformers, and martyrs for the covenanted cause and work of reformation.”¹⁶¹ The Seceders, in contrast, as they were more reconciled to the Hanoverian order, “tried valiantly to square the circle of Covenanting Whiggism.”¹⁶² As it was not a tyrannical regime, they were content to live under it while testifying against its defects – principally that it was an uncovenanted government. Their claim to the memory of the Covenanters was based on an insistence that the martyrs were moderate and reasonable men, who had endured persecution for many years before they finally resisted. The Burgher minister William Fletcher (d. 1815) insisted that although the Covenanters had been entitled to resist, modern Britons must know that they had no grounds to oppose their just government. “Whoever, therefore are the

¹⁵⁹ W. McMillan, ‘The Covenanters after 1688’, *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* x (1948-50), 141-153; C. Kidd ‘Conditional Britons: The Scots Covenanting Tradition and the Eighteenth-century British State’, *English Historical Review* cxvii (2002), 1162. William Wilson (d. 1757), a schoolmaster in Douglas, led a splinter group from the Cameronians that was even more extreme. In 1751 Wilson published a remarkable account of the battle of Bothwell Bridge, in which he concluded that the reason for the defeat of the Covenanting party was that they had not sufficiently purged themselves of malignants, as the Solemn League and Covenant bound them to do. W. Wilson, *The True and Impartial Relation of the Persecuted Presbyterians in Scotland; Their rising in Arms, and defeat at Bothwell-Bridge, in the Year 1679* (Glasgow, 1751).

¹⁶⁰ J. Thomson, *The Presbyterian Covenanter Displayed, In His Political Principles; and the Impostor Detected* (Dublin, 1765), 4-5, 26, 40-1.

¹⁶¹ J. Fairly, *An Humble Attempt in Defence of Reformation Principles; Particularly on the Head of the Civil Magistrate* (Edinburgh, 1770), 282.

¹⁶² Kidd, ‘Conditional Britons’, 1163.

successors of the late noble army of martyrs in Scotland, it is certain, that they who disown the present civil government cannot be such.”¹⁶³

The appeal of such debates might appear narrow and marginal, however Kidd has argued that the importance of the Covenanting sects in eighteenth-century Scotland has been underestimated. Alongside conventional Whig Presbyterians and Jacobites and Episcopalians, the Cameronians should be seen as “a genuine third force” in political and religious discourse.¹⁶⁴ Historians have commented on the extent to which the Covenanting heritage permeated Scottish popular culture in the eighteenth century, despite the best efforts of the Moderates to distance the established church from it.¹⁶⁵ Finlay suggests, “Whatever the claims of the Moderates, the Scottish religious success story of the eighteenth century were the seceders.” He argues that it was the rise of a middle class, a group for whom the seceding churches held considerable appeal, that did most to promote the image of the Covenanting tradition, particularly because the “radical and anti-aristocratic strain” in Covenanting thought was effective in the ideological battle against patronage.¹⁶⁶ Covenanting texts by authors such as Rutherford and Shields continued to be popular, and were supplemented by other texts which celebrated the Covenanters’ cult of martyrdom, such as *A Cloud of Witnesses* and *Scots Worthies*. It has been suggested that *Scots Worthies*, “probably had a greater impact in the shorter term than all the works of Enlightenment philosophers put together.”¹⁶⁷

A martyrology of the Restoration Covenanters compiled by the Cameronians, *A Cloud of Witnesses* was first published in 1714 and had reached fifteen editions by 1814. It included the letters and speeches of the principal martyrs such as Donald Cargill, James Renwick, and Richard Cameron, along with a list of the humble Presbyterians of southwest Scotland who died during the persecution.¹⁶⁸ The preface was a jeremiad for the present times, and expressed the hope that readers might be

¹⁶³ W. Fletcher, *The Scripture-Loyalist: Containing a Vindication of Obedience to the Present Civil British Government, in Things Lawful* (Falkirk, 1789), p. v.

¹⁶⁴ Kidd, ‘Conditional Britons’, 1150.

¹⁶⁵ Kidd, ‘Conditional Britons’, 1161.

¹⁶⁶ Finlay, ‘Keeping the Covenant’, 127-8.

¹⁶⁷ E. J. Cowan, ‘The Covenanting Tradition in Scottish History’, in Cowan & Finlay (eds.), *Scottish History: The Power of the Past*, 126.

¹⁶⁸ *A Cloud of Witnesses for the Royal Prerogatives of Jesus Christ* ed. Rev. J. H. Thomson (Edinburgh, 1871).

inspired by the dying speeches of the martyrs: “How can the best of us read these Testimonies, without blushing for our low attainments and small proficiency in the school of Christ! How unlike are we to them!”¹⁶⁹

In a similar vein are the works of John Howie, (1735-93) which included the *Biographica Scoticana* or *Scots Worthies*, first published in 1775 and enlarged in 1781, as well as *A Collection of Lectures and Sermons, Preached upon Several Subjects, mostly in the Time of the Late Persecution*, published in 1779. He complained that the memory of the martyrs “both in the Reformation and Suffering Period” had been besmirched by accusations of fanaticism; meanwhile, “the duty of national covenanting” had been “slighted and neglected.”¹⁷⁰ Like the compilers of *A Cloud of Witnesses*, Howie hoped that the example of the Worthies would inspire readers to follow their example. Most of Howie’s emphasis was placed on the second reformation, with narratives of the deeds and deaths of Covenanters such as Rutherford, Argyll, Guthrie, Mitchel, Welwood, Cameron, Cargill, and Peden. However, some place was given to figures from the first reformation: Hamilton, Wishart, Knox, Moray and Buchanan.

Howie had a low opinion of the age of enlightenment in which he lived, complaining in a dig at the Moderates, “little else flows from the pulpit than some insipid scraps of morality.” He bemoaned the tendency for even ministers to learn “from some Heathen oeconomy [rather] than divine revelation; when almost every sentence must either be deduced from, or confirmed by some antient or modern Poet naturalist, or moral Philosopher.”¹⁷¹ He lamented the near-absence of evangelical emotion in religion and was appalled by the religious scepticism that he saw as the mark of his age.¹⁷² Such a collection of opinions – suspicion of high learning coupled with rigid religious orthodoxy – had little place for Buchanan.

However, the eighteenth-century Covenanters, like their seventeenth-century forebears, found Buchanan useful as the provider of a convenient introduction to the

¹⁶⁹ ‘Preface to the First Edition’, *A Cloud of Witnesses*, p. xxxvii.

¹⁷⁰ J. Howie, *The Scots Worthies: Containing a brief historical account of the most eminent Noblemen, Gentlemen, Ministers, and others, who testified or suffered for the cause of Reformation in Scotland* (Glasgow, 1846), pp. xxviii, xxx.

¹⁷¹ Howie, ‘Preface’, *A Collection of Lectures and Sermons*, p. vii.

¹⁷² Howie, ‘Preface’, *A Collection of Lectures and Sermons*, pp. ix-x.

history of the early Scottish church. Howie began *Scots Worthies* with an account of the early church in Scotland that was thoroughly Buchananite, narrating how the disciples of St. John brought Christianity to Scotland, how Donald I was the first Christian king, how the Culdees chose their Superintendents from among themselves and how there had been no bishop before Palladius.¹⁷³ Furthermore, William Wilson, (1690-1741) one of the original Seceders of 1733, produced an edition of Richard Cameron's *Good News to Scotland* which was prefaced with a Buchananite account of the early arrival of Christianity in Scotland.¹⁷⁴

However, eighteenth-century Covenanters tended to place their emphasis on the second Reformation, not on the history of the early Church or the first Reformation of the 1560s. Burleigh notes that in 1760, "No official notice was taken of the bicentenary of the First Reformation."¹⁷⁵ Wilson's *A Defence of the Reformation-Principles of the Church of Scotland* barely referred to the 1560s.¹⁷⁶ He was more interested in Scotland's *covenanted* Reformation, which began, at the earliest, with Andrew Melville and the Negative Confession. Furthermore, while the first reformation was a period of success and victory, the Covenanting mind preferred to concentrate on periods of struggle and persecution.

In the debate between Reformed Presbyterians and Seceders over the Scottish Presbyterian character, and the question of allegiance to the civil magistrate, it might be expected that Buchanan would be a useful resource. However, Buchanan was barely cited, despite the fact that both sides were as keen as their Covenanting predecessors on piling up authorities to support their arguments. The Reformed Presbyterian minister John Thorburn (1730-88) cited authorities such as Cicero, Grotius, Sidney, Knox, Harrington, Rutherford, Shields, Hoadly and Locke – everyone, it seems, except Buchanan.¹⁷⁷ John Fairly attacked his opponent, the Antiburgher John Goodlet, (d. 1775) for his use of Locke as an authority, regarding

¹⁷³ Howie, *Scots Worthies*, 3-5.

¹⁷⁴ W. Wilson, 'Preface', *Good News to Scotland (1680), To which is added, an Acrostick upon his name, by a true Lover of his Memory, and Owner of the Cause which he sealed with his Blood* (Glasgow, 1756), pp. iii-iv.

¹⁷⁵ Burleigh, 'The Scottish Reformation as seen in 1660 and 1760', 250.

¹⁷⁶ W. Wilson, *A Defence of the Reformation-Principles of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1739).

¹⁷⁷ J. Thorburn, *Vindiciae Magistratus: or, the Divine Institution and Right of the Civil Magistrate vindicated* (Edinburgh, 1773), 31-3, 37, 43, 120.

it as surprising that a professed “covenanted *Presbyterian*” should have “*deserted the cause*” and “turned out of the *Presbyterian road*,” by making use of an author of “the *Sectarian* and *Independent camp*.” He said that he preferred to use authorities with impeccable Covenanting credentials such as John Brown of Wamphray, Samuel Rutherford, Alexander Shields, and James Renwick, and he insisted that the Seceders’ ideas were not consistent with those of these Covenanting worthies.¹⁷⁸ He also cited John Knox as another authority who would not be in agreement with the principles of the Seceders. It is here that he cited Buchanan’s *Historia* on the Protestant action against Mary of Guise and Mary Queen of Scots, a citation that was only in support of Knox.¹⁷⁹

The Seceders also tried to use Presbyterian authorities wherever possible, but they too largely ignored Buchanan.¹⁸⁰ From their point of view, Buchanan may have been an undesirable name to cite because of the necessary moderation of their views: the heritage of Scottish Presbyterianism that they wished to put forward, from the reign of Mary Queen of Scots through to the reign of James VII, was one of loyal obedience followed by reluctant resistance. They could not avoid citing Covenanting radicals such as Shields, but tended to do so selectively, to argue to moderate ends.¹⁸¹ Thomson insisted,

John Knox, the famous *Scots Reformer*, and all the other Reformers in that Period, own’d the Authority of *Queen Mary*, an idolatrous *Papist*, a bloody Persecutor... Yet neither he nor the other Reformers with him, who were indeed our first Covenanters, ever disown’d her Authority, till the Body politick did divest her of the Government.¹⁸²

Such an apologetic admission of resistance was hardly Buchananite. Fletcher replicated this passage almost exactly in 1789 to pour scorn on the Reformed Presbyterians:

¹⁷⁸ Fairly, *Reformation Principles*, 10, 13, 80-1, 124.

¹⁷⁹ Fairly, *Reformation Principles*, 244-5.

¹⁸⁰ Goodlet, although attacked by Fairly for his usage of Locke, also regularly cited Rutherford’s *Lex, Rex*. J. Goodlet, *A Vindication of the Associate Synod, Upon the Head of their Principles about the present Civil Government* (Edinburgh, 1764), 5, 14, 18. Thomson cited Calvin and Knox. Thomson, *The Presbyterian Covenanter Displayed*, 18-23. Turnbull cited Brown’s *Apologetical Relation*, Steuart and Stirling’s *Naphthali*, Steuart’s *Jus Populi Vindicatum* and Shields’ *A Hind Let Loose*. J. Turnbull, *A Review of the Antigovernment-Scheme: As it is stated in what is called the Reformed Testimony and its Vindications* (Edinburgh, 1783), p. vi.

¹⁸¹ Turnbull, *A Review of the Antigovernment-Scheme*, 78.

¹⁸² Thomson, *The Presbyterian Covenanter Displayed*, 23.

They would have the world believe, that they are the genuine successors of our famous reformers; but no man, who knows the history of the Reformation, can believe them to be so. From the dawn of the Reformation from Popery to the Revolution, our worthy ancestors were subject to the powers which then were, in all things lawful.¹⁸³

The dispute between the Reformed Presbyterians and the Seceders hinged on the exact grounds on which the later Covenanters had resisted Charles II and James VII. The Reformed Presbyterians insisted that the martyrs had not merely resisted the oppression of their own lives and liberties, but had resisted the usurpation of Christ's prerogatives by the Stuart kings. This was to justify their own continuing opposition to the uncovenanted, erastian regime that had prevailed since the Revolution.¹⁸⁴ The Seceders, on the other hand, insisted that the later Covenanters had only resisted the oppression which began under Charles II and continued until they could no longer endure it. Turnbull, ignoring the Pentland rising of 1666, argued that the Covenanters did not properly resist until 1679, which made it evident that they had tried to bear the persecution for as long as possible.¹⁸⁵ The Seceders' position aimed to demonstrate that that by living peaceably under a benevolent government, they were the true heirs of the Covenanters:

Were the reformed Presbytery, and their followers, the true successors of the ancient Presbyterians in Scotland, they would be subject to King George the third in all things lawful, and continue their subjection, till the gentle sceptre, which he now sways over his subjects, were exchanged for a rod of iron.¹⁸⁶

Both the Seceders and the Reformed Presbyterians placed emphasis not on the first Reformation in Scotland, but on the second, on the Covenanting period, most particularly, on the Covenanters of the Restoration. For this reason, as a theorist and historian of the first Reformation, Buchanan was less usable. Although narratives of fortunes of Protestantism in Scotland tended to begin with the first Reformation and with Knox, or even with the early church, the object was always to get to period of the 'late persecution'.

¹⁸³ Fletcher, *Scripture-Loyalist*, 24.

¹⁸⁴ Fairly, *Reformation Principles*, 252-65; Thorburn, *Vindiciae Magistratus*, 146-7; A. Newton, *A voice to Seceders* (Edinburgh, 1783), 44-6.

¹⁸⁵ Turnbull, *A Review of the Antigovernment-Scheme*, 76.

¹⁸⁶ Fletcher, *Scripture-Loyalist*, 24.

Conclusion

It would be an over-simplification to state that in the decades after the Glorious Revolution, Scottish Jacobites and Episcopalians loathed Buchanan and all he stood for, or that the Whigs wholeheartedly appropriated him. Rather, the uses of Buchanan in this period were flexible, almost to the point of being mutually contradictory. Episcopalians could ignore Buchanan's resistance theory and claim him as a representative of a moderate and reasonable first Reformation, or as a figurehead for the Scottish Latin humanism of which they were self-appointed guardians. Presbyterians, equally, could celebrate Buchanan for his learning, and situate him in a broad tradition of Presbyterian scholarship that spanned the first and second Reformations. However, their sensitivities over allegations of the rebellious tendencies of Presbyterianism also tempered their appropriation of Buchanan.

McFarlane has suggested that eighteenth-century scholarship, "made such serious inroads into Buchanan's standing as a scholar that one cannot say he has recovered properly since."¹⁸⁷ However, this view can be challenged. Innes's devastating critique of the *Historia* was barely taken up in the first half of the eighteenth century because Buchanan's history of the ancient Scottish monarchy remained compellingly useful, both to Whigs and Jacobites. Arguably the decline in the relevance of Buchanan's ideas in the eighteenth century owed more to the continuing association of his name with the unfashionably fanatical Covenanters than to the assault on his scholarship. Later in the eighteenth century, when Buchanan came to be valued as an upholder of civil and religious liberty, any problems with his scholarship could be overlooked just as the radicalism of his resistance theory could be conveniently ignored or glossed over.

Buchanan was largely irrelevant to the high philosophers of the enlightenment who disdained the doctrine of the original contract as a product of an age of fanaticism. The rapid and sophisticated development of civic humanism in the eighteenth century is an indicator of Buchanan's diminishing relevance as a political thinker. Furthermore, Scottish historians came to focus on the history of England, and Scottish history, increasingly shorn of its ideological significance, was being

¹⁸⁷ McFarlane, *Buchanan*, 440

relegated, as Pocock notes, “to the status of ‘an auld sang’ or ‘the tales of a grandfather’.”¹⁸⁸ The progress of Buchanan’s reputation was towards the status of an icon, and in these conditions, the relevance of his thinking faded.

Buchanan’s name and ideas were not of great interest to the anti-enlightenment remnants of the Covenanters, a proliferation of pedantic sects whose narrow gaze focused on the second Reformation, not the first. While association with the resistance of the Covenanters had dominated Buchanan’s standing in the seventeenth century, the Covenanting tradition in the eighteenth century was a dead end in his reputation. Scotland was no longer an arena in which the theory or practice of resistance was vitally important. Only the American colonies would be an arena of resistance, and only there might Buchanan be appropriated as a resource in anything like the terms in which he had been used in the seventeenth century.

It has been argued that Robertson’s views of civil and religious liberty, far from being progressive, should be seen as an example of vulgar Whiggism, a crude form of Whig polemic that was vehemently anti-Catholic, anti-tyranny and anti-Stuart, that defended the Glorious Revolution, and regarded the British constitution as near perfect.¹⁸⁹ This is a persuasive argument: undoubtedly some of Robertson’s hyperbolic paeans to the Revolution and the British constitution do smack of vulgar Whiggism. However, in comparison to the thoroughly backward-looking rhetoric of the eighteenth-century Covenanters, Robertson’s views on civil and religious liberty can arguably be seen as progressive. This broadly based understanding of British liberty was progressive in that it would continue into the era of the French Revolution and the nineteenth century. It was progressive in that it would give the reputation of George Buchanan a future in a way that the Covenanting tradition could not. Ultimately, the tradition of civil and religious liberty would even bestow respectability upon the reputations of certain seventeenth-century Covenanters, something that, again, their own narrow tradition could not do.

¹⁸⁸ J. G. A. Pocock, ‘The Limits and Divisions of British History: In Search of the Unknown Subject’, *American Historical Review*, lxxxvii (1982), 313.

¹⁸⁹ Sher, ‘1688 and 1788’, 101.

Even in a Scotland where radical resistance theories had little place, it was becoming possible for Buchanan to enjoy a high reputation as a hero of civil and religious liberty, in a trend that would continue into the nineteenth century. This owed in part to the efforts of historians such as Robertson to reach a better understanding of the first Reformation as distinct from the second, and went some way towards dislodging Buchanan's reputation from the clutches of the Covenanters. This process, however, would be slow, and the legend of Scotland's resolutely and continuously Presbyterian history and destiny would prove to be durable.

In 1781 John Anderson wrote a proposal for a monument to George Buchanan on Buchanan Street in Glasgow, to be built by public subscription. He commended Buchanan as "a Poet, as a Writer in Defence of Liberty, as an Historian, and as a Man of Genius who experienced great Vicissitudes of Fortune."¹⁹⁰ According to Anderson, Buchanan was a proponent of a modern and reasonable theory of resistance, indeed, he was a prophet of Revolution principles:

To set aside the Monarch who misbehaves and to exalt another Heir of Line; is no more than what was done at the last Revolution of the freest state that has ever existed.¹⁹¹

Anderson's monument never came to fruition, but a monument was built to commemorate Buchanan's life in his birthplace, Killearn, in the auspicious year of 1788. The monument, an obelisk 103 feet high, was paid for by public subscription, encouraged principally by the minister of the parish of Killearn, Reverend James Graham, (1736-1821) who laid the foundation stone.¹⁹² The first *Statistical Account of Scotland* implied that the monument was paid for primarily by "the gentlemen of this parish and neighbourhood," and suggested that it was built in order that "The living may reap advantage from the dead. Emulation is thereby excited, and the active powers of the mind stimulated by an ardour to excel in whatever is praiseworthy."¹⁹³ Graham's suggestion that the monument was modelled on a monument to the Battle of the Boyne in Ulster clarifies the perception of Buchanan

¹⁹⁰ Anderson, 'An Obelisk in Honour of Buchanan', 1.

¹⁹¹ Anderson, 'An Obelisk in Honour of Buchanan', 3.

¹⁹² H. Scott, *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae* (Edinburgh, 1920), III, 349.

¹⁹³ The entry for Killearn in the first *Statistical Account* was not written by the parish minister, Rev. Graham, but by Rev. David Ure, a minister from Glasgow. J. Sinclair, *The Statistical Account of Scotland 1791-99*, ed. D. J. Withrington & I. R. Grant (Wakefield, 1978), IX, 383.

as a hero of civil and religious liberty, linked to the Revolution that took place over a century after his death.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴ Rev. Graham did write the entry for Killearn in the *New Statistical Account*. *The New Statistical Account of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1845), VIII, 66.

Chapter 6

The American Revolution and the Atlantic Canon of Political Theory

Introduction

Scotland was no longer an arena of resistance by the final quarter of the eighteenth century, but America was a place where practical applications of resistance theory remained relevant. Although the breakdown in relations between Britain and the American colonies originated in disputes over taxation, the American Revolution was more than a conflict over taxation and representation. Shaped by immigration, the colonies replicated many of the political and religious tensions that had traumatised Scotland, England, and Ireland since the sixteenth century. Colonial Anglicanism was forced to compete with religious groups that it characterised as dissenters, such as Quakers, Presbyterians and Congregationalists, as well as with the faiths and cultures of other European Protestants. In the 1750s and 1760s, the threat of the appointment of a colonial Anglican bishop outraged many dissenters who had travelled to the supposed safe haven of the colonies in order to escape Britain's Episcopal culture.¹ In the British Isles the Catholic Irish were regarded as aliens within, and on the American continent the Catholics of recently acquired French-Canada were perceived in comparable terms. The Quebec Act of 1774, which granted a Catholic establishment within British dominions, outraged the American colonists and was one of the links in a chain of events that led to the breakdown of relations between Britain and the colonies, and eventually to revolution and separation.

The American Revolution was a culminating point in the history of ideas in the Atlantic World, a point at which all the ideological resources for the justification of resistance that had been developed since the sixteenth century could be considered, selected, sharpened and deployed by the colonies' propagandists. With migrants were conveyed religious ideas, political theories and histories, and resources from Scotland could provide valuable arguments for resistance as relations between Britain and the colonies began to break down in the 1760s. Among the most

¹ C. Bridenbaugh, *Mitre and Sceptre: transatlantic faiths, ideas, personalities and politics, 1689-1775* (Oxford, 1962).

prominent patriots of the American Revolution were Scotland's two signatories of the Declaration of Independence, the Lowland Scots John Witherspoon (1723-94) and James Wilson (1742-98).

It should be noted, however, that many Scottish migrants to the colonies, Highlanders and Lowlanders, sided with the Loyalists when the Revolutionary war broke out. Many had sworn personal oaths to George III, or in areas such as the Carolinas, had received land grants and believed their future prosperity would be better secured if the colonies remained under British rule. Furthermore, for some Scots Presbyterians, it was impossible to forget that the political order in Britain after 1690 had been the guardian of their Presbyterian Church. Thomas Jefferson's (1743-1826) draft of the Declaration of Independence complained that Britain had quartered on the colonies, not only "soldiers of our common blood," but also "Scotch & foreign mercenaries to invade & destroy us," a reference that Congress thought it prudent to remove from the final document.² Rather, it was the Scots-Irish, along with those of French, Dutch and German extraction, who formed the core of the patriot side outside New England.

In the periodical upgrading and downgrading of the importance of various schools of thought to the ideology of the American Revolution, Lockean liberalism, classical republicanism and the Scottish Enlightenment have all been considered. Classical republicanism, also described as 'Commonwealth' or 'Real Whig' thought, prized seventeenth century republicans such as Milton, Harrington and Sidney, and emphasised the concerns of civic vitality, fear of corruption, and anxiety over the proper limits of government. The classic formulation of these concerns was expressed in *Cato's Letters*, published in the early 1720s by the Dublin-born John Trenchard, (1662-1723) and the Scot Thomas Gordon (d. 1750).³

Lockean liberalism, in contrast, is assumed to be a more modern and secular understanding of liberty. The state is seen less as a community of virtuous participants, and more as a mere mechanism to protect the rights and the property of

² T. Jefferson, 'Declaration of Independence' (Jefferson's draft), in J. Appleby & T. Ball (eds.), *Political Writings* (Cambridge, 1999), 100.

³ J. Trenchard & T. Gordon, *Cato's Letters: Or, Essays on Liberty, Civil and Religious, and other important subjects*, ed. R. Hamowy (Indianapolis, 1995).

individuals. However, it has been argued that it is anachronistic to ascribe this view of liberty to Locke himself, who wrote the *Two Treatises*, it must be remembered, in the context of the Exclusion Crisis. ‘Lockean liberalism’ may have been a product of nineteenth-century readings of Locke, and Pocock has argued that in the eighteenth century, Britain and America continued to occupy a ‘Machiavellian Moment’, dominated by the mindset of classical republicanism.⁴

One corpus of political thought that has not been properly addressed in the debate over the ideological origins of the American Revolution is the Scottish tradition of resistance, which included Knox, Buchanan and the Scottish Covenanters. It must be questioned why, in a period when American patriots were calling in all the intellectual resources they could muster to justify resistance to Britain, this radical Scottish tradition was barely resorted to.

The key test of the usefulness of resistance theories in the American revolutionary context was their populism: that is, how far they allowed individuals or communities to resist a ruler in themselves. Resistance by inferior magistrates was an unwelcome and unlikely scenario, as the magistrates in this case were colonial governors or tax collectors, enemies of the patriot cause. As the momentum of opposition to the British gathered in the 1760s, the colonists increasingly sought resources of popular resistance that would allow the ordinary people, led by the clergy and intelligentsia, to judge and resist British tyranny.

A culture of popular action had been developing in the colonies in the eighteenth century, disseminated in part by the Great Awakening. This was one of a number of developments that led Edmund Burke to remark in a speech in 1775 that a tendency to rebellion was part of the American Calvinist character: “The religion most prevalent in our northern colonies is a refinement on the principle of resistance; it is the dissidence of dissent and the protestantism of the Protestant religion.”⁵ An outbreak of revivalistic fervour from the 1730s, the Great Awakening appealed to the lower orders and was thus a movement with participation across denominations and

⁴ Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 462, 545-6.

⁵ E. Burke, ‘Speech on Moving Resolutions for Conciliation with the Colonies’, in T. H. D. Mahoney (ed.), *Selected Writings and Speeches on America* (Indianapolis, 1964), 134.

ethnic groups. It promoted an ethos of resistance, particularly in the backcountry where many communities felt ignored by colonial authorities. However, the importance of the Great Awakening as one of the causes of the Revolution should not be overstated.⁶ It had been in progress since the 1730s, but was not directed against Britain until after 1763.

Settled mainly in the middle colonies, colonial Presbyterianism was dominated by the Scots-Irish group, that is, Scottish Presbyterians who migrated to Ulster in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, and who then crossed the Atlantic to the colonies. Despite their shared Calvinism, Presbyterian migrants had not been welcome in Congregationalist New England, and this was one of the reasons for their concentration in the middle colonies, particularly in Pennsylvania.⁷ However, the differences between Congregationalists, who were generally of English dissenting stock, and Presbyterians, should not be exaggerated, as both were interested in the histories and ideas of the other.

Although they differed in their strict views on church government, both of these denominations placed emphasis on an educated clergy that was well equipped to provide civil as well as religious leadership, and their sermons, preached and published, were among the most notable media for public communications. Clergymen wrote 80% of pamphlets published in the colonies in the 1770s and 1780s, and many of these were sermons or political pieces written in a sermonic style.⁸ Congregationalists and Presbyterians shared the jeremiad as a sermonic device to emphasise the depravity of man. The Scottish jeremiad had its origins with Knox and, like the Puritan jeremiad, was designed to berate the sinfulness of the elect, which might result in the loss of their covenanted status.⁹

As relations between Britain and the colonies became critical, however, the colonial jeremiad took on a new complexion. By 1776, jeremiad sermons did not focus on the sins of the colonists, but rather praised their activism in standing up for their

⁶ J. C. D. Clark, *The Language of Liberty: Political discourse and social dynamics in the Anglo-American World* (Cambridge, 1994), 263.

⁷ W. F. Dunaway, *The Scotch-Irish of Colonial Pennsylvania* (Chapel Hill, 1944), 48.

⁸ D. S. Lutz, *A Preface to American Political Theory* (Lawrence, 1992), 136.

⁹ R. B. Sher, 'Witherspoon's 'Dominion of Providence' and the Scottish Jeremiad Tradition', in R. B. Sher & J. R. Smitten (eds.), *Scotland and America in the Age of Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 1990), 53.

liberties and asserted that America was morally upright and guided by providence.¹⁰ There was some disagreement among the colonists on how far they should go to redress their grievances – opinions ranged through petitioning, to civil disobedience, to outright resistance – but few regarded tame submission as morally right. The American Calvinist character held that God's support was jeopardised by passivity, not by resistance, but few Americans followed the Scottish Covenanters in desiring tyrannicide. Through the colonists' assertion that they were not rebels but protectors of the public good, they hoped to avoid the charges of antinomianism that had been levelled at previous practitioners of resistance, particularly the Scottish Covenanters.

Buchanan's ideas were present in the American colonies before the Revolution, and inter-denominational connections ensured that they spread beyond Presbyterian circles. A Scots-Irish printer in Philadelphia published the *De Jure Regni* in 1766.¹¹ And the *Historia*, although it was not published in the colonies, could be found in the private libraries both of the Presbyterian James Logan in Philadelphia and the Congregationalist John Adams in Boston, as well as in public libraries in Pennsylvania, New York and Rhode Island.¹² The history of publishing in the colonies before the Revolution does not tell the whole story of the available resources of resistance theory, as numerous works that were never published there were still available, having been transported by booksellers or privately by individuals. Buchanan's *Historia* is an example of a text that was not published in the colonies but still found its way into colonial libraries, as we have seen. The works of the Covenanting canon by Rutherford, Brown, Steuart and Shields, in addition, were not published in the colonies yet still found a way, albeit to a limited extent, into colonial discourse.¹³

With a bank of materials at their disposal, with diverse national and denominational origins, the resources for the justification of resistance that the colonists rejected

¹⁰ Clark, *Language of Liberty*, 275.

¹¹ G. Buchanan, *De Jure Regni Apud Scotos*, (Philadelphia, 1766); Mason, 'Introduction', in *De Jure Regni*, p. xv-xvi and footnote.

¹² T. Colbourn, *The Lamp of Experience: Whig History and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Indianapolis, 1998), 263, 260, 254, 252, 251.

¹³ Not listed in C. Evans, *American bibliography: a chronological dictionary of all books, pamphlets and periodical publications printed in the United States of America from the genesis of printing in 1639 down to and including the year 1820* (New York, 1941-67).

were as significant as what they selected. The Covenanters and, by association, Buchanan, were barely usable in the context of the American Revolution. The classic texts of Covenanting political theory by Rutherford, Steuart and Shields were known in the colonies, and found an audience among American Seceders and Reformed Presbyterians. However, it appears that the political theory of the Scottish Covenanters occupied a barely marginal place in the political discourse of the American Revolution as a whole.

The culture of resistance in the colonies that was gathering pace in the 1760s and into the 1770s mediated the reception and usage of history and political theory when the Revolution began. On one hand, Clark has identified the importance of religious heterodoxy as a spur to political radicalism in the eighteenth century, and in particular to the leadership of the American Revolution.¹⁴ Parallel to this, however, new revivalism and older denominational cultures can also be seen inspiring resistance, and the jeremiad sermon and the obligation of the covenant remained powerful incitements to action. In this context, the covenantal impulse shared by Congregationalists and Presbyterians was general, a means of emphasising a shared culture and shared aims. It was not associated with the historically rooted Scottish National Covenant of 1638 and Solemn League and Covenant of 1643, as adherence to these was a marginal and divisive position. Covenantal thinking correlated with the contractual theories of government that were used by both secular and clerical polemicists to convince the colonists of the need to resist. In this sense, it is to be anticipated that the high enlightenment's denial of contract theory, pioneered by Hume and Smith in Scotland, was unlikely to be adopted in America.

¹⁴ Clark, *Language of Liberty*, 337.

The Sources of Resistance in America

The historiographical debate over the ideological origins of the American Revolution has found little evidence of engagement with Buchanan's resistance theory.

Historians have tended to focus on certain 'canonical' texts and authors of the Revolutionary era, and tried to identify their sources and inspirations. Of these, emphasis has been placed on the Declaration of Independence and the ideas of Thomas Jefferson, and much has been made of the Declaration's borrowing of Locke's expression "a long train of abuses."¹⁵ The ideas and sources of other Founding Fathers such as John Adams, (1735-1826) Benjamin Franklin, (1706-90) and Richard Henry Lee, (1732-94) have also been considered in detail, as well as the impact of prominent sermons and pamphlets, particularly Thomas Paine's incendiary *Common Sense*, and the sermons of Jonathan Mayhew.¹⁶ Other studies have sought to gauge the influence of European theorists upon American thought by compiling lists of what Americans were reading, or by counting citations.¹⁷

In the debate on the ideological origins of the Revolution, there has been a tendency since the 1960s to downgrade the importance of John Locke and to privilege classical republican thought.¹⁸ Recently, however, there has been something of a shift back towards Locke, visible in the work of Huyler, and Dworetz, who has argued that the republican revision "began with a hostile interpretation of Locke and some wishful thinking about Cato."¹⁹ Dworetz is concerned that the ideas of John Locke may not have directly inspired the American Revolution: rather the colonists simply put his name to propositions they wished to justify: "The 'guide and prophet' of the American Revolution was actually an impostor whom the Revolutionists

¹⁵ 'The Declaration of Independence', in Appleby & Ball (eds.) *Political Writings*, 102. See above, p. 127.

¹⁶ Staple studies of the political ideas of the American Revolution include B. Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge MA, 1967); Clark, *Language of Liberty*; A. C. Houston, *Algernon Sidney and the Republican Heritage in England and America* (Princeton, 1991).

¹⁷ Colbourn includes appendices that list the texts of Whig history that could be found in colonial libraries during the eighteenth century. Colbourn, *Lamp of Experience*, Appendix II. Lutz undertakes considerable quantitative analysis of citations in American political writings, as well as providing an appendix listing the European texts that were most commonly cited by the American Founding generation. Lutz, *American Political Theory*, 135-9, Appendix 159-64.

¹⁸ Robbins, *Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman*; Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*; Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*.

¹⁹ J. Huyler, *Locke in America: The Moral Philosophy of the Founding Era* (Lawrence, 1995), p. x, 210; Dworetz, *The Unvarnished Doctrine*, 12.

fabricated for partisan political purposes.”²⁰ Although Dworetz sees this process as a negative one, this is still a valid usage of a classic political text in a given context. It is immaterial if the colonists were strictly right or wrong in their use of Locke, the point is that they wanted to use his name – it was his reputation that was important. Houston’s study of the uses of Sidney’s name and ideas takes a less pedantic and more inclusive view, embracing the fact that texts can be used in ways very different to what their authors intended. ‘Misreadings’ should not be dismissed as simply ‘wrong’ or ‘unfaithful’, but are worthy of study. “The thought of Algernon Sidney is not (necessarily) the same as the ideas his readers obtained from him.” Houston admits that not all invocations of Sidney’s name or ideas implied deep engagement with his ideas, but may express “the desire of a writer to tap its affective power.”²¹

An open approach to citations and other evidence will prove useful in the study of the ideological origins of the American Revolution. Quite simply, the colonists were willing to use whatever resources would meet their needs, as Lutz has argued, “Americans appropriated theory from overseas in accord with their own needs as informed by their own experience.”²² Lutz takes a common sense approach to the intellectual resources used in the American Revolution, admitting:

No European intellectual tradition dominated because those philosophers to whom Americans turned were spread over several ‘traditions’, and the supposed traditions were themselves mixed, interpenetrating each other, so that individual thinkers can often be simultaneously assigned to several traditions.²³

In the debate over Locke, for example, he argues that the colonists’ use of Locke did not necessarily imply full engagement with all his ideas, especially on property and individualism, or that Locke was acting as a constant formative influence on the American republic and character. Rather, he suggests, Locke was usable in a narrower, more immediate sense, for his resistance theory. This suggestion is borne out by the fact that Locke was most cited at around the time of the Declaration of Independence, and cited far less after 1781, at a late stage in the Revolutionary war when the justification of resistance had ceased to be a vital concern.²⁴ Lutz

²⁰ Dworetz, *The Unvarnished Doctrine*, 21.

²¹ Houston, *Republican Heritage*, 229-30.

²² Lutz, *American Political Theory*, 114.

²³ Lutz, *American Political Theory*, 112.

²⁴ Lutz, *American Political Theory*, 123.

downplays the supposed ideological gulf between Lockean ‘liberalism’ and classical republicanism. Americans in the context of the Revolution would have seen Locke as a republican, similar to Sidney.²⁵ Similarly, Huyler acknowledges the importance of classical republican thought and the inspiration of Sidney and *Cato’s Letters* in the origins of the Revolution, but argues that the similarities between classical republicanism and the ideas of Locke have been underestimated. This echoes Houston’s judgement, which concludes that Sidney’s ‘republicanism’ was not markedly different from Locke’s supposed ‘liberalism’.²⁶ It is not helpful to insist that Locke could only possibly have belonged to *one* intellectual tradition, whether it be liberalism or individualism; classical republicanism; or the nascent enlightenment of the late seventeenth century.

Colbourn has noted that the Commonwealthmen in England and America “sought to maintain the revolutionary tradition of their seventeenth-century heroes,” and “kept fresh the memory and the political techniques of the crusades against the Stuarts.”²⁷ However, it appears that not all crusaders against the Stuarts were treated as equals. Locke and Sidney, as Whigs of the early 1680s, shared many of the ideas, aims and methods of the Scottish Covenanters. Despite this, the two Englishmen were privileged in the ideology of the American Revolution, while the Covenanters and the Scottish tradition of resistance were marginalized. Similarly, in the American context, Jonathan Mayhew and Thomas Paine enjoyed good reputations, although they used violent rhetoric to argue for popular resistance.

Historians have examined the historical and mythological basis of Sidney’s reputation and found that those later polemicists who appropriated his name and ideas, “wrote to reinforce an existing mythology in response to the political needs it was required to serve, rather than investigate the facts about the man from whose memory it was derived.” Sidney’s violent personality, his shady associations with the French and his dislike of the eventual deliverer of England, William of Orange, were airbrushed out of his reputation as “the ‘inflexible patriot’ of Whig

²⁵ Lutz, *American Political Theory*, 119-20.

²⁶ Houston, *Republican Heritage*, 224-5.

²⁷ Colbourn, *Lamp of Experience*, 10.

martyrology.”²⁸ The manner of Sidney’s death was also important in the formation of his reputation, as Houston points out: “The distinction between these two facets of Sidney’s impact on American thought – his fame as a martyr and his influence as a political theorist – has not previously been noted.”²⁹ Sidney’s judicial murder at the hands of the Stuart establishment in 1683 was pivotal in his refurbishment as a Whig hero, allowing a convenient forgetting of some of his more off-putting features. Sidney is an example of how the reputation of a problematic career could be refurbished and made respectable and usable for new generations of users.

Jonathan Mayhew provides a striking example of a controversial preacher whose radical stance on resistance nonetheless earned him a good reputation among the patriots of the 1760s and 1770s. His fiery *Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission* of 30 January 1750 took Romans 13 as its text and deviated substantially from the standard line of anniversary sermons in the Atlantic World by admitting rights of resistance and claiming that Charles I had deserved to be executed. Another sermon, preached in August 1765 in the midst of the Stamp Tax crisis and described as “a succinct summation of the political philosophy of Locke, Milton and Sidney,” provoked a riot that saw the tearing down of Governor Hutchinson’s home.³⁰ But Mayhew’s radical and at times imprudent views on resistance did not earn him a reputation for rebelliousness or make his ideas unusable. The balance of American opinion was evidently shifting in favour of resistance, and by the time of the reprinting of the *Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission* in 1775, its doctrine of resistance was so embedded in the public consciousness as to be received as “simple common sense.”³¹

Thomas Paine (1737-1809) provides another example of a radical theorist of resistance who enjoyed a good reputation in the context of the American Revolution. The instant impact of his pamphlet *Common Sense*, published in January 1776, is regularly noted: it sold between 120,000 and 150,000 copies in its first year, and was

²⁸ Scott, *Algernon Sidney and the English Republic*, 1-4.

²⁹ Houston, *Republican Heritage*, 224.

³⁰ Houston, *Republican Heritage*, 240 footnote.

³¹ B. Bailyn, (ed.) *Pamphlets of the American Revolution* (Cambridge MA, 1965), I, 209.

“the first American best-seller.”³² In many ways Paine’s pamphlet illustrates Condren’s argument on what makes, or does not make, a classic text.³³ *Common Sense* is neither original, nor entirely coherent, nor unambiguous. Yet it is indisputably a classic text.

Above all, it is notable that Paine’s text has consistently enjoyed a good reputation despite its vengeful tone and menacing position towards those who remained either undecided or loyal to Britain. The clergy might argue that resistance had noble motivations such as regard for the public good and the maintenance of God’s favour, but Paine appealed to the more base grounds of revenge and retaliation, quoting Milton’s adage, “Never can true reconciliation grow where wounds of deadly hate have pierced so deep.”³⁴ The clergy admitted popular rights of resistance to what they hoped was a virtuous citizenry, but Paine seemed to appeal to the passions of an anarchic mob. As Ferguson notes, “The unleashing and manipulation of group hatreds do not make for a pretty sight, and the success of *Common Sense* depends on them.”³⁵ Clearly there is no necessity that a text must display the best and wisest sentiments of which mankind is capable in order to earn the status of a classic.

The examples of Jonathan Mayhew and Thomas Paine illustrate the fickle nature of reputations in this period. Although at times admired and at times denigrated for his stance on resistance, Mayhew’s reputation at the point of the revolution was positive, and he inspired such reverence that John Adams was to describe the *Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission* as a “catechism” of armed resistance.³⁶ Historians have in general praised Mayhew for the content and style of his sermons, and few have deemed him as an incendiary and anarchist danger to society in the way that Buchanan and the Covenanters have been regarded.³⁷ And while a violent,

³² R. A. Ferguson, ‘The Commonalities of Common Sense’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, lvii (2000), 466.

³³ Condren, *Classic Texts*, 3.

³⁴ T. Paine, ‘Common Sense’, in B. Kuklick (ed.), *Political Writings* (Cambridge, 2000), 22.

³⁵ Ferguson, ‘The Commonalities of Common Sense’, 499.

³⁶ H. S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (Oxford, 1986), 240.

³⁷ Bailyn has not been the only historian to praise Mayhew. Colbourn has considered him to be “probably the most outstanding of New England’s politically minded clerics.” Colbourn, *Lamp of Experience*, 72. However Clark has dissented by suggesting that Mayhew perhaps does not deserve the reputation he enjoys, arguing, “Mayhew effectively sanctioned resistance while washing his hands of responsibility for the violence which accompanied it.” Clark, *Language of Liberty*, 367.

even hysterical tone of argument was the making of a classic political text in the case of Paine's *Common Sense*, it was the making of a reputation for extremity in the case of some of the later Covenanters.

The debate on the extent of any Scottish influence on the political thought of the American Revolution has tended to focus on the impact of the Scottish Enlightenment. The Wills thesis, which insists that Francis Hutcheson rather than John Locke was Jefferson's principal inspiration in the composition of the Declaration of Independence, has largely been discounted.³⁸ In this heated debate, Hook has proposed a common sense position: if Wills was guilty of overstating the impact of the Scottish school on Jefferson's thought, then his detractors have perhaps been equally guilty of underestimating this influence, or of seeking to relegate it out of existence.³⁹ This he identifies as part of a general problem,

The lack of recognition of the Scottish contribution to eighteenth-century America is no more than a particular example of a general American reluctance to acknowledge fully the contributions of other national groups to America's development.⁴⁰

There is a need to establish Jefferson's debt to the Scottish Enlightenment – he certainly owed at least some of his thinking to it – but this need not be done at the expense of Locke.⁴¹

Any debate on the influence of the Scottish Enlightenment in America must acknowledge the inconvenient fact that the leading lights of the literati, Hume and Smith, had exploded contract theory, a theory that most of the polemicists of the

³⁸ G. Wills, *Inventing America: Jefferson's Declaration of Independence* (New York, 1978). Wills' thesis has been attacked in Hamowy, 'Jefferson and the Scottish Enlightenment'; S. Fleischacker, 'The impact on America: Scottish philosophy and the American founding', in Broadie (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment*.

³⁹ A. Hook, *From Goosecreek to Gandercleugh: Studies in Scottish-American Literary and Cultural History* (East Linton, 1999), 14-21.

⁴⁰ Hook, *From Goosecreek to Gandercleugh*, 20.

⁴¹ Jefferson's writings provide evidence that he was at least familiar with Buchanan's work and ideas. In 1786, a letter to Jefferson from his fellow Virginian George Wythe (1726-1806) mentioned Buchanan's *History of Scotland* in a point about the Scottish genealogy of a Virginian family, and the terms of the reference suggest that Jefferson could be expected to be familiar with the text. 'Letter from George Wythe', in J. P. Boyd ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (Princeton, 1954), X, 592. In a letter to Rev. Knox of 1810, in a discussion of one of Buchanan's texts, probably the *De Iure Regni*, Jefferson praised Buchanan's Latin and confessed, "The title of the tract of Buchanan... was familiar to me, and I possessed the tract; but no circumstance had ever led me to look into it." Historians have long debated the texts and possibly 'influences' that Jefferson lost when his library at Shadwell burned down in 1770. Perhaps Buchanan was one of them? 'Letter to Rev. Knox', in J. P. Foley (ed.), *The Jefferson Encyclopedia* (New York, 1900), 110.

American Revolution continued to regard as commonplace. Yet the Scottish Enlightenment could provide useful resources for the colonists to justify resistance. Hutcheson's *System of Moral Philosophy*, published in 1755, had specifically addressed the question of "When it is that colonies may turn independent" and admitted rights of resistance:

If the plan of the mother-country is changed by force, or degenerates by degrees from a safe, mild, and gentle limited power, to a severe and absolute one; or if under the same plan of polity, oppressive laws are made with respect to the colonies or provinces; and any colony is so increased in numbers and strength that they are sufficient by themselves, for all the good ends of a political union; they are not bound to continue in their subjection.⁴²

Hutcheson's views ultimately concerned the right of a community to act in its own interest, and this argument was reprinted in the *Massachusetts Spy* in 1772.⁴³

It is rare in the history of political thought that a single idea can be traced back to a single theorist. The leaders of the American Revolution, many of whom were lawyers, were experts in putting together a mass of ideas in order to build a persuasive case. Resistance theories in the bank of ideas had often come to be divorced from the names and contexts of the theorists that had provided them, and in this sense, citations must be treated with some reservation. A citation is often more indicative of the reputation of a theorist and how desirable it was to mention his name, than evidence of engagement with a particular text. The argument that Romans 13 could justify resistance rather than forbidding it could have come from the earliest such use of that text in the fifteenth century, or from Buchanan, or from Locke, or Hoadly, or from a writer in the American context such as Jonathan Mayhew, or indeed from any of the innumerable writers who had taken the same position on St. Paul's text.

As it is difficult to ascertain with any confidence the theorists that 'influenced' a colonial writer, it must suffice to say simply that Buchanan's theories were present as a resource in the American colonies. However, the extent to which they were

⁴² Quoted in C. Robbins, "When It Is That Colonies May Turn Independent": An Analysis of the Environment and Politics of Francis Hutcheson', *William and Mary Quarterly*, xi (1954), 216. Hutcheson had already briefly rehearsed this argument in the *Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy*, published in Latin in 1742 and in English in 1747. Hutcheson, *Short Introduction*, 316-7.

⁴³ Robbins, "When It Is That Colonies May Turn Independent", 246.

known, used, or differentiated from the work of other theorists, is open to question. Robbins has suggested that the arguments contained in the *De Iure Regni* “became a part of the Real Whig creed and so passed into American thinking in the eighteenth century.”⁴⁴ However, the fact that the publication of the *De Iure Regni* in Philadelphia in 1766 was in the same volume as Knox’s *First Blast of the Trumpet* suggests that Buchanan continued to be bracketed with the Calvinist zealots of sixteenth and seventeenth century, rather than with ‘high’ political theorists such as Locke.

Most resistance theories from the sixteenth century onwards, and certainly by the period of the American Revolution, should be regarded as part of an ever-growing bank of usable ideas. The study of the ideological origins of the American Revolution, therefore, should not be an attempt to label it as inspired by certain theorists or schools of thought, but to appreciate the eclecticism and flexibility of the bank of ideas, the transmission of theories to new contexts, and the anomalies that arose in terms of selection, rejection, and subversion. What can be drawn from this is an understanding of the separation of ideas from reputations. It is probable that Buchanan’s ideas were present in the mix of resources for resistance, even if his name was thought inappropriate for citation.

⁴⁴ Robbins, *Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman*, 180.

The Scots-Irish and their Heritage of Resistance

If Buchanan was not usable as a high political theorist in the mainstream justifications of the American Revolution, then evidence of his reputation can be sought in the more narrow denominational and ethnic groupings of his Scottish descendants. The 'Scots-Irish' were Presbyterians who had migrated from the Lowlands of Scotland to Ulster in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and who then, sometimes generations later, made the journey from Ulster to the middle colonies of America. This migration across the Atlantic peaked in the years 1717-18, 1725-29, 1740-41, 1754-55, and 1771-75, and tended to be driven by localised Northern Irish factors, particularly connected to the economic health of the region, rather than by Scottish or broadly British imperatives.⁴⁵ Estimates vary as to the number of Scots-Irish migrants who made the journey from Ulster to America, but average out at around 150,000 to 200,000 in the years between 1718 and 1775.⁴⁶

Studies of the social, political, and demographic character of the Scots-Irish have tended not to focus in detail on the transmission of Covenanters and the Covenanted tradition to America.⁴⁷ More needs to be done to elucidate the extent of the Covenanted presence in America, but it is not to be expected that the picture of the ideological origins of the Revolution would be fundamentally altered. As Lehmann rightly argues, any attempt to make the Covenanted tradition central to the theory and action of the American Revolution would be little more than a piece of myth-making.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ J. G. Leyburn, *The Scotch-Irish: A Social History* (Durham NC, 1962), 169.

⁴⁶ Westerkamp suggests that the figure for the 60 years before the American Revolution is between 150,000 and 200,000, and McBride estimates at least 200,000 in the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century. Dunaway estimates that as many as 250,000 Scots-Irish entered America in the eighteenth century. Westerkamp, *Triumph of the Laity*, 142; I. R. McBride, *Scripture Politics: Ulster Presbyterians and Irish Radicalism in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1998), 115; Dunaway, *The Scotch-Irish of Colonial Pennsylvania*, 41.

⁴⁷ Griffin does not engage with Covenanters or the Covenanted tradition in Ulster or in America. P. Griffin, *The People with No Name: Ireland's Ulster-Scots, America's Scots-Irish, and the Creation of a British Atlantic World, 1689-1764* (Princeton, 2001). Leyburn, keen to downplay the 'Scottishness' of the Scots-Irish in Ulster and regard them as creators of their own society and identity, does not discuss the Scottish exportation of ecclesiastical conflicts, and their offshoots, particularly Reformed Presbyterian and Seceding sects, to Ulster and America. Leyburn, *The Scotch-Irish*, 140-2. The fuller accounts of Westerkamp and McBride do take notice of the importation of Scottish Covenanted traditions and sects into Ulster and America. Westerkamp, *Triumph of the Laity*; McBride, *Scripture Politics*.

⁴⁸ W. C. Lehmann, *Scottish and Scotch-Irish Contributions to Early American Life and Culture* (Washington DC, 1978), 99.

Historians have wrestled with the problem of definition of the Scots-Irish. As Griffin suggests, these migrants did not wish to be seen as 'Irish,' as the name was suggestive of Catholicism. Nor did they want to be seen as 'Scotch', because that name in Ireland signified radicalism.⁴⁹ Furthermore, although the migrants built up a Presbyterian church in Ulster, and again in America, the different conditions in these parts of the Atlantic World mean that they cannot simply be regarded as 'Scottish' Presbyterians.⁵⁰ In Scotland Presbyterianism was the established religion, but in Ireland, Presbyterians were classified as dissenters. While Scottish Presbyterians after 1707 enjoyed many of the rights of Englishmen, Ulster Presbyterians were subjugated by penal laws, enacted by the Episcopalian Protestant Ascendancy that managed Ireland.

Seceding and Cameronian sects developed in Ulster in the eighteenth century, and like their Scottish counterparts, they testified against the erastian and prelatical evils of the British state. McBride detects hints of Covenanting radicalism in agrarian disturbances in Ulster, and notes that contemporaries were quick to ascribe any disorder to rebellious Covenanting impulses.⁵¹ The Scottish Covenanting canon, comprising Rutherford, Steuart and Shields, was available as a resource for Ulster's Covenanters, as were the writings of Scottish Reformed Presbyterians such as John Thorburn.⁵² While Ulster's Covenanters revelled in the religious controversies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, moderate Presbyterians sought relief from the penal laws, and were keen to demonstrate that they were loyal and valuable subjects of the crown. Their rhetoric tended to sanitise the troubled Presbyterian past:

It was essential to play down the seventeenth-century record of resistance and rebellion, to demonstrate their social respectability and theological moderation, while setting out principled grounds for the rejection of authority in ecclesiastical matters.⁵³

⁴⁹ Griffin, *The People with No Name*, 2-3.

⁵⁰ For accounts of eighteenth-century Ulster and its religious character, including its Seceders and Reformed Presbyterians, see McBride, *Scripture Politics*, 1-110; Westerkamp, *Triumph of the Laity*, 74-135.

⁵¹ McBride, *Scripture Politics*, 79-80.

⁵² McBride, *Scripture Politics*, 81-2.

⁵³ McBride, *Scripture Politics*, 93.

The Scottish Covenanting tradition also penetrated the political and religious landscape of the American colonies, but its impact should not be exaggerated. Although the particularly Scottish influences on the development of the Secession churches, such as patronage and the Burgess oath, did not apply, the Secession flourished in Ulster and America. Westerkamp suggests that it was the conservative quality of the Seceders' religiosity that made them an attractive alternative in Ulster.⁵⁴ The works of the Scottish Seceders Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine were also published in the American colonies in the 1740s and the 1760s,⁵⁵ and the Scottish Seceding churches regularly received requests from their American brethren to send ministers across the Atlantic. In 1766 two Seceding ministers made the journey, and as McBride notes, Seceding ministers in the colonies were influential in winning their congregations over to the patriot side as the American Revolution gathered pace.⁵⁶

It appears that there was considerably greater harmony between Reformed Presbyterians and the Burgher and Antiburgher sects in America than in Scotland, where the specific historical circumstances in which they had originated were not pressing. In 1782 the formation of the Associate Reformed Synod of North America united the Reformed Presbyterians with almost all of the Antiburghers in America, independently of Scottish ecclesiastical jurisdiction. The basis of this union was an acknowledgement of the need to remember the Covenants, but there was no mention of the duty of regular Covenanting.⁵⁷

However, the question of the binding nature of the Covenants was not an irrelevant one in the American colonies. Alexander Craighead (d. 1766) was a Scots-Irish clergyman who ministered to congregations in the backwoods of Pennsylvania, Virginia and North Carolina. He took a less guarded view of the heritage of Covenanting than mainstream political discourse and demanded that New Side Presbyterians reaffirm the Covenants. The Synod declared that his views were "full of treason, sedition, and distraction," and he seceded with his congregation and

⁵⁴ Westerkamp, *Triumph of the Laity*, 127.

⁵⁵ Evans, *American Bibliography*, II, 261; IV, 94.

⁵⁶ McBride, *Scripture Politics*, 75.

⁵⁷ J. McKerron, *History of the Secession Church* (Glasgow, 1841), 571.

renewed the Solemn League and Covenant in 1743.⁵⁸ Baldwin illuminates Craighead's views on the perpetually binding obligation of the Covenants, and the right to resist civil and religious tyranny. Like Scottish Covenanters both during and after the Restoration, Craighead was obsessed with the tyrannical regimes of Charles II and James VII & II, and regarded every monarch down to George II as uncovenanted and therefore illegitimate.⁵⁹

Craighead can also be seen as emblematic of the perceived deficiency in scholarship in the Covenanting tradition, transplanted from Scotland to the colonies. In 1738 the Synod of Philadelphia had demanded that all ministers have university degrees, the Presbyterian academic Francis Alison (1705-79) having noted that some ministers were of a poor standard of learning. He named Craighead as one of three ministers whom he regarded as weak in this respect.⁶⁰ This illustrates that one of the principal differences between Old Side and New Side Presbyterianism – analogous with mainstream and Covenanting Presbyterianism in Scotland – concerned the value of learning weighed against the inner light.

The rebellious reputation of the Scottish Covenanting tradition evidently travelled with the migrants beyond Scotland and Ulster to the American colonies. In 1764 the Paxton Boys, a group of backcountry Presbyterians, rose in revolt because they believed that the Quaker elites of Philadelphia, out of touch with the frontier, were more concerned about the welfare of Indians than the settlers who were the frequent victims of Indian attacks. They invoked the authority of the English Whig tradition, through *Cato's Letters*, to demand their right to protection from the government, but those who opposed them tended to attack them in two separate and even mutually contradictory ways. Firstly, the Paxton Boys were lampooned as typically 'Irish', conforming to the drunken and violent Catholic stereotype. Secondly, however, they were denounced as typically rebellious Presbyterians.⁶¹

⁵⁸ quoted in A. M. Baldwin, 'Sowers of Sedition: The Political Theories of Some of the New Light Presbyterian Clergy of Virginia and South Carolina', *William and Mary Quarterly*, v (1948), 65.

⁵⁹ Baldwin, 'Sowers of Sedition', 70.

⁶⁰ D. Sloan, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the American College Ideal* (New York, 1971), 73.

⁶¹ Griffin, *People with No Name*, 170-1.

One such tirade against the Paxton Boys appeared in Pennsylvania in 1764, and was entitled ‘A Looking-Glass for Presbyterians, or A brief examination of their Loyalty’. The anonymous author rehearsed conventional charges against colonial Presbyterians similar to those previously directed at Scots: that their principles made them comparable to the Jesuit practitioners of resistance that they affected to despise. He dredged up the Covenanting past and accused the Presbyterian denomination of having a rebellious, antinomian character. He complained of the Covenanters’ insurrections during the Restoration:

What King has ever reign’d in Great Britain, whose government has not been disturbed with *Presbyterian Rebellions*, since ever they were a people? Will they not be answerable for all the innocent blood spilt at *Pentland Hills* and *Bothel* [sic] *Bridge*?⁶²

Sensitivity to such disdain for the excesses of the Presbyterian past may explain why the Covenanting works of Rutherford, Steuart and Shields were so rarely cited as examples of legitimate resistance in the eighteenth century: they may not have been seen as such by moderate Presbyterians and members of other denominations. Thus when the Presbyterian preacher Abraham Keteltas spoke of how God raised up individuals to plead his people’s cause, he did not mean assassins, as Steuart would have suggested. Rather, he spoke of public orators and pamphlet writers – social leaders to unite the colonies in resistance whose legitimacy could not be disputed.⁶³

As in Scotland and Ulster, moderate Presbyterian ministers made a concerted effort to appear moderate and loyal, to try to recover from their denomination’s negative reputation. When the Synod of New York and Philadelphia gave thanks for the repeal of the Stamp Act in 1766, it advised a “cheerful and ready obedience to civil authority”, and expressed the hope that its adherents would, “carefully distinguish between liberty and licentiousness.”⁶⁴ At the outbreak of war with Britain in 1775, the pastoral letter from the Synod which John Witherspoon had a hand in composing took a cautious tone, disclaiming, “It is well known to you... that we have not been

⁶² ‘Presbyterians and the American Revolution: A Documentary Account’, *Journal of Presbyterian History*, lii (1974), 333-4.

⁶³ A. Keteltas, ‘God Arising and Pleading his People’s Cause’, in E. Sandoz (ed.), *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era 1730-1805*, (Indianapolis, 1991), 591.

⁶⁴ ‘Presbyterians and the American Revolution’, 337.

instrumental in inflaming the minds of the people, or urging them to acts of violence and disorder.”⁶⁵

Witherspoon, who became President of the College of New Jersey in 1768 and was later a signatory of the Declaration of Independence, was one of the most influential Scots Presbyterians in America. He was educated at Edinburgh University alongside future members of the Moderate literati such as William Robertson, Hugh Blair and John Home, but after his ordination he was a committed member of the more evangelical Popular Party before his emigration to America. Influenced by Francis Hutcheson, his lectures on Civil Society at Princeton restated contract theory and admitted rights of resistance: “If the supreme power wherever lodged, came to be exercised in a manifestly tyrannical manner, the subjects may certainly if in their power, resist and overthrow it.”⁶⁶

Witherspoon understood the need to present the patriot cause as moderate and defensive in order to win support both within the colonies and beyond. Presbyterians had in general been slower than New England Congregationalists to swing behind the patriot cause and to preach politics outright: Witherspoon claimed in his *Dominion of Providence* in 1776 that it was the first time he had done so.⁶⁷ He discouraged personal attacks on George III and his ministers, averring, “Many of their actions have probably been worse than their intentions... They are men, and therefore liable to all the selfish bias inseparable from human nature.”⁶⁸ Ultimately, however, rights of resistance were necessary because unlimited submission was impossible: it simply could not be owed to men because men were fallible and inevitably corrupt.

There is one example of a colonial pamphlet that urged resistance on the Covenanters’ terms. *Defensive Arms Vindicated* was published in 1783, but probably written in 1779, and has been attributed to Stephen Case (1746-94). It is presumed that he was the Captain Stephen Case of New York who served in the

⁶⁵ ‘Presbyterians and the American Revolution’, 380.

⁶⁶ J. Witherspoon, ‘Of Civil Society’, *The Works of John Witherspoon* (Edinburgh, 1805), VII, 103.

⁶⁷ J. Witherspoon, ‘The Dominion of Providence over the Passions of Men’, in Sandoz (ed.), *Political Sermons*, 549.

⁶⁸ Witherspoon, ‘Dominion of Providence’, 550.

Ulster County militia during the Revolutionary War. The dedication to General Washington and reference in the preface to “my dear brother soldiers” supports this assumption. The editor of *Defensive Arms Vindicated*, Ellis Sandoz, praises the pamphlet as “learned and brilliant, if unpolished,” and remarks with approval on Case’s citations of such weighty authors as Bodin and Grotius.⁶⁹ But is it not surprising that a soldier in the field would have access to such hefty French and Latin tomes?

Case broached the Covenanting era early on, and it becomes clear that this was his principal frame of historical reference. The title *Defensive Arms Vindicated* was borrowed from the heading of one of Shields’s chapters in *A Hind Let Loose*, a work that, strangely, was not cited in the pamphlet. For the Covenanters, popular resistance was always proclaimed as defensive, undertaken when the ruler had failed in his part of the covenant or contract. Case asserted the legitimacy, even necessity of all resistance to tyranny, and freely agreed with the methods of the Covenanters, citing Buchanan, Knox, Rutherford, Brown and Steuart.⁷⁰ From these sources, he inferred popular rights of resistance, arguing that the people could judge and punish tyranny: their only judge was God.⁷¹

Case subscribed to the Covenanters’ cult of martyrdom and adopted their vocabulary, lamenting the “killing time” of the Restoration, and urging “the lawfulness of a defensive war.” Adopting typical Covenanting rhetoric, he argued that resistance to tyrannical power was a principle that “many, for adhering to it, have suffered death, and sealed the truth thereof with their blood.”⁷² Where the Covenanters had always hoped that God would raise up an instrument of God’s vengeance against their enemies, Case was able to give thanks had America had already received such a blessing in the form of George Washington.

Have not we of America great reason to bless God, and to stand amazed at the great goodness and providence of God... that he raised us up a second Matthias, even the great Washington, as an instrument in his hands to save this land from ruin and slavery.⁷³

⁶⁹ Sandoz, *Political Sermons*, 712.

⁷⁰ [Case], ‘Defensive Arms Vindicated’, in Sandoz (ed.), *Political Sermons*, 720, 722, 724, 731, 750, 755-6, 758.

⁷¹ [Case], ‘Defensive Arms Vindicated’, 726.

⁷² [Case], ‘Defensive Arms Vindicated’, 719.

⁷³ [Case], ‘Defensive Arms Vindicated’, 745.

Case's privileging of the Covenanting outlook is further emphasised with his statement on the sources he was using:

This great truth is sufficiently made manifest by the most famous and learned patrons and champions for this excellent privilege of mankind, the unanswerable authors of *Lex Rex*, the apologetical relation Naphtali and *Jus Populi Vindicatum*. But because it is easy to add to what is found, I shall subjoin my mite; and their arguments being various and scattered at large through their books, I shall endeavour to collect a compend of them in some order.⁷⁴

Case borrowed more than simply the title of his pamphlet from Shields. This passage was plagiarised almost verbatim from Shields' *A Hind Let Loose*, which was itself a compendium of fifty years of Covenanting thought, completed shortly before the Glorious Revolution.⁷⁵ Case's two citations of Buchanan were also borrowed from Shields, on the biblical precept of Romans 13, and the killing of the tyrant Ahab in the Old Testament.⁷⁶ Shields had already plagiarised a number of citations of such authors as Arnisaeus, Barclay, Bodin, Ferne and Grotius from an earlier Covenanting work by John Brown. Further comparison with Case reveals more of the same: Case appropriated from Shields the same citations that Shields had already taken from Brown.⁷⁷

Case cemented an image of the Scottish canon of resistance theory as monolithic, ignoring the different contexts and assumptions of the writers within it. Although he did situate Rutherford in the 1640s and Steuart in the Restoration, he pointedly did not locate Knox and Buchanan in the period of the Scottish Reformation, using them only in abstract, to illustrate points of Scripture. Surprisingly, while his historical precedents for resistance ranged from the Maccabees of the Old Testament to early modern Switzerland, Holland and France, he neglected to mention the Scottish Reformation, a seemingly obvious example. By failing to locate Knox and Buchanan in their proper context, Case was implicitly associating them with the Covenanters, the main focus of his work. The Covenanters had adopted Buchanan

⁷⁴ [Case], 'Defensive Arms Vindicated', 720.

⁷⁵ Compare [Case], 'Defensive Arms Vindicated', 720, with Shields, *A Hind Let Loose*, 591. See above, p. 104.

⁷⁶ The copied citations of Buchanan can be found in [Case], 'Defensive Arms Vindicated', 722-4, and Shields, *A Hind Let Loose*, 593-5.

⁷⁷ Compare [Case], 'Defensive Arms Vindicated', 720-4 and 731-3 with Shields, *A Hind Let Loose* 591-5 and 603-5.

as one of their own, and Case, taking *A Hind Let Loose* as his main source, had no reason to see Buchanan any differently.

Case should not be seen as a wholly unlearned author, although his appropriation of citations from sources he probably had not read may suggest otherwise. His dedication to George Washington was littered with Latin maxims and quoted St. Augustine, as well as including more conventional biblical references. Although it is possible that Case plagiarised from other sources than Shields, it would seem to be a fair judgement that his pamphlet was a considerable achievement, one that ranged across biblical and historical examples, appropriated all the conventional justifications of resistance spiced up with Covenanting references, and peppered with allusions to the American situation.

Nonetheless, Case's Covenanting rhetoric appears incongruous alongside his references to the present time. The Covenanters were addressing a public very different from that in America at the time of the Revolutionary war. Indeed, one wonders who Case was attempting to persuade, as 1783 was a late date for there to be any who were undecided about the righteousness of American resistance. Who would be persuaded by the rhetoric of the Covenanters, a poor suffering remnant, in a context where Continental mobilisation was required? Case himself was a part of this mobilisation, and was more likely to have been preaching to the converted, to those who were already sympathisers of the Covenanters and who would accept this out-dated rhetoric. To the main body of American opinion, the Covenanting position on resistance, and Case's formulation of it, must have remained marginal.

Conclusion

The build up of pressure in relations between Britain and the American colonies and the eventual eruption of the American Revolution, registered throughout the Atlantic World as a seismograph measures an earth tremor. But this historic climax of resistance was not accompanied by a spike in levels of engagement with Buchanan's resistance theory. It cannot be said that Buchanan was a victim of the historiographical tendency that Hook has noticed, of wilful blindness towards Scottish influences on American politics and culture. The Declaration of Independence does not contain paraphrases from the *De Iure Regni* that wait only for a historian to find them. Buchanan simply was not present in the mainstream of revolutionary rhetoric.

As Kidd argues, the provincial patriotisms of the eighteenth-century peripheries of the British state were "emulative patriotisms concerned with the extension of the achievements of English exceptionalism within the wider British world."⁷⁸ Scots sought to 'complete the Union', eager to experience the benefits of the Union of 1707 through further anglicization, and they pressed demands that the rights of Englishmen should, by law, be the rights of Scots also.⁷⁹ However, in the case of the Protestant Anglo-Irish and the American colonists, claims that they should enjoy the rights of Englishmen outwith English soil were based on biological descent. These groups had no guarantee of their status or their rights in law, and no representation at Westminster. They demanded "the replication of English freedoms in 'colonial' settings," and when Britain was seen to deny these rights, emulation and desire for increased integration could turn into demands for separation.⁸⁰ The American Revolution, then, was not the product of some nascent nationalism in the colonies, but was rather, as Murrin argues, "the culminating moment in the process of anglicization."⁸¹ And in 1782, the war against America and France allowed Ireland's

⁷⁸ C. Kidd, 'North Britishness and the Nature of Eighteenth-Century British Patriotisms', *Historical Journal*, xxxix (1996), 362.

⁷⁹ Kidd, 'North Britishness', 364.

⁸⁰ Kidd, 'North Britishness', 378.

⁸¹ J. Murrin, 'A Roof Without Walls: The Dilemma of American National Identity', in R. Beeman, S. Botein & E. C. Carter II (eds.), *Beyond Confederation: Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity* (Chapel Hill, 1987), 340.

Anglican subjects to gain legislative independence from Britain, albeit independence that has been described as “short-lived and half-illusory.”⁸²

This desire to emulate England and England’s political traditions can illuminate the motives of American colonists in their selection and rejection of ideological resources for political controversy. Griffin argues that one of the reasons for the success enjoyed by Scots-Irish migrants to America was their capacity to integrate, their “dynamic ability to take advantage of the imaginative possibilities of their larger world as they struggled to make sense of it.”⁸³ Many of the Scots-Irish learned to take their political ideas from the wider bank of resources of the Atlantic World, rather than from their narrower Presbyterian or Covenanting traditions. By invoking *Cato’s Letters*, for example, the Paxton Boys were implicitly rejecting the ideological resources of their own tradition, in a search for greater political credibility. In this sense, Case’s unapologetic dependence on Covenanting sources stands out as particularly unusual.

In the cases of Locke and Sidney, Mayhew and Paine, convenient ignoring of some of their excesses of rhetoric made them usable as political theorists. Such refurbishment was not possible for the Scottish Covenanters, who remained symbolic of religious fanaticism. Here, the contradictions inherent in a conception of a Scottish canon of resistance theory become apparent. Alongside the zealots – John Knox and the Covenanters – was situated George Buchanan, a theorist who did not share their biblicist orientation. His ideas were strongly secular, rooted in reason and natural law and comparable to those of Locke, as we have seen. While Buchanan did not properly belong with this Scottish company, however, his location there meant that by association he was effectively unusable in the American context.

There are a number of reasons why Buchanan was so rarely cited in the context of the American Revolution. Firstly, resistance theories had developed into a bank of ideas that American polemicists could draw on indiscriminately and flexibly without enquiring too much into the authorship or nature of individual sources or ideas. Buchanan’s ideas did meet the colonists’ needs by providing a popular and

⁸² J. C. Beckett, *The Anglo-Irish Tradition* (London, 1976), 47.

⁸³ Griffin, *People with No Name*, 173.

contractarian admission of resistance that could be blended with other resources, and his resistance theory was present in the mix, although his name was rarely mentioned. It can be concluded that Buchanan was known in the American context, but not to a great extent. His continuing association with the over-zealous and under-schooled Covenanters, whose works were barely known and wholly unusable, meant that his name was not a desirable one to mention, in comparison to the thoroughly appropriate names of Locke and Sidney.

Although prolific contributors to resistance theory, the Covenanters were rarely cited in the American Revolutionary context because of their perceived murderous and antinomian tendencies. Stephen Case, who, with amusing understatement used the pseudonym of 'A Moderate Whig', was something of a maverick, one of the only examples of willingness to cite and endorse their views and methods. Despite all the theorising and sermonising on resistance that had taken place before and during the conflict with the British, he claimed, remarkably, "none, that I have seen, has, to my satisfaction, cleared up the lawfulness of the use of defensive arms against tyrants."⁸⁴ However, for the educated laymen and clerics who had drawn on ideas from the Reformation to the Enlightenment to vindicate American resistance (with help from Thomas Paine), the case had been so adequately proven by 1776 as to secure the passage of the Declaration of Independence. This was achieved through an effort of self-conscious moderation, without recourse to such potentially embarrassing sources as those of the Covenanters and, by association, George Buchanan.

⁸⁴ [Case], 'Defensive Arms Vindicated', 717.

Chapter 7

George Buchanan and the Era of the French Revolution

Introduction

In the second half of the eighteenth century, as we have seen, Buchanan's reputation in Scotland began to undergo a process of rehabilitation. Scottish historians of the enlightenment such as Robertson and Hume had been successful in encouraging the reading of history in a broader public than ever before. Robertson can be regarded as particularly important, as his work went a considerable way towards separating the first and second Scottish Reformations, a development that was significant in dislodging the reputation of Buchanan from that of the Scottish Covenanters. The process of Buchanan's rehabilitation as a hero of civil and religious liberty was underway by the building of the Killearn monument to Buchanan in 1788, and it will be suggested that it was cemented in the era of the French Revolution.

The unsettling effects of the French Revolution, with its slide towards atheistic republicanism, and the experience of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, consolidated the formation of a pantheon of civil and religious liberty that all Scots could be proud of. A pantheon of heroes, it must be emphasised, is very different to a canon of political theories. A canon, as an accepted collection of writings, is relatively static and based to a considerable extent on the texts. While we have seen that the reputations of canonical political theorists can experience vagaries of fortune, membership of the canon is also associated with merit, on the uniqueness of a theorist's ideas. A pantheon, in contrast, is based on more grandiose, but potentially less flattering foundations. It is based not on texts, but on imagination. Its membership can change through generations, subject to fashion, capable of reinterpretation, redefinition, and rebranding. In a pantheon of heroes, the members acquire 'equal' status that undermines their uniqueness. Their intrinsic meanings, the qualities that they displayed in order to gain their place, are assumed to be the same.

The demise of Jacobitism and the confessional politics associated with it also contributed to the consolidation of the Scottish pantheon. The Old Pretender died in

1766, the Young Pretender in 1788, and in 1800 Cardinal Henry Stuart, the last in the direct line of the Royal Stuarts, was given a pension by George III. By 1815 a considerable distance had been attained from the political and religious conflicts of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, conflicts in which Buchanan and the Covenanters had been involved or invoked. This distance allowed the troubled Presbyterian past to be reconsidered and re-imagined by novelists such as Sir Walter Scott, James Hogg and John Galt.

The rehabilitation of Buchanan's reputation played down his regicidal radicalism and began to privilege the *Historia* over the *De Iure Regni*, a process that was helped by the fortuitous timing of translations of his work. Buchanan became a popular historian, one of few who had covered the broad sweep of Scottish history from the earliest times to the Reformation. The Covenanters, it will be argued, were not yet ripe for rehabilitation, and would remain unsuitable for entry into the pantheon of civil and religious liberty until the mid-nineteenth century.

From its inception in 1789, the French Revolution divided opinion in Britain. Many welcomed it, including the English dissenters Richard Price and Joseph Priestley, and prominent Scots such as Thomas Reid and John Millar. It was hoped that 1789 might be France's Glorious Revolution, a constitutional watershed and a release from the bondage of absolutism. However, the escalating radicalism of the Revolution sent shockwaves through Europe: by March of 1793 the French had formed a republic, executed their king, Louis XVI, and were at war with most of the European powers, including Britain. One of the earliest warnings about the potentially anarchic development of the Revolution came from the Irish MP Edmund Burke (1729-97) in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, published in 1790. Burke saw the Revolution as a twisted growth of the Enlightenment, which had inspired the French to move away from the accepted wisdom of centuries of government and to form a new system based on philosophical speculation. This he regarded as folly:

When ancient opinions and rules of life are taken away, the loss cannot possibly be estimated. From that moment we have no

compass to govern us; nor can we know distinctly to what port we steer.¹

Like all republican discourse in the early modern period, French republicanism was based on the concept and rhetoric of virtue. In the final quarter of the eighteenth century, the theory of republicanism had undergone a significant shift. Before this time, republican thought focused on the experiences of Sparta and Rome, Venice and the United Provinces, and insisted that republics had to be small, virtuous, and lacking in expansionist or imperial ambition. The English republic of the 1650s was often dismissed as an aberration, an improper example. This orthodoxy was reinforced by Baron de Montesquieu (1689-1755) in *Espirit des lois* in 1748, but was turned on its head in the context of the new American republic. In the debates over the ratification of the constitution in 1787, James Madison (1751-1836) famously argued that a republic could be large, and that a multiplicity of competing interests, far from being ‘unvirtuous’ or detrimental to stability, could act as checks on one another for the good of the republic.²

French republicanism, rather than admitting contention and virtuous dissent, preferred a vision of unanimity. Leading Jacobins such as Maximilien Robespierre (1758-94) and Leon de Saint-Just (1767-94) released the totalitarian potential in Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s (1712-78) understanding of the social contract. They defined ‘the people’ as a single entity, which acted unanimously, and literally spoke through its Jacobin mouthpieces in the Convention, making any dissent counterrevolutionary by definition.³

Rights of resistance, and the question of who could resist, were not of vital importance in the context of the French Revolution. In the debates leading up to the regicide, Saint-Just famously argued that Louis “must reign or die.” He complained that there was no need for a legal process – the Romans had boldly killed Caesar, “with no law but the liberty of Rome.” Saint-Just alluded to the social contract, but in a different formulation to what had been the norm in the sixteenth and seventeenth

¹ E. Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. J. G. A. Pocock (Indianapolis, 1987), 68-9.

² J. Madison, ‘Factions and their Remedy: The Federalist No. 10’, in R. D. Brown (ed.), *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution, 1760-1791* (Boston, 2000), 440-44.

³ C. Blum, *Rousseau and the Republic of Virtue: The Language of Politics in the French Revolution* (Ithaca, 1986), 160-81.

centuries. It was not a contract between ruler and ruled, he insisted, but one “between citizen and citizen.” The people and the monarch were inexorably enemies. The problem was not tyranny, an occasional moral disease that might disfigure monarchy, but the institution of monarchy itself, which was “an eternal crime against which every man has the right to rise and arm himself.”⁴

In the British ideological landscape of the 1790s a distinction can be made between what might be called ‘new’ radicalism and an older and more constitutional variety of political thought. The new radicalism was that of Thomas Paine and the French Revolution, democratic republicanism, a set of opinions that attacked the wisdom of history and argued that each generation could and should act rationally to meet its own needs without being constrained by precedent. As Paine argued in his incendiary *Rights of Man*, published in 1791-2:

I am contending for the right of the *living*, and against their being willed away, and controlled and contracted for, by the manuscript-assumed authority of the dead; and Mr. Burke is contending for the authority of the dead over the rights and freedom of the living.⁵

The extremity of these new radical ideas limited the application they could have in Britain. In this period, the rejection of history was very difficult, and there were many in Britain – many, even, who were far less conservative than Edmund Burke – who continued to see rights and liberties not as universal and abstract, but as an inheritance of history. The ‘rights of Britons’ were a constant ideological rival to the ‘rights of man’. Even the rhetoric that had been used to celebrate the rights of Britons in 1788, the rhetoric of civil and religious liberty, could begin to look dangerous against the context of the escalating Revolution in France, and the hardening culture of loyalism in Britain.⁶ William Robertson’s family suppressed an unpublished sermon from 1788 after his death because its tone had come to appear

⁴ L. Saint-Just, ‘Speech Before the Convention’, in M. Walzer (ed.), *Regicide and Revolution: Speeches at the Trial of Louis XVI* (Cambridge, 1974), 122-4.

⁵ Paine, ‘The Rights of Man’, *Political Writings*, 64.

⁶ On the “smug and perhaps gratuitous self-congratulation on the glories of the British constitution” that marked the centenary celebrations of the Glorious Revolution in November 1788, see K. Wilson, ‘Inventing Revolution: 1688 and Eighteenth-Century Popular Politics’, *Journal of British Studies*, xxviii (1989), 353.

dangerous in the climate of the 1790s.⁷ As Kidd notes, “The small window of self-expression which had opened in 1788 was firmly closed and shuttered by 1793.”⁸

Invocations of the ‘rights of Britons’, therefore, can be seen as old radicalism, or constitutionalism. Many hoped this could be a language sufficiently relevant to discuss the British constitution and its present faults and needs, but with adequate historical support to avoid charges of sedition. Those who used this language in Scotland, England and Ireland in the period of the French Revolution usually did so for reformist rather than radical ends, if ‘radical’ is taken in the sense of aspiring to far-reaching and fundamental change. The Societies of the Friends of the People, formed in England in April 1792 by reformist Whigs and extended to Scotland in July of that year, did not exist to propagate new radical ideas, as John Brims has argued: “the new association’s stated objectives owed nothing to Paineite radicalism and everything to Whig constitutionalism.”⁹ One of the most interesting features of this period is the extent to which the establishment failed to grasp the continuing prevalence of the safe Whig and ancient constitutional thought among the reformers, and were constantly frightened by the dangerous but somewhat illusory spectre of Paine and the new radicalism.

⁷ Sher, ‘1688 and 1788’, 103.

⁸ C. Kidd, ‘The Kirk, the French Revolution, and the Burden of Scottish Whiggery’, in N. Aston (ed.), *Religious Change in Europe 1650-1914* (Oxford, 1997), 223-5.

⁹ J. Brims, ‘From Reformers to ‘Jacobins’: The Scottish Associations of the Friends of the People’, in T.M. Devine (ed.) *Conflict and Stability in Scottish Society 1700-1850* (Edinburgh, 1990), 35.

The Uses of Buchanan in Reformist and Loyalist Discourse

The activities of the Scottish reformers, particularly the Conventions held in Edinburgh between December 1792 and December 1793, took place against the background of an establishment reaction. This reaction came to include the trials and transportations of leading members of the Scottish radical movement, first of Thomas Muir, (1765-99) Vice-President of the Edinburgh Friends of the People and the Tayside reformer Thomas Fyssh Palmer (1747-1802); and later of William Skirving, (d. 1796) Secretary of the Edinburgh Friends of the People and the English reformers Joseph Gerrard (1763-96) and Maurice Margarot (1745-1815), who had been delegates at the first British Convention in December 1793.

The most interesting of these trials for sedition were those in which the accused spoke in their own defence, particularly those of Thomas Muir and William Skirving. Both attempted to defeat charges that they endorsed the new radicalism, while regarding it as perfectly acceptable, and even desirable, to declare themselves adherents of constitutionalism and to name Buchanan as a part of this tradition. However, the reformers' faith in constitutionalism as a broadly acceptable language was mistaken. Although the establishment would prefer to attack reformers by associating them with the new radicalism, a hardening culture of loyalism by the mid-1790s in particular, meant that Buchanan could still be cited as a malevolent influence, a representative of anarchic Calvinist populism.

The establishment regarded new radicalism as a more effective tar with which to brush reformers than constitutionalism. This is apparent in the reaction to the Address sent by the Dublin United Irishmen to the first convention of the Scottish Friends of the People in Edinburgh in December 1792. The United Irishmen at this time were a reformist pressure group, seeking to unite Presbyterians, Anglicans and Catholics in campaigning for greater political and religious freedom. Several of their leading Presbyterian members had been educated in Scotland, including William Drennan, the author of the address. The tone of the document, however, was misjudged, and McFarland has discussed how the authorities in Scotland received its

“high-flown combative rhetoric,” at the time when the establishment reaction was beginning to gather momentum.¹⁰

Thomas Muir read out the Address to the assembled delegates at the Scottish Convention, and it was one of the factors in his conviction for sedition. The sentence in which Buchanan’s name featured read:

We rejoice that you do not consider yourselves as merged and melted down into another Country, but that in this great National Question you are still Scotland – the Land where Buchanan wrote, and Fletcher spoke, and Wallace fought.¹¹

However, Buchanan’s name did not feature in the selected excerpts of the Address read out by the prosecution. These were necessarily the most incriminating parts, and this suggests that Buchanan’s name did not have the same radical connotations as it had a century before. If Buchanan’s name had radical associations then the prosecution would certainly have seized upon them.

The prosecution rather placed their emphasis on a disembodied section of this sentence which read “You are still Scotland”, and attempted to suggest that the United Irishmen were urging Scots to support the dissolution of the Union. This was bolstered by an expression in the previous sentence, referring to Scotland as an “embodied Nation.”¹² Muir did not deny that he had read the Address, and maintained, “that every line” was “strictly constitutional.”¹³ He read out the offending sentence in its entirety and argued that the intended meaning of the United Irishmen was simply to complement Scotland, “expressing solely their idea of her still being distinguished by her former lustre”.¹⁴ The completion of the sentence with the names of Buchanan, Fletcher and Wallace made the meaning more moderate. Or, to put it another way, the removal of these names, which signified constitutionalism, from the sentence, gave it a more incriminating and damaging meaning.

¹⁰ E. W. McFarland, *Ireland and Scotland in the Age of Revolution: Planting the Green Bough* (Edinburgh, 1994), 79.

¹¹ ‘Address from the Society of United Irishmen in Dublin’, in McFarland, *Ireland and Scotland in the Age of Revolution*, 248.

¹² ‘Address from the Society of United Irishmen in Dublin’, 248; ‘The Trial of Thomas Muir’, in T. J. Howell (ed.), *A Complete Collection of State Trials and Proceedings for High Treason* (London, 1817), XXIII, Col. 124-6.

¹³ ‘The Trial of Thomas Muir’, *State Trials*, XXIII, Col. 224.

¹⁴ ‘The Trial of Thomas Muir’, *State Trials*, XXIII, Col. 225.

William Skirving, at his trial in Edinburgh in January 1794, chose to assert his constitutional credentials by reading aloud excerpts from *Essays on the Lives and Writings of Fletcher of Saltoun and the Poet Thomson*, by the Earl of Buchan. He apparently believed that sharing opinions with men of this station, “men in the higher spheres of life,” was a mark of moderation.¹⁵ However, McIlvanney points out Buchan’s somewhat maverick character, which challenges Skirving’s apparent hope that his aristocratic reading matter would be favourably regarded by the court. Buchan “was a peer of decidedly liberal sympathies, a supporter of the American and French Revolutions, a Friend of the People.” Not only this, but he had a Covenanting ancestor who fled to the Americas on account of his rebelliousness.¹⁶

Buchan had contributed to *The Bee*, writing under the pseudonym of Albanicus,¹⁷ and, with confidence bordering on the comical, he proclaimed his trust in February 1792 that France’s new rational system “will withstand the shock of ages.”¹⁸ Such ideas were perhaps too sensitive for *The Bee*. The editor, James Anderson, as he was wont to do when publishing some of the more colourful pieces, appended some of his own remarks to qualify what had been written.¹⁹

Skirving nonetheless advanced Buchan as a paragon of moderation, despite the fact that in January 1794 the French republic appeared to be far from rational. He quoted the earl’s Buchananite view of the history of Scottish liberty, which was, “determined, and fixed by multiplied instances of changing the order of succession, and attainting their sovereigns for treason against the rights of the people.” Speaking of Buchanan, he read out the earl’s words: “It is to Scotland and a Scotchman that

¹⁵ ‘The Trial of William Skirving’, *State Trials*, XXIII, Col. 571.

¹⁶ McIlvanney, *Burns the Radical*, 56.

¹⁷ H. W. Meikle, *Scotland and the French Revolution* (Glasgow, 1912), 13. Buchan is known to have used the pseudonym ‘Albanicus’ prior to 1792, and it is safe to assume that he is the author of this piece because of the nervous but deferential response of the editor. “The ingenious performance above, is probably written by one who has had much better opportunities of observing facts, and who is much more capable of drawing proper inferences from these than I could do...” ‘Remarks on the above by the Editor’, *The Bee*, VII, (1792), 319.

¹⁸ ‘Novum Organum Politicum: Being an Attempt to Shew that the Aera of Scientific Government is Arrived’, *The Bee*, VII, (1792), 314.

¹⁹ ‘Remarks on the above by the Editor’, 319-320.

the world is indebted for the establishment of the philosophical and logical principles of a free constitution.”²⁰

Skirving was careful to deny any association with the principles of the French Revolution. “With these I have nothing to do... Excesses and sanguinary measures make no part of my principles.”²¹ The Lord Advocate, Robert Dundas, had tried to associate the proceedings and forms of address of the British Convention with those of the French Convention. This was not difficult: the members of the British Convention had addressed one another as ‘citizen’, and dated the existence of their assembly as ‘Year 1’ of the British Convention.²² Dundas spoke of the present associations attending the word ‘citizen’, arguing, “The term citizen, of itself is no crime; but used in this manner, it is a circumstance, in the chain of evidence to show that they are a set of French Conventionists.”²³

Here the Lord Advocate was implicitly acknowledging the differences between the old and new radicalisms. Under the old radicalism, with its humanist and Real Whig heritage, the connotations of the word ‘citizen’ were entirely positive, signifying virtue and participation in the commonwealth. A similar disjunction between the old and new radicalisms can also be seen in the word ‘republic’. In the new radical or Jacobin meaning it had connotations of the dismantling of an ancien regime with its monarchy and aristocracy. In the ‘Real Whig’ discourse, however, ‘republic’, like ‘citizen’, had entirely positive meanings. Britain could be described as a republic if republic was taken as a synonym for commonwealth, and Trenchard and Gordon had described Britain in this way in *Cato’s Letters* in the 1720s.²⁴ In the language of the new radicalism, the term ‘citizen’ was a dangerous one, and it was this association that the Lord Advocate was trying to emphasise.

However, if King Charles I was a victim of the old radicalism and King Louis XVI a victim of the new, then the two radicalisms could be regarded as similar. Loyalist

²⁰ ‘The Trial of William Skirving’, *State Trials*, XXIII, Col. 573; D. Stewart Erskine, Earl of Buchan, *Essays on the Lives and Writings of Fletcher of Saltoun and the Poet Thomson* (London, 1792), 33.

²¹ ‘The Trial of William Skirving’, *State Trials*, XXIII, Col. 588.

²² Brims, ‘From Reformers to ‘Jacobins’’, 46.

²³ ‘The Trial of William Skirving’, *State Trials*, XXIII, Col. 545.

²⁴ P. Ayres, *Classical Culture and the Idea of Rome in Eighteenth Century England* (Cambridge, 1997), 11.

rhetoric often associated the excesses of the 1790s with those of the 1640s, and this is evident in the naming of loyalist societies such as the Association for the Protection of Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers. Its leading organiser, John Reeves (1752?-1829) wrote a loyalist tract in 1795 that did not discriminate between the two radicalisms, but attacked both equally as French innovations. Calvin was blamed for encouraging the popular doctrines that later developed into the French Revolution.

The English Reformation, Reeves argued, was “a master-piece of temper and good sense,” but England was later corrupted by the insidious influence of the more extreme Calvinist reformations in Scotland and elsewhere in Europe.²⁵ Recalling the spirit of the Oxford Decree, Reeves complained that Calvinist doctrine encouraged the people to believe that they themselves were “the origin of all Civil Authority.” The holders of this “Geneva Discipline” he named as Calvin and Beza, Knox and Buchanan.²⁶ For the defenders of the establishment, then, the novel terrors of the new radicalism did not neutralise fears of the old. Buchanan could still be attacked as a prophet of rebellion, in the same terms in which he had been attacked in the previous centuries. Reformers invoked Buchanan as a member of the Scottish pantheon of civil and religious liberty, but this tactic was not entirely safe.

²⁵ [J. Reeves], ‘Thoughts on the English Government. Addressed to the Quiet Good Sense of the People of England’, in G. Claeys (ed.), *Political Writings of the 1790s* (London, 1995), VIII, 230.

²⁶ [Reeves], ‘Thoughts on the English Government’, 232.

Buchanan and the Covenanting Tradition in the 1790s

The Scottish Presbyterian mind, particularly the Covenanting mind, experienced great difficulty with the tension between new radicalism and constitutionalism. Through their continuing adherence to the covenants, Reformed Presbyterians and Seceders faced problems in trying to hold to their views on the church and state. They sought to testify against the erastian and prelatical evils of the British state and the Anglican Church, while maintaining a position of loyalty to the constitution in dangerous times. In England, the theology and ecclesiology of the Anglican church led to more natural conservatism among the clergy, who could “be deployed unreservedly against the Jacobin menace.” In Scotland, as Kidd notes, “There was a very real danger that conservative Covenanting might be mistaken for radicalism.”²⁷

Archibald Bruce (1746-1814) put forward a historical conception of liberty rooted in the Scottish Covenanting tradition in *Reflections on Freedom of Writing*, published in 1794. As an Antiburgher minister he held to a position that was at once theologically conservative and politically radical. Bruce took a Buchananite position on kingship, insisting that Presbyterians were loyal “to the name, authority, and interest of their kings,” but were “the first to bridle their despotism, to deny their illegal prerogatives, and to resist their attempts to destroy their religion and liberty.”²⁸ He argued that books by authors such as Calvin, Buchanan, and Rutherford were once consigned to be burned, implying that now he regarded their views as orthodox and even commonplace.

It is but of late that the principles of free government, of the origin and conveyance of power, the voice a people ought to have in framing the laws by which they are governed, their right of resisting tyrants, and rectifying the public abuses, and mal-administration of their governors, were publicly recognized, or allowed to be tolerable.²⁹

It is doubtful whether Henry Dundas, or indeed his nephew the Lord Advocate would regard such principles as ‘publicly recognized’ or ‘tolerable’. Yet significantly, Bruce did not appear to regard figures such as Buchanan and Rutherford as dangerous radicals anymore.

²⁷ Kidd, ‘French Revolution’, 232.

²⁸ [A. Bruce], *Reflections on Freedom of Writing, and the Impropriety of attempting to suppress it by Penal Laws* (Edinburgh, 1794), 80-1.

²⁹ [Bruce], *Reflections on Freedom of Writing*, 44-5.

Political sermons of the 1790s contain further illustrations of the constitutionalist position, illustrating a lack of penetration of Paineite theories and the persistence of concerns of civil and religious liberty. William Dunn (1745-98) took the view that the community instituted government for its own good. Rulers, he said, are accountable to the community and “liable to be censured, cashiered, or otherways punished, for extravagance, wilful mismanagement, or betraying their trust.”³⁰ Although this admission of rights of resistance sounds Buchananite, its terminology can actually be traced to more recent origins: this usage of ‘cashier’ was from Richard Price’s provocative lecture *A Discourse on the Love of our Country*.³¹ Dunn was imprisoned for three months in 1793 for his reformist activities, and Kidd regards his assertiveness as atypical of Scottish ministers of that time.³²

Andrew Hunter (1744-1809) was a member of the Popular Party, held the Chair of Divinity at Edinburgh University, and was Moderator of the General Assembly in 1793. He preached in Edinburgh in 1792 on the subject of St. Paul’s injunctions on obedience, passages that had long held a central position in debates on rights of resistance. He emphasised that St. Paul had urged citizens to be obedient to their rulers, even at a time when those rulers were heathens. This obedience was enjoined “in all things lawful”, but was not an unlimited submission. If a ruler gave commandments that were contrary to the revealed laws of God, then, Hunter argued, “in such cases a refusal to obey becomes a branch of moral obligation, nay resistance itself may be proper... We ought to obey God rather than men.”³³ This was a Buchananite position, indeed, the position of most Calvinist political theory from the sixteenth century. He gave thanks for “the inestimable blessings of the reformation from popery, and the legal establishment of our excellent constitution at the glorious aera of the revolution in 1688.”³⁴

³⁰ W. Dunn, *A Sermon preached at the opening of the Synod of Glasgow and Air, at Glasgow, 9 October, 1792* (Glasgow, 1792), 11.

³¹ R. Price, *A Discourse on the Love of our Country*, ed. D. O. Thomas (Cambridge, 1991), 189-90.

³² Kidd, ‘French Revolution’, 228.

³³ A. Hunter, *The Duties of Subjects. A Sermon preached in the Tron Church, Edinburgh, December 16th, 1792* (Edinburgh, 1793), 3-4.

³⁴ Hunter, *Duties of Subjects*, 8.

Many ministers, however, would not go so far as Hunter's moderate and constitutional admission of resistance. John Erskine, (?1721-1803) another member of the Popular Party, unequivocally renounced the Covenanting era.³⁵ Emma Vincent has argued that ministers in the 1790s "defended the British constitution in a typically conservative fashion."³⁶ However, this use of the word 'conservative' can be qualified. Many of these ministers were certainly defending the British constitution, but they were arguably doing so in a manner that was formerly radical, but tending to a conservative end in this context. Pointing out the citations made by ministers of the traditional biblical passages used to inculcate obedience, such as Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2, Vincent overstates the submission to government required by these precepts.³⁷ As can be seen in Hunter's sermon, such passages were, and for centuries had been used, for radical ends, and to justify rights of resistance. Old debates were continued in the same terms – but to draw conservative conclusions and buttress the established order. Ideas that had once been radical were now a form of conservatism. The Buchananite position, it might be argued, was in some ways a form of conservatism in the context of the 1790s because it was centred on the civil and religious liberties achieved at the reformation.

Invocations of 'noble ancestors' such as Buchanan, Fletcher and Wallace became a regular feature of constitutionalist writings of the 1790s. However, it is open to question whether the Covenanters could be named in such a way. Brims has emphasised the Presbyterian piety of many of the Scottish reformers in the 1790s. William Skirving was a Burgher, and at his trial he compared the repression of the reformers with the measures taken against the Covenanters during the Restoration.³⁸ Thomas Muir, although an adherent of the established church, also invoked the Covenanting tradition, citing the numbers of Scottish Presbyterians who had suffered for opposing the ambitions of the Stuarts from the reign of James VI onwards. Brims has commented on the extent to which the Covenanting tradition, "Attracted devotees even from within a church which had long since abandoned its support for

³⁵ Kidd, 'French Revolution', 225.

³⁶ E. Vincent, 'The Responses of Scottish Churchmen to the French Revolution, 1789-1802', *Scottish Historical Review*, lxxiii (1994), 197.

³⁷ Vincent, 'The Responses of Scottish Churchmen', 199.

³⁸ J. Brims, 'The Covenanting Tradition and Scottish Radicalism in the 1790s', in T. Brotherstone (ed.), *Covenant, Charter and Party: Traditions of Revolt and Protest in Modern Scottish History* (Aberdeen, 1989), 57.

the Covenants themselves.”³⁹ It is notable, however, that in both these instances, Skirving and Muir were attacking persecution, which they also perceived themselves to be victims of, rather than positively endorsing any of the ideas or actions of the Covenanters.

Notably, the Friends of the People avoided references to the Covenanting tradition. They were a broad church, seeking to hold together an alliance of ‘old Calvinism’ and ‘new rationalism’, from Antiburghers to Unitarians. As a “movement which sought to avoid confrontation with government by channelling discontent along constitutional lines,” a more important reason for their avoidance of the Covenanting tradition was a fear of being tainted by its antinomian and anti-establishment heritage, a recognition that it was ‘unsafe’.⁴⁰

Archibald Bruce was willing to name exactly which ‘noble ancestors’ he thought deserving of emulation. He emphasised the good work of some of the nobility who, in the first and second reformations, gained fame “by zealously espousing the cause of popular liberty and reformation, in opposition to the tyranny of the crown and church united.” Bruce shared the attitudes of the Covenanters towards the nobility, praising them at times, but criticising their present actions, and going so far as to argue, “the Commons of Scotland can no longer honour their Peers with confidence.”⁴¹

Bruce generalised on the role of the nobility in the first and second reformations in his political work *Reflections on Freedom of Writing*. It was only in his sermon on *The Remarkable Providences of the Times* that he was willing to specifically discuss “the posterity of covenanting ancestors,” and name such names as Guthrie and Renwick. Even here, however, he professed the loyalty of the Secession churches to the civil government, arguing that they “have expressly recognized both the lawfulness and the excellence of such a civil constitution, have uniformly professed

³⁹ Brims, ‘The Covenanting Tradition and Scottish Radicalism’, 57.

⁴⁰ Brims, ‘The Covenanting Tradition and Scottish Radicalism’, 58.

⁴¹ [Bruce], *Reflections on Freedom of Writing*, 88.

subjection to the authority constituted in it,” and emphasised that their only objection to the present establishment was the religious presence in the civil sphere.⁴²

Numerous citations of Buchanan can be found in this period, although only rarely do they emphasise, positively or negatively, Buchanan’s advocacy of rights of resistance. The pages of *The Bee*, for example, contain references to Knox and Buchanan as pillars of the Reformation.⁴³ But absent are names such as Rutherford, Steuart and Shields, proponents of the sort of resistance theory that “made even Buchananite resistance seem tame.”⁴⁴ By the 1790s, Archibald Bruce was one of few who were willing to positively uphold the Covenanting view of Scottish history and celebrate its achievements. He was something of a maverick character, representing a position that was not widely held. Although many of Bruce’s pronouncements clearly skated on thin ice as far as the establishment was concerned, he appears not to have experienced prosecution for his views, nor to have attended reform societies or conventions.⁴⁵

⁴² [Bruce], *A Serious View of the Remarkable Providences of the Times* (Glasgow, 1795), 46, 65, 81.

⁴³ The treatment of Knox was far from complimentary. The author of the ‘Characteristical Sketch of John Knox the Reformer’ was determined to set him in context, as the manners of the 1790s were very different. He saw in Knox “too much ardour of mind, and too much zeal in religious matters,” as well as an inability to understand or forgive the failings of others (notably Queen Mary). ‘Characteristical Sketch of John Knox the Reformer’, *The Bee*, XV, (1793), 193-7. Another commentator on Buchanan implicitly noted this historical distance when he said “The annals of the sixteenth century supplied incessant exercise for a mind addicted to the language of indignation and defiance.” ‘Some Remarks on the Literary Character of George Buchanan’, *The Bee*, V, (1791), 237. Gleanings of Biography, 1st from the Diary of Mr James Melvil, September 1582’ *The Bee*, V, (1791), 134.

⁴⁴ Kidd, *Subverting Scotland’s Past*, 54.

⁴⁵ Brims, *The Scottish Democratic Movement*, I, 107-8.

The Scottish Pantheon of Civil and Religious Liberty

The address from the United Irishmen established in the pantheon of Scottish liberty the triumvirate of Wallace, Fletcher, and Buchanan, and their motives in picking out these names can be examined. Did they intend these names to evoke radical connotations? All three had written or fought in defence in freedom, however, these were very different forms of freedom, spaced several centuries apart, and it would be difficult to construe these as particularly democratic, or suited to the radical context of the 1790s. Rather, these choices were made, as Thomas Muir said, simply as illustrations of the ‘former lustre’ of Scotland.

Muir’s oratory at his trial made many citations of authors who had written in defence of freedom, including Cicero, More, Harrington, Locke and Hume. None of these, he argued, were guilty of sedition.⁴⁶ Muir used the names of Buchanan and other political theorists just as the lawyer Thomas Erskine used the name of John Locke in his defence of Thomas Hardy at his trial for treason in London in 1794.⁴⁷ These names represented the accumulated political wisdom of centuries, and Muir regarded them as safe enough to invoke in his trial because such wisdom was the antithesis of the new radicalism of the French Revolution. In Muir’s usages of these theorists it is doubtful if he was trying to declare an attachment to or defend a set of political principles. Rather, these men were simply names, intended principally to produce associations in the minds of his hearers. In this sense, then, this name-dropping does not constitute a canon of texts or theories, but a pantheon of heroes.

Other authorities of this period made similar attempts to construct pantheons of liberty, with varying memberships. The Earl of Buchan praised Wallace as “a martyr to the independency and liberties of his country,” and outlined his own pantheon: “Hume, and Napier, and Fletcher, and Buchanan, and Thompson, will live forever.”⁴⁸ He referred to Fletcher as “my favourite” and confessed his desire “to perpetuate his name”.⁴⁹ Robert Burns’s “personal pantheon of libertarian heroes”

⁴⁶ ‘The Trial of Thomas Muir’, *State Trials*, XXIII, Col. 213.

⁴⁷ Goldie, ‘Introduction’, *The Reception of Locke’s Politics*, I, p. xvii.

⁴⁸ Buchan, *Essays on Fletcher and Thomson*, p. xvi, xxviii.

⁴⁹ Buchan, *Essays on Fletcher and Thomson*, p. xxxv, 4.

included Alfred the Great as well as Scottish heroes Wallace and Bruce.⁵⁰ Outdoing Muir in citations, Archibald Bruce name-dropped More, Harrington, Milton, Sidney, Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Machiavelli and Hobbes, as well as Buchanan.⁵¹ Even James Mackintosh, (1765-1832) whose *Vindiciae Gallicae* of 1791 was one of the earliest responses to Burke, and was among the most Paineite of all Scottish political writing of the 1790s, made references to the conventional canon of 'Real Whig' political theory, naming Milton, Harrington, Sidney, Locke, Molyneux and Fletcher.⁵²

In the 1790s, therefore, Buchanan was accepted as a principal member of the Scottish pantheon of civil and religious liberty. He was respected, even deified, but was judged less by his texts and fundamentally misunderstood, or rather, understood in terms of the period's own choosing. The hyperbolic praise bestowed upon Buchanan tended to be vague and indiscriminating. It displayed engagement with what Buchanan had come to stand for, not with his political theory. The earl of Buchan compared Buchanan to "the morning star, to announce the approach of philosophical day", and called him "the greatest man of his age, as well as country", and "the father of whiggery".⁵³ This new rarefied status is underlined by the fact that one contributor to *The Bee* took 'Philo Buchananus' as his pseudonym.⁵⁴ Buchanan was further described as "a herald of civil and religious liberty".⁵⁵ Mackintosh's usage of Buchanan also hints at this iconic status. His praise of *De Iure Regni* as a work which "no former age had equalled, and no succeeding has surpassed," highlights this, locating Buchanan in the past and present, and potentially the future.⁵⁶ An article in *The Bee* illustrates the possibilities of ascribing any fashionable political principles to Buchanan: "Never did the 'rights of man' meet with a more ardent partisan."⁵⁷

⁵⁰ McIlvanney, *Burns the Radical*, 51.

⁵¹ Bruce, *Reflections on Freedom of Writing*, 45-6.

⁵² J. Mackintosh, *Vindiciae Gallicae: Defence of the French Revolution and its English Admirers against the Accusations of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke* (London, 1791), 310-11.

⁵³ Buchan, *Essays on Fletcher and Thomson*, p. xxi, 33 (These last two expressions of praise were quoted by William Skirving in his trial for sedition.)

⁵⁴ *The Bee*, IX, (1792), 330.

⁵⁵ 'Some Remarks on the Literary Character of George Buchanan', *The Bee*, V, (1791), 232.

⁵⁶ Mackintosh, *Vindiciae Gallicae*, 310.

⁵⁷ 'Some Remarks on the Literary Character of George Buchanan', *The Bee*, V, (1791), 232.

1799 saw the publication of two near-identical translations of Buchanan's *Historia*.⁵⁸ Robert Macfarlan (1734-1804) also published the *De Iure Regni* in a new translation in the same year, and the text further illustrates Buchanan's status as an icon rather than a relevant political thinker. Macfarlan expressed his motives in publishing Buchanan's works as the hope of "vindicating the posthumous fame of deceased merit." He also showered Buchanan with praise as one of "those rare spirits, who have shone as luminaries in their respective nations, and guided them, like polar stars, through the sea of ignorance and barbarism."⁵⁹

Ferguson has suggested that Macfarlan's motive in translating and publishing the *De Iure Regni* was to defend Buchanan's historiographical reputation from the assaults of John Pinkerton, (1758-1826) the Lowland-supremacist who scornfully dismissed Celtic languages and culture.⁶⁰ Although Macfarlan had clearly embedded himself in this controversy, as his ethnographical preface illustrates, it can still be questioned why he chose to publish the *De Iure Regni*.⁶¹ Might not the early books of the *Historia* have been more relevant to this debate?

Macfarlan insisted that there was no hint of sedition in the *De Iure Regni* because although Buchanan was "a steady friend to liberty, he was a systematical enemy to all violent changes in any moderate form of government."⁶² His obsequiously loyal *Address to the People of the British Empire*, published in 1797 and also appended to the translation of the *De Iure Regni*, suggests that he saw no contradiction in publishing Buchanan's political theory at a time when Britain was fighting a nation of visionary republicans.⁶³ Can it be argued that Macfarlan had anti-revolutionary motives in publishing Buchanan's revolutionary ideas? Chambers suggests that with

⁵⁸ G. Buchanan, *The History of Scotland* (Aberdeen, 1799); G. Buchanan, *The History of Scotland, revised and corrected from the original by Mr. Bond* (Glasgow, 1799).

⁵⁹ R. Macfarlan, 'Vindication of Buchanan', in G. Buchanan, *George Buchanan's Dialogue Concerning the Rights of the Crown in Scotland* (London, 1799), 53-4.

⁶⁰ Ferguson, *Identity of the Scottish Nation*, 265.

⁶¹ Macfarlan's ethnographical essay is enticingly titled *An Inquiry: Into the pretended identity of the Getes and Scythians, of the Getes and Goths, and of the Goths and Scots*. R. Macfarlan, 'An Inquiry', in G. Buchanan, *George Buchanan's Dialogue*.

⁶² Macfarlan, 'Vindication of Buchanan', 54-5.

⁶³ Macfarlan, 'Address to the People of the British Empire', in Buchanan, *George Buchanan's Dialogue*, 16.

his loyalist rhetoric, "It appears that he had now become more attached to the government than he had formerly been."⁶⁴

However, it can be argued that Macfarlan's publication of the *De Iure Regni* was a veiled attack on the British government, and in particular on William Pitt the Younger. Pitt, a one-time supporter of parliamentary reform, had been forced by the exigencies of the time into a more repressive style of government. From 1797, the weakness of the other European powers left Britain alone in the fight against France, and the following years witnessed economic distress, invasion fears, naval mutinies and rebellion in Ireland. Also at this time, the Foxite Whigs were keen to situate themselves in the proud heritage of Whiggism, battling against repressive government and guarding against absolutism. It has been suggested that Macfarlan was, for a time, editor of the London *Morning Chronicle*, the Foxite Whig organ that was heavily critical of the government and the war throughout the 1790s.⁶⁵ It is tempting to speculate that Macfarlan was associated with the Foxite Whigs, or at the very least was sympathetic to their position, and his loyalist rhetoric may have been merely a smokescreen for a shielded protest against Pitt.

Macfarlan's enthusiasm for Buchanan could not be universally regarded as harmless adulation for a 'Great Scot'. In April 1801 the *British Critic* reviewed the new edition of the *De Iure Regni* and pronounced, "it lays down *some* well-founded principles of government." At least Buchanan was not a republican: "That author is far from despising Kings, or, like some of our modern reformers, considering their office as pernicious or useless." However, his doctrine of resistance was "pregnant with mischief," and probably had a hand in inspiring regicides in England and France. In this sense, the Dialogue "is certainly adverse to the Constitution as now established," and therefore "we cannot consider this as a well-timed publication."⁶⁶

McIlvanney has taken statements for praise of Buchanan as evidence of "the readiness with which late eighteenth-century reformers traced their creed to the

⁶⁴ R. Chambers, *A Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen* (Glasgow, 1847), iii, 492.

⁶⁵ Chambers, *Biographical Dictionary*, iii, 492. The Scot James Perry (1756-1821) was the owner and editor of the *Morning Chronicle* from 1789 until 1821, and although it is not certain that Macfarlan took over as editor for a time, it is not too much to conjecture that he was at least associated with this circle of Whig journalists.

⁶⁶ *The British Critic*, XVII, (1801), 443.

political theorist of the Scottish Reformation and to the political legacy of Presbyterianism.”⁶⁷ However, it can be argued that late-eighteenth-century reformers were well aware of the limitations of ideological resources from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Undiscriminating adulation of Buchanan admitted of many misunderstandings, misappropriations, and abuses of his ideas, underpinning the suggestion that by the 1790s he was meaningful more as a name rather than as a theorist.

For those who did attempt to look beyond the name of Buchanan and examine his writings and ideas, what conclusions did they draw? The pages of *The Bee* are illuminating in this respect. It was above all his literary qualities that were discussed. In one edition, Buchanan’s *Epithalamium* on the marriage of Mary Queen of Scots to Francis is recommended to readers.⁶⁸ In another, a contributor relates a conversation with Adam Smith in which he tried to defend the poetry of Allan Ramsay in a positive comparison with that of Buchanan, which Smith disdained.⁶⁹ In a short excerpt, or ‘gleaning’ from biography, an anecdote from the diary of James Melville is included where an ageing Buchanan is found teaching his servant to read.⁷⁰ Buchanan in *The Bee* is surprisingly apolitical and the references to the Scottish Reformation, to Knox and Melville as well as to Buchanan, were presented merely as historical curiosities. Poems that were printed in full reveal the Buchanan who wrote of the muses and the graces, of Venus and Cupid rather than of tyrants and patriots.⁷¹

Of greater interest is a series of articles written for *The Bee* entitled ‘Some Remarks on the Literary Character of George Buchanan’ and published between October 1791 and January 1792. The articles were signed J. T. C. and it is tempting to speculate that this was James Thomson Callender, otherwise known as Timothy Thunderproof, the author of *The Political Progress of Britain*. This violent attack on the corruption and hypocrisy of the establishment was also serialised in *The Bee*, and was later the

⁶⁷ McIlvanney, *Burns the Radical*, 17-8.

⁶⁸ *The Bee*, I, (1791), 364-5.

⁶⁹ ‘Anecdotes tending to throw light on the character and opinions of the late Adam Smith’, *The Bee*, III, (1791), 6.

⁷⁰ ‘Gleanings of Biography’, *The Bee*, V, (1791), 134.

⁷¹ ‘Verses inscribed to a young lady’, *The Bee*, IX, (1792), 330; ‘The Ninth Elegy of Buchanan translated’, *The Bee*, X, (1792), 176.

object of a government prosecution that resulted in Callender fleeing to America, and the imprisonment of his bookseller and printer.⁷²

The discussion of Buchanan here centred once again on his poetry, marvelling at his prolific output, and the variety of styles and metres used. The author praised Buchanan for his lifelong “aversion to popery” and mentioned, but without further elaboration, his “disdain of royalty, and those levelling republican principles which formed, as it were, the essence of his soul.”⁷³ There followed a long comparison of the respective merits of Buchanan and the English poet and playwright of the Restoration John Dryden, (1631-1700) in which Buchanan was naturally pronounced superior. Dryden could be regarded as an opportunistic and licentious hireling who pandered to the basest tastes of his audiences, his patrons, and his kings, Charles II and James VII & II. Buchanan, in contrast, was “grave, ardent, intrepid, and implacable.”⁷⁴

Buchanan was invoked in a lament for the incursions being made against liberty in the 1790s, and it was suggested that some of his zeal, or even fanaticism for liberty, would not go amiss in a supposedly more refined age.

We call ourselves a free people, and yet we have submitted to hear, from the chair of justice, that *truth is a libel*, a doctrine which tears up the foundations of civil society, and compared to / which transubstantiation, or even the divine right of tyrants, is a modest and respectable sophism. With what indignation would the author of the treatise *de jure regni* have branded the father and abettors of such an execrable maxim.⁷⁵

In his discussion of the ideological uses to which Scottish heroes such as William Wallace and Robert Burns were put in the nineteenth century, Richard Finlay argues, “Scottish hero worship was designed to inform and instruct.”⁷⁶ This is borne out by rhetoric surrounding Buchanan’s status as a Scottish hero, in which he was held up as a figure worthy of emulation, whether for his literary talents, his Protestantism, or his commitment to liberty. Commentators such as Mackintosh, Muir and Macfarlan,

⁷² Meikle, *Scotland and the French Revolution*, 114.

⁷³ ‘Some Remarks on the Literary Character of George Buchanan’, *The Bee*, V, (1791), 234-5.

⁷⁴ ‘Some Remarks on the Literary Character of George Buchanan’, *The Bee*, V, (1791), 237.

⁷⁵ ‘Additional Remarks on the Poetry of Buchanan’, *The Bee*, VI, (1791), 55-6.

⁷⁶ R. J. Finlay, ‘Heroes, Myths and Anniversaries in Modern Scotland’, *Scottish Affairs*, xviii (1997), 109.

and publications such as *The Bee*, are, of course, hardly representative of political discourse in the late eighteenth century. They are representative of libertarian political discourse in the strained environment of the 1790s, but they also illustrate the direction in which Buchanan's reputation was moving. When the threat of France, and the climate of paranoid loyalism receded, many of the most negative and controversial aspects of Buchanan's reputation were washed away. What remained above the high water line was Buchanan's status as a member of the Scottish pantheon of civil and religious liberty.

Not Dead Yet? Buchanan and the Covenanters in Nineteenth-Century Literature

Much attention has been focused on the flurry of novel writing on the subject of the Scottish Covenanters in the period after the Napoleonic Wars, particularly because it produced such received classics of Scottish literature as Sir Walter Scott's *Old Mortality*, John Galt's *Ringan Gilhaize*, and James Hogg's *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* and *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. The literary debate over the Scottish tradition of resistance can illuminate the reputation of George Buchanan in this context. His reputation, and the reputations of the Covenanters, remained much as they had been in the 1790s. Buchanan had been rehabilitated as a broadly acceptable hero of civil and religious liberty but the Covenanters had not. The Covenanters certainly had their champions in early nineteenth-century Scotland, and partly because they were tightly held in the grip of the Reformed Presbyterians, they had not yet achieved this level of approbation. However, by the mid-nineteenth century, all contributors to the Scottish canon of resistance theory – John Knox, George Buchanan, and the Covenanters – had been received into the pantheon of civil and religious liberty.⁷⁷

A character by the name of George Buchanan appears in the novel *Clan-Albin: A National Tale*, published in 1815 by Christian Isobel Johnstone. The novel commences in the 1780s, in Glen Albin in the Scottish Highlands. An orphan, born and raised in the glen, is sent for his education to the local schoolmaster, George Buchanan, a comic character who is both like and unlike the 'real' George Buchanan, the royal tutor. The character of George Buchanan was, like the real one, born in Stirlingshire, and given an excellent education when his potential was realised. The character, however, is a Calvinist zealot whose distinctly Lowland-based fanaticism makes him an alien in the Highlands. Buchanan is of extreme Presbyterian stock and boasts of an ancestor who fought at Bothwell Bridge:

With his milk he had sucked in the troublesome controversial spirit, which, with a smattering of *divinity*, is very often the unpleasant distinction of a Lowland peasant. Buchanan had fed on the 'Marrow', from his infancy; the 'Cloud of Witnesses', had been to

⁷⁷ I am grateful to James Coleman for many helpful discussions on the subject of civil and religious liberty in late-eighteenth and nineteenth century Scotland, and in particular for information relating to monument-building and commemoration of the Covenanters in the nineteenth century.

him what fairy tales are to other children. From his tenderest years he had gone ten miles every Sunday to hear a Cameronian preacher.⁷⁸

The author clearly sympathises less with the character of Buchanan than with the crypto-Catholic Highlanders, with a race “whose religion consisted more in deeds of mercy than in dogmas of belief.”⁷⁹ In Johnstone’s hands, Buchanan the polymathic humanist is re-imagined as an apocalyptic obsessive who “abandoned every favourite and liberal science, unless it served to develop his darling mysteries.”⁸⁰ The flexible Calvinism of the first Reformation is passed over, and emphasis is placed on the rigid orthodoxies and theological conservatism of the second. Johnstone is playing with the vagaries of Buchanan’s reputation, acknowledging the recent associations of his name with the Covenanters and satirising their beliefs and rhetoric. Is she satirising only the Covenanting mind, and winking at a readership that is supposed to know that the real George Buchanan was different? Or is she deliberately associating Buchanan’s name with the continuing Covenanting tradition? Her humorous lightness of touch makes it impossible to tell just how many veneers of irony she has applied to the reputation of George Buchanan, but it is significant to note that by the early nineteenth century Scotland’s heritage of resistance could be the apparent object of a novelist’s joke.

The literary controversy over the Covenanters began in earnest with the publication of Sir Walter Scott’s *Old Mortality* in 1816, a novel set at the time of the 1679 rebellion in which the Covenanters defeated the army of the crown at Drumclog, and then were themselves defeated at Bothwell Bridge. The protagonist of the novel, Henry Morton, is a typical Walter Scott hero, moderate and humanitarian, who stumbles into all manner of coincidences in the narrative and, of course, meets all the important personages of the era. This includes the Royalist leader Claverhouse, who had long been the arch-villain of Presbyterian historical memory, famed as a bloodthirsty persecutor, but portrayed by Scott as a chivalrous flawed hero.

According to Scott, the Covenanters were dead and irrelevant in early nineteenth-century Scotland. The title ‘Old Mortality’ referred to the Cameronian Robert

⁷⁸ C. I. Johnstone, *Clan-Albin: A National Tale*, ed. A. Monnickendam (Glasgow, 2003), 48.

⁷⁹ Johnstone, *Clan-Albin*, 49.

⁸⁰ Johnstone, *Clan-Albin*, 49.

Paterson who had devoted his life to caring for gravestones and monuments to Covenanting martyrs, and who had died in 1801. Scott's implication was that the monuments were now destined to crumble away and to be forgotten.⁸¹

Douglas Mack has suggested,

In early nineteenth-century Scotland the Covenanters were widely revered as the defenders of the civil and religious liberties of the nation, and the publication of Scott's novel aroused considerable controversy.⁸²

This view can be challenged, as arguably in the early nineteenth century the Covenanters were still widely perceived as rebels, assassins and religious fanatics. Civil and religious liberty, after all, was a view of British liberty shaved of the excesses that too great an enthusiasm for liberty might engender. The Covenanters were still perceived as guilty of enthusiasm, and this reputation was a difficult one to shake, particularly as the vocal defenders of the Covenanters were also perceived as zealots.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the building of monuments to the Covenanters tended to be undertaken by the Reformed Presbyterians. They raised money by subscription and they laid claim to the Covenanting heritage. It was only in the middle of the nineteenth century that such commemorations began to be undertaken as civic initiatives – that is, for and by the public, broadly defined, rather than by a narrow Presbyterian sect.⁸³

The publication of *Old Mortality* inspired criticism for its perceived negative portrayal of the Covenanters, and its positive portrayal of Claverhouse. One of the first to attack Scott was the Rev. Thomas McCrie, (1772-1835) in a series of reviews

⁸¹ J. Stevenson & P. Davidson, 'Introduction', in W. Scott, *Old Mortality* (Oxford, 1993), pp. x, xx, xxiii.

⁸² D. Mack, 'Introduction' in J. Hogg, *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* (Edinburgh, 1976), p. xiii. Mack expresses the same idea in 'The Rage of Fanaticism in Former Days.' James Hogg's Confessions of a Justified Sinner and the Controversy over Old Mortality', in I. Campbell (ed.), *Nineteenth-Century Scottish Fiction: Critical Essays* (Manchester, 1979), 39.

⁸³ The Reformed Presbyterian monopoly on commemoration of the Covenanters can be seen in their initiation of the monuments to Brown of Priesthill in 1825, to Richard Cameron in 1832, to the battle of Drumclog in 1839, and in their monument to Covenanting Martyrs at Larghill in 1843. By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, such commemorations were increasingly undertaken as civic projects, such as the monument to James Guthrie in Stirling in 1857, the commemoration of the Sanquhar Declarations in 1864, and the monument to Alexander Peden in Cumnock in 1892.

in the *Christian Instructor* in 1817. McCrie was a Seceder who had been instrumental in the split of the Antiburghers into Old Light and New Light groups in 1806, with himself and Archibald Bruce as leading members of the Old Light Constitutional Associate Presbytery. While McCrie admitted that the Covenanters had been extreme and violent, he charged that Scott had played down the persecution they had endured and had glossed over their valour.

The good people of Scotland, who inherit any portion of the spirit of their fathers, will, no doubt, be amazed to see those whom they have been accustomed to revere as patriots, and to venerate as confessors and martyrs for truth, now held up to derision as mad enthusiasts, and reviled as hypocritical and murderous ruffians.⁸⁴

McCrie, then, appears to provide evidence for Mack's position that the Covenanters were seen as heroes of civil and religious liberty in the early nineteenth century.

Further novels by Hogg and Galt might also be seen as responses to Scott's *Old Mortality*. James Hogg's *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* was published in 1818, and is a short novel set in the Scottish Borders in the years after the Covenanters' defeat at Bothwell Bridge. Hogg's heroes are a humanitarian father and daughter of a farming family, who help the Covenanters hiding in the hills near their home, and who also have to endure the severe persecution of Claverhouse. In 1823, John Galt published *Ringan Gilhaize*, a novel which spanned three generations of the Gilhaize family from the first Scottish Reformation in the 1550s and 1560s, through to the second Reformation and the era of the Covenants. The principal hero of the novel is Ringan Gilhaize, who lives through the persecutions of southwest Scotland during the Restoration, persecutions conducted by Claverhouse, among others. From a position of neutrality and reluctance to take up arms, Ringan is eventually provoked into joining the Covenanters by the terrible depredations committed against his family, and when he has virtually nothing left to lose, he joins the Cameronians. Deliverance comes with the Glorious Revolution of 1688, but even then Ringan, as an old man, feels there is still more to be done – throughout the novel he has a nagging feeling that he is to be an instrument of God's vengeance against the

⁸⁴ T. McCrie, 'Review of *Tales of My Landlord, Part II*', in T. McCrie Jnr. (ed.) *The Works of Thomas M'Crie* (Edinburgh, 1857), IV, 47.

oppressor. Sure enough, at the Battle of Killiecrankie in July 1689, it is Ringan himself who fires the bullet that kills the leader of the Jacobite army, Claverhouse.

The final addition to this canon of Covenanting novels came with the publication of James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* in 1824. This is a very different novel to *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, darker, less comic, and a lot less couthy, and any understanding of it demands penetration of Hogg's many layers of irony. The novel is set after the Covenanting period in the years leading up to the Union of 1707, but it is imbued with the spirit of Covenanting Calvinism. The anti-hero is Robert Wringhim, a self-righteous Calvinist who wrestles with the question of whether or not he is one of the elect, predestined for salvation. It is when he believes his election to be a certainty that he begins to be seduced into murderous deeds by the sinister character of Gil-Martin who may or may not be the devil, or an alternative personality of Robert himself.

A number of commentators have set about categorising each of these novels as for or against the Covenanters. The editors of *Old Mortality* consider both *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* and *Ringan Gilhaize* to be "pro-Covenanter," in response to the anti-Covenanting stance taken by Scott.⁸⁵ Mack regards *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* as "strongly pro-Covenanter," and *Ringan Gilhaize* to be "totally in sympathy with the Covenanters."⁸⁶ Galt's *Ringan Gilhaize* has been described as an attempt "to restore to the Covenanters the dignity and seriousness of which *Old Mortality* had deprived them."⁸⁷ Hogg's *Justified Sinner* is by far the most difficult to categorise, and Mack notes that, in contrast to his position in *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, Hogg displays considerable sympathy with the moderate Royalist side to which characters like George Colwan belong, and is in effect satirising all prejudice and fanaticism, Whig and Tory.⁸⁸

If Hogg's *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, and Galt's *Ringan Gilhaize* are to be regarded as 'pro-Covenanter', then this suggests that the authors accepted the idea of the Covenanters as heroes of civil and religious liberty, and there is some evidence to

⁸⁵ Stevenson & Davidson, 'Introduction', in Scott, *Old Mortality*, p. xviii.

⁸⁶ Mack, "The Rage of Fanaticism in Former Days", 39-40.

⁸⁷ P. H. Scott, *John Galt* (Edinburgh, 1985), 83.

⁸⁸ Mack, "The Rage of Fanaticism in Former Days", 42, 48-9.

support this assumption. In *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, Hogg describes Scotland in the Covenanting era as “the age and country of fanaticism.”⁸⁹ But elsewhere the novel is imbued with the spirit, and indeed with the rhetoric, of civil and religious liberty. One of the Covenanters anticipates the Glorious Revolution by telling Walter that the blood of the martyrs “shall drive the cruel Stuarts frae the land they have disgraced, and out of it a church of truth and liberty shall spring.”⁹⁰ Elsewhere, Claverhouse is said to have sought “to destroy the Covenanters, and all that hankered after civil and religious liberty.”⁹¹ And Laidlaw’s daughter Katharine refers to the martyred Covenanters as “those who have stood for our civil and religious liberties.”⁹² Was the association of the Covenanters with the concerns of civil and religious liberty intended to provoke sympathy for the Covenanters? Should *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* be regarded as pro-Covenanter? Or was Hogg simply placing the language of the early nineteenth century in the mouths of his seventeenth century characters?

Similarly, in *Ringan Gilhaize*, Galt appears keen to promote the place of the Covenanters within a stream of Scottish civil and religious liberty that ranged from the Wars of Independence, through the first and second Reformations, to the Revolution of 1688-9. Galt used the Declaration of Arbroath of 1320 – indeed he appended a full translation of it to the text of *Ringan Gilhaize* – to insist that Scotland had a proud libertarian heritage:

In dictating Magna Carta to the tyrant John, the English barons implied, that if he observed the conditions, they would obey him in all things else. But the Scottish nobles, in their Remonstrance to the Pope, declared, that they considered even their great and glorious Robert Bruce to be on his good behaviour.⁹³

Buchanan was called upon to support this point: “In truth, the act of bringing kings to public condign punishment was no such new thing in the chronicles of Scotland, as that brave historian, George Buchanan, plainly shows.”⁹⁴ Galt clearly endorsed the principle of resistance to tyranny and saw it as a proud constant in Scottish

⁸⁹ J. Hogg, *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, ed. D. S. Mack (Edinburgh, 1976), 13.

⁹⁰ Hogg, *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, 24.

⁹¹ Hogg, *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, 67.

⁹² Hogg, *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, 119.

⁹³ J. Galt, *Ringan Gilhaize, or The Covenanters*, ed. P. J. Wilson (Edinburgh, 1995), 449-50.

⁹⁴ Galt, *Ringan Gilhaize*, 218.

history. The question is whether or not he sanctioned the resistance of the later Covenanters. Did he regard the Covenanters as an acceptable part of Scotland's constitutional tradition, as his creation of a chain between the Wars of Independence and the first and second reformation might suggest? Did he support Ringan's belief in himself as pre-ordained to carry out a great service to God and to the nation? Or did he frown on resistance when it was inspired by religious fanaticism and delusion?

Attempts to rigidly categorise the various authors as pro-Covenanter or anti-Covenanter are of questionable value. In *Old Mortality*, *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, and *Ringan Gilhaize*, the heroes are moderate and humanitarian men who are sucked into events in which they wished to have no part. The Borders peasants, not the Covenanters, are the real heroes of Hogg's *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*.⁹⁵ Arguably both Hogg and Galt were provoked more by Scott's positive representation of Claverhouse than by his perceived negative portrayal of the Covenanters. Neither Hogg nor Galt fully accepted the 'pro-Covenanting' position: both took up a stance that was ironic and ambiguous.

Mack draws a strong contrast between the violence in *Ringan Gilhaize* and that in *Justified Sinner*, suggesting that Galt's pro-Covenanting position was unsophisticated, a defence of the violence of fanatics.

It seems clear that Galt intends us to take Ringan's view of the killing of Claverhouse at face value: it does indeed represent the deliverance of Scotland and the Church from bondage. Hogg, however, clearly rejects the view that Salvation comes out of the barrel of a gun. When Wringhim pulls the trigger he believes that he is serving God in a great work of purification by Blood – but he is in fact acting at the Devil's instigation, with the Devil at his elbow. The deed which in Galt's novel marks the deliverance of church and nation from bondage, becomes in the *Justified Sinner* a decisive step in Wringhim's progress towards damnation.⁹⁶

Arguably Mack underestimates the sophistication of Galt's narrative. There are, in *Ringan Gilhaize*, a number of hints to the reader that Ringan's belief in himself as "a

⁹⁵ Mack, 'Introduction' in Hogg, *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, p. xv.

⁹⁶ Mack, "The Rage of Fanaticism in Former Days", 42.

chosen instrument” of God is delusional.⁹⁷ As MacQueen suggests, “Galt was aware of the extent to which the Calvinist elect were capable of self-deception and even hypocrisy.” As his family is wiped out, Ringan is driven mad for a period of six or eight months, a condition from which he eventually recovers – or does he? – in time to meet his date with destiny at Killiecrankie.⁹⁸ The perspectives of Galt in *Ringan Gilhaize* and Hogg in *Justified Sinner* are not as opposed as Mack suggests. Both, as Kidd argues, “deploy indirect and ironic narrative modes which shroud their authors’ view in ambiguity, but certainly signify a detachment from Covenanting extremism.”⁹⁹ Both criticise the tendency of extreme Calvinists to justify their rebellious and tyrannicidal actions as the work of God.

⁹⁷ Galt, *Ringan Gilhaize*, 439.

⁹⁸ J. MacQueen, ‘Ringan Gilhaize and Particular Providence’, in C. Whatley (ed.) *John Galt 1779-1979* (Edinburgh, 1979), 115.

⁹⁹ Kidd, *Subverting Scotland’s Past*, 203.

Buchanan and the Covenanters in Nineteenth-Century Popular Culture

If neither Hogg nor Galt were unequivocal defenders of the Covenanters in the early nineteenth century, then we must return to Thomas McCrie and his audience.

McCrie, as we have seen, was a narrow Presbyterian sectarian and it might appear that his defence of the Covenanters was a marginal and unpopular position. But this was not entirely the case, as it must be pointed out that the Covenanters also enjoyed a prominent position in a popular sub-culture in which their cult of martyrdom was deeply admired.¹⁰⁰ McCrie was also the author of popular biographies of the Scottish reformers John Knox and Andrew Melville, and these books had an appeal that went far beyond the narrow Covenanting strata in Scotland.¹⁰¹ Therefore, it cannot safely be assumed that McCrie spoke only for a minority, and the editors of *Old Mortality* argue that McCrie, “was articulating the more extreme end of a genuine groundswell of popular feeling, which resented Scott’s gentry interference with the cherished delusions of popular history.”¹⁰²

Buchanan also had a place in this popular culture, appearing as a character in chapbooks that illustrate the gradual consolidation of his status as a ‘Great Scot’. In *The Witty and Entertaining Exploits of George Buchanan*, which went through at least six editions in Scotland between 1765 and 1829, Buchanan was portrayed accurately as “A Scotsman born,” who, “tho’ of mean parentage, made great progress in learning.”¹⁰³ Buchanan, always referred to as simply ‘George’, was the teacher and counsellor to King James VI, but this is the point at which the text enters the realm of whimsy. George was contemporary with the *adult* James, and was the king’s fool – who was, of course, very far from being a fool.

The mischievous George bared his bottom to the king, passed wind at court, and consistently outwitted the high and mighty. In one anecdote, an Englishman mocked

¹⁰⁰ C. Kidd, ‘Conditional Britons’, 1161.

¹⁰¹ C. Kidd, ‘Sentiment, Race and Revival: Scottish Identities in the Aftermath of Enlightenment’, in L. Brockliss & D. Eastwood (eds.), *A Union of Multiple Identities: The British Isles, c. 1750-c. 1850* (Manchester, 1997), 114.

¹⁰² Stevenson & Davidson, ‘Introduction’, in Scott, *Old Mortality*, p. xxxvii.

¹⁰³ *The Witty and Entertaining Exploits of George Buchanan, who was Commonly called The King’s Fool* (Leith, 1765), Part 1, p. 2. The text was reprinted in at least the following years: 1780; 1795; 1799; 1800; 1829.

William Wallace, telling George that he had an effigy of him in his toilet. George responded that Wallace “was such a terror to the Englishmen when they were alive, that a sight of him yet makes them beshit themselves.”¹⁰⁴ In another tale, George tricked a groups of English bishops into believing that all Scots were well-educated by dressing up as a shepherd and speaking to them in Latin, Greek, Flemish, Gaelic and English.¹⁰⁵ The chapbook has been attributed to the prolific Dougal Graham, (1724-79) a camp-follower of the Young Pretender in 1745 who gleefully ignored the potential contradictions of covering romantic Jacobitism and proto-Whiggism alike. His work suggests that neither factual accuracy nor political consistency were vital features of the pantheon, and he was both a contributor to the making of the pantheon and a reflection of it.

The king’s fool, then, did bear some resemblance to the real figure of George Buchanan, and was perceived in positive and indiscriminating terms as a man of high learning and folk cunning, a man of the people and a patriot. The anecdotes about the English bishops, and the satirising of James VI’s Episcopising policies, hint at the possibility of some engagement with the Covenanting tradition. This can also be seen in Buchanan’s place in another popular chapbook, *The Scots Chronicle*, published in 1808. It was an abridged version of the *Historia*’s account of the early progress of Christianity in Scotland down to the time of the Culdees, a narrative that, as we have seen, had also found a place in the Covenanting tradition.¹⁰⁶

A number of small popular biographies of Buchanan appeared in the early nineteenth century, and continued the trend of hyperbolic and uncontroversial praise that has been identified as part of the cult of civil and religious liberty. David Irving, (1778-1860) a prolific biographer of Scottish writers, librarian at the Faculty of Advocates and later member of the Free Church of Scotland, defended Buchanan’s character from the centuries of imputations against it, and said of the play *Baptistes*, “Its great theme is civil and religious liberty.”¹⁰⁷ The *De Iure Regni* was described as “A most profound and masterly compendium of political philosophy,” and Irving struggled to

¹⁰⁴ *Witty and Entertaining Exploits*, Part 1, p. 8.

¹⁰⁵ *Witty and Entertaining Exploits*, Part 2, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ *The Scots Chronicle: or, A Short History of Scotland, by the Celebrated Historian Mr. George Buchanan, Tutor to King James VI of Scotland* (Falkirk, 1808).

¹⁰⁷ D. Irving, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of George Buchanan* (Edinburgh, 1807), 32.

moderate its radical sentiments. Buchanan's argument that political power is derived from the people, and that liberties are better protected by laws than by capricious kings, was a sound one, but the question of resistance was "of a delicate and dangerous nature." "That tyrants ought to be punished," he conceded, "is an abstract proposition which cannot easily be controverted." Buchanan was not a dangerous republican but a modern constitutional theorist, who, in the tradition of civil and religious liberty, could be linked to the Glorious Revolution: "The best commentary on his immortal work is the memorable revolution of 1688."¹⁰⁸

Although Buchanan's reputation had been largely separated from that of the Covenanters by the mid-nineteenth century, connections continued to be made between the two principal eras of Scotland's Reformation. James Aikman (1779-1860) produced a new translation of Buchanan's *History of Scotland* in 1827 and continued to link Buchanan to the Covenanting tradition, and to press for the entitlement of the Covenanters to a place in the pantheon of civil and religious liberty. Little is known about Aikman, and it would be particularly helpful if his religious affiliations could be identified. As a Covenanting enthusiast, he may well have been a Reformed Presbyterian or Seceder, but nothing in his writings explicitly suggests this.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Irving, *Memoirs*, 243, 258-61. See also Joseph Robertson, who insisted that Buchanan's writings, "more durable than the Pillar of Absalom, will perpetuate his fame to coming generations." J. Robertson, *The Life of George Buchanan* (Edinburgh, 1812), 100. Less fawning was John Parker Lawson, who noted Buchanan's achievements but pointed out the limitations of the *Historia* and the extremity of the *De Iure Regni*. "Had his life been in reality virtuous, and his patriotism pure; had he not become a zealous partisan, and a republican in principle, he might well have been held as a model, in every respect worthy of imitation to succeeding generations of his countrymen." [John Parker Lawson], *Life & Opinions of the celebrated George Buchanan* (Edinburgh, 1829), 205.

¹⁰⁹ Near identical death notices in the *Glasgow Herald* and the *Scotsman* eulogised James Aikman merely as a former bookseller in Edinburgh, and author of the *History of Scotland* and other works. *The Scotsman*, 22 May 1860; *The Glasgow Herald*, 23 May 1860, 5. Along with his brother, Aikman was proprietor of the newspaper the *Edinburgh Star*, from 1808 until around the time of the debut of *The Scotsman* in 1817. The editorial line of the *Edinburgh Star* has been described as anaemic and "not combative." R. M. W. Cowan, *The Newspaper in Scotland* (Glasgow, 1946), 21, 37. Aikman appears to have been a relatively marginal figure on the literary scene of early-nineteenth-century Edinburgh. He is not mentioned in Sir Walter Scott's correspondence, nor is he known to have been associated with Scotland's foremost literary circles, which coalesced around the *Edinburgh Review* and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. Aikman's edition of Buchanan's *History of Scotland* was not reviewed in either of these publications. Scott, *Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. H. J. C. Grierson; G. Pottinger, *Heirs of the Enlightenment: Edinburgh reviewers and writers 1800-1830* (Edinburgh, 1992); *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals 1824-1900*, ed. Walter E. Houghton (Toronto, 1966), I.

As we have seen, there are question marks over some parts of Aikman's translation of the *Historia*. It can be assumed that Aikman was trying to situate Buchanan firmly in the reformed tradition and to 'de-paganise' his Latin. Aikman was prone to displaying indiscriminating adulation for him, typical of the era of civil and religious liberty. Buchanan was praised for his "stern integrity," his "undoubted veracity," and the "transcendent excellence" of his virtues. His excellent character, along with the fact that he had access to records since destroyed, meant that his history was unimpeachable.¹¹⁰

Aikman's footnotes to the *History of Scotland* glossed over the question of the forty kings, and it is clear that his main aim was not to establish historical 'truths', but to defend Buchanan's reputation. The veracity of the forty kings was not important, Aikman insisted. Rather,

The noble love of liberty which breathes in that part of Buchanan's history, the freshness and vigour of his political remarks, and the lessons of wisdom which he inculcates, are of infinitely more importance than any list of barbaric names."¹¹¹

The discoveries of Innes were barely mentioned, and Aikman was primarily concerned with illustrating the extent to which subsequent historical research had proved Buchanan correct on the identity of the Scots and the Picts.¹¹² If only Buchanan had cited the authorities on which he based his *Historia*, Aikman insisted, there would never have been doubts about his methods and motives!

Aikman employed Buchanan's account of early Scottish Christianity in the way that the Covenanters and the Covenanting tradition had done in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, asserting, "the tradition which assigns the Christianization of Scotland to an earlier period, than the corruptions of Rome, bears evident marks of authenticity."¹¹³ His continuation of Buchanan's *History of Scotland* also took a Buchananite view of kingship and tried, as Buchanan always did, to narrate the

¹¹⁰ J. Aikman, 'Address', in G. Buchanan, *The History of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1827), I, no pagination.

¹¹¹ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, ed. and trans. J. Aikman, I, 153 footnote.

¹¹² Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, ed. and trans. J. Aikman, I, 154 footnote.

¹¹³ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, ed. and trans. J. Aikman, I, 206 footnote. Aikman again replicated the standard Buchananite account of early Scottish Christianity in his *Historical Account of Covenanting in Scotland*, which included numerous paraphrases of passages from the *History of Scotland*. Aikman, *An Historical Account of Covenanting in Scotland, from the First Band in Mearns, 1556, to the signature of the Grand National Covenant, 1638* (Edinburgh, 1848), 1.

virtues as well as the vices of his subjects. Although a tyrant who was justly executed, Charles I was a good husband, a good father, and a decent man. His execution by English parliamentarians was described as an act in line with the Buchananite tradition of Scotland:

The accountability of monarchs for their conduct, and the right of subjects to try, depose, or put to death their sovereigns for the flagrant crimes of murder and tyranny, had always been asserted by the Scottish reformers, and had been acted upon in the case of this king's grandmother.¹¹⁴

Aikman's account of the Scottish Covenanters followed the standard hagiographic line of the Covenanting tradition. When persecution provoked the Pentland Rising in 1666, Aikman said that it was admirable that the Covenanters had endured it for so long without resisting.¹¹⁵ All the martyred Covenanters, he insisted, "died with constancy, and left behind them an united testimony, which must ever exculpate them from the charge of fanatical rebellion."¹¹⁶ Aikman followed a similar line in *Annals of the Persecution, from the Restoration to the Revolution*, published in 1842, which might be seen as a plea for the inclusion of the Restoration Covenanters in the pantheon of civil and religious liberty. The Covenanters had rebelled reluctantly, and only because "they had seen their civil and religious liberties swept away."¹¹⁷ According to Aikman, the Covenanters had anticipated the Glorious Revolution. The principles for which the martyrs died "were the principles which the Revolution sanctioned and settled," principles which, far from being extreme, "have since been declared the only bases upon which the best and the most thoroughly tried practical system of national and personal freedom can stand."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Aikman, *Continuation of Buchanan's History of Scotland*, IV, 347-50.

¹¹⁵ Aikman, *Continuation*, IV, 521.

¹¹⁶ Aikman, *Continuation*, IV, 527.

¹¹⁷ J. Aikman, *Annals of the Persecution, from the Restoration to the Revolution* (Edinburgh, 1842), 132.

¹¹⁸ Aikman, *Annals of the Persecution*, 553.

Conclusion

Ultimately, new radical views did not gain a strong foothold in Scotland in the 1790s – certainly not as strong as the authorities imagined. Scotland was simply too piously Presbyterian to swallow the new radicalism whole, with its deistic and atheistic implications. Some reformers in the era of the French Revolution praised Buchanan's political principles, and apparently believed that they were no longer incendiary. In this, however, they were mistaken, and invocation of the names of canonical political theorists and respectable Whig thinkers did not save Thomas Muir and William Skirving from transportation. On the whole, however, the establishment preferred to attack the reformers by associating them with the new radicalism, rather than with the old.

Buchanan's writings were undoubtedly read by the reformers of the 1790s – the mass of citations proves this if nothing else – but they were not digested in the terms in which Buchanan wrote them, and the establishment did not think them worthy of proscription. There were no Oxford Decrees in the 1790s, but even if there had been, it is doubtful that Buchanan would have been included. Rather it was Paine and the new radicals who were regarded as the evil masterminds behind the French Revolution and the attempts to export it to Britain.

The usage of Buchanan in the era of the French Revolution tended to be laudatory, not investigative, and uncontentious expressions of praise for him can be regarded as indicative of his developing stature as an icon. Buchanan's political ideas were rarely critically discussed or engaged with, but rather he was accepted, as a 'Great Scot', a member of the Scottish pantheon of civil and religious liberty. The formation of the pantheon of civil and religious liberty had been underway before the outbreak of the French Revolution, and it did falter somewhat under the weight of the shifting political orthodoxies of the 1790s. However, by 1815, there was a broad acceptance of a group of heroes that could safely be admired, and Buchanan was one of them.

By the time of Aikman's writing, the British constitution was in flux. The repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828, and Catholic Emancipation in 1829 removed

the last remnants of the confessional politics that had dominated Britain since the sixteenth century, and the passage of the Reform Act in 1832 completed this radical change. Until this time the position of the Covenanters as heroes of civil and religious liberty was still contested. The Scottish pantheon of such heroes had come to include William Wallace, patriot of the Wars of Independence, Andrew Fletcher, patriot of the time of the Union, and George Buchanan, ideological defender of the first Scottish Reformation, who himself had only recently been rehabilitated from a reputation of rebelliousness. The Covenanters remained too hot to handle in the 1790s and the early nineteenth century. They were not dead, but they were not yet 'resurrected' as acceptable public heroes.

Conclusion: The Reputation(s) of George Buchanan in the Atlantic World

The composition of the Scottish pantheon of civil and religious liberty by the mid-nineteenth century is well illustrated by the writings and activities of Charles Rogers, (1825-90). Rogers was a cultural nationalist who agitated for the building of the Wallace Monument at Stirling, and who was a biographer of significant Scots including William Wallace, George Wishart, John Knox and Robert Burns. In *Stirling: The Battle Ground of Civil and Religious Liberty*, published in 1857, he discoursed on a number of historical figures connected with Stirling including Wallace and Bruce, Knox and Buchanan, James Guthrie and Ebenezer Erskine. For Rogers, Knox and Buchanan were equivalent as heroes of the Scottish Reformation, an event that was vital to the progress of civil and religious liberty. They were,

Especially adapted for mutual co-operation in the great work which they were raised up to accomplish. Knox was the great preacher, Buchanan the erudite and accomplished teacher of the Reformed doctrines; Knox stood on the watch-tower and blew the trumpet in Sion, Buchanan sat by the gate and guarded the portals of the Church.¹

James VI & I, Rogers suggested, had the Stuart tendency towards tyranny and persecution that “brought both his mother and his son to the scaffold,” and afterwards “drove his family from the throne.” Rogers implied that in the long-term development of British history it was almost destiny that the Stuarts should rule, tyrannize, and then suffer deposition. Buchanan had a monumental place in this struggle, not only because he supplied ideological weapons that could be used against tyranny; but also because his tutoring of James VI “prevented the full development of the evil till the work of reformation was perfected.”² No longer perceived as a dangerous anarchist or an enemy to monarchs, Buchanan was hailed as a contributor to the perfection of the British constitution.

George Buchanan has been identified as a committed Calvinist, whose faith was nonetheless a civic one, tempered by his devotion to humanism and the overriding concern of the welfare of the commonwealth. His political and historical writing was strongly secular, and his impatience with biblical debate must be contrasted to

¹ C. Rogers, *Stirling: The Battle Ground of Civil and Religious Liberty* (London, 1857), 32.

² Rogers, *Stirling*, 34.

his near-worship of classical literature. He tended to privilege simple morality above faith, reason over revelation, the commonwealth over the afterlife, and civic participation over martyrdom. Buchanan's Calvinism had subtle shadings of difference from the norm, from a Calvinist orthodoxy that was not yet rigidly established in the second half of the sixteenth century. However, the hardening Protestant cultures of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries moulded Buchanan into a staunch and inflexible Calvinist, both a pillar of the Scottish Reformation alongside John Knox, and a contributor to a body of political theory commonly known as 'Calvinist' resistance theory.

Certain features of Buchanan's works were privileged in the development of his reputation. Broadly speaking, in the early modern period, the *De Iure Regni* and the *Historia* were most often referred to, and the poems and plays less so. In the *De Iure Regni*, albeit only in one instance, Buchanan admitted rights of resistance to individuals acting alone against tyrants. The *Historia* provided examples of resistance in the broad sweep of Scottish history, against mythical early kings, and the more recent Stuarts, James III and Mary Queen of Scots. By the late eighteenth century, however, increasing attention was paid to Buchanan's literary career while his reputation was depoliticised and rehabilitated for the pantheon of civil and religious liberty. The *Historia* came to be valued not so much for its history of resistance, nor even for its accuracy, but more broadly for its libertarian and accessible account of Scottish history.

The reputation of George Buchanan presents a picture of contradictions. Buchanan was a Gael who did much to elucidate the character and origins of the Gaelic language, and Ferguson has championed his achievements in this field. Buchanan's account of the early Scottish kingdom, moreover, despite its spuriousness, provided Scotland with an antiquity and a political maturity that all Scots, of whatever persuasion, could be proud of. Yet Buchanan took little pride in Gaelic culture, and in one of the most well known passages in the *Historia*, he welcomed its demise.

I can perceive without regret, the gradual extinction of the ancient Scottish language, and cheerfully allow its harsh sounds to die away, and give place to the softer and more harmonious tones of the Latin. For if, in this transmigration into another language, it is necessary that

we yield up one thing or another, let us pass from rusticity and barbarism; to culture and civilisation.³

Gaelic culture never claimed Buchanan as one of its own, and instead, Buchanan was absorbed by the Covenanting tradition, an ideological institution that belonged authentically and exclusively to the Lowlands.

Almost from its inception, the Covenanting movement in Scotland looked to Buchanan to justify escalating levels of opposition to the Crown. However, the Covenanters' use of Buchanan as a resource was problematic, as they were more interested in divine than in popular sovereignty. They could not brook ideological resources that did not quote the Scriptures, invoke providence, or speculate on the apocalypse, and all of these things were added, often silently, to their citations of Buchanan.

In addition, the *Historia* provided a useful narrative of the history of the early church in Scotland, of its separateness from Rome and the laudable proto-Presbyterian values of the Culdees, those "convenient apparitions in protestant mythology."⁴ Buchanan supplied the earliest and best Protestant narrative of this period, which Knox had not covered in his *History of the Reformation*. This narrative was appropriated into the Covenanting tradition, and replicated regularly, from David Buchanan's edition of Knox's *History of the Reformation* in 1644, to James Aikman's *Historical Account of Covenanting in Scotland* in 1848.

The Scottish Covenanters were only the most committed of those who used Buchanan's name, ideas and reputation as ideological resources in the early modern Atlantic World. Other users included English parliamentarians, regicides, and Whigs of the seventeenth century; Scottish Whigs and Jacobites after the Glorious Revolution; Scottish Kirkmen, Seceders and Reformed Presbyterians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; patriots of the American Revolution; reformers of the 1790s; and novelists and literary commentators of the early nineteenth century. Furthermore, in these periods, opponents of resistance and political

³ Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, I, 9.

⁴ Ferguson, *Identity of the Scottish Nation*, 106.

radicalism used Buchanan's name as a malevolent totem to demonise or deter would-be radicals.

Engagement with Buchanan peaked at times of revolution and political unrest in the early modern Atlantic World, and examination of these contexts has shown the extent to which Buchanan's name and ideas were available to many potential users as part of a bank of ideological resources. This has highlighted the eclecticism of radical discourse, the ease with which theorists and polemicists could draw on diverse, even mutually incompatible intellectual traditions in order to argue their case. In the late seventeenth century, the bank of resources of resistance theory began to coalesce as the Atlantic canon of political theory. 1688 can be regarded as a turning point in Buchanan's reputation, a point at which his name and works went from being a potential resource to a potential liability. The post-Revolution cultures of Scotland, England and Ireland were sensitive about the Calvinist heritage of resistance, and moderate Scottish Presbyterians were particularly keen to distance themselves from the Covenanting extremism with which Buchanan's name was associated.

If entry into the canon of political theory does not depend purely on the intrinsic merit of political texts, but on contingent factors, then Buchanan was certainly not in the right place at the right time. Absorbed into the Covenanting tradition that was transmitted in Scotland, Ulster, and America from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, Buchanan's longstanding association with the parochial and narrow-minded Covenanters was detrimental to his reputation as a political theorist, and effectively retarded his acceptance into the Atlantic canon of political theory.

Recent general studies of the history of political thought have covered Buchanan's career in some detail, and Buchanan is now recognised as a political theorist whose importance extends beyond the confines of purely Scottish history.⁵ However, Buchanan's texts are not regarded as truly 'canonical' in the way that those of Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Locke are – they are not available in cheap and accessible editions, for example. The *De Iure Regni* is not widely touted as a text that one *must*

⁵ Skinner, *Foundations*, II; Burns & Goldie, *History of Political Thought*.

have read in order to consider oneself well versed in the history of political theory, and this, surely, must be one of the first qualifications for a classic text. Moreover, sourcebooks such as *Classics of Modern Political Theory* take no notice of Buchanan, but include Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Hume, Smith, the Declaration of Independence, The Federalist Papers and Burke.⁶ The securely British identities of Hume and Smith meant that their Scottish origins were no bar to recognition of their achievements. In contrast, theorists such as George Buchanan and Andrew Fletcher, who are assumed to be more distinctively Scottish, have a problematic place in the canon of political theory. Their perceived parochialism, their very distinctiveness, sits uneasily alongside the supposed universality of the canon.

From the middle of the eighteenth century, the literati of the Scottish Enlightenment criticised Buchanan's scholarly achievements and developed a more sophisticated brand of civic humanism. However, the literati's scrutiny of Scottish history and vulgar Whiggism was not wholly detrimental to Buchanan's reputation. The confessional and dynastic conflicts that had pressed Buchanan into service as a prophet of resistance were fading, and as they faded, they were better explained by enlightened historians. As better understandings developed of the first and second Scottish Reformations, the Presbyterian myth of continuity between them began to be broken, and Buchanan's reputation was dislodged from the grip of the Covenanters. The Covenanting tradition proved to be a dead end in Buchanan's reputation, as in the late-eighteenth century, the heirs of the Covenanters in Scotland, Seceders and Reformed Presbyterians, showed comparatively little interest in Buchanan's name and ideas. By 1788, the separation of Buchanan's reputation from that of the Covenanters had proceeded to such a degree that Buchanan could be honoured as an object of pride for the Scottish nation, with the building of the monument at Killearn in 1788.

The consolidation of the Scottish pantheon of civil and religious liberty stuttered in the 1790s, owing to the continuing sensitivities over past political radicalism. However, as part of a long-term trend in the second half of the eighteenth century

⁶ S. M. Cahn (ed.), *Classics of Modern Political Theory: Machiavelli to Mill* (Oxford, 1997).

and into the nineteenth century, the pantheon, and Buchanan's membership of it, was cemented. Depoliticised and increasingly irrelevant as a theorist, Buchanan had become more usable for his name than for his ideas, and praise of him tended to be indiscriminating and flexible. The Covenanters, in contrast, remained beyond the pale of the pantheon of civil and religious liberty until around the middle of the nineteenth century.

By the mid-nineteenth century, then, the name of George Buchanan could be confidently linked to the names of Knox and the Covenanters, but this was done in a different way than in the past two centuries. The making of such connections depended less on an understanding or misunderstanding of what Buchanan thought, wrote, or stood for, and more on the status of all of these figures as heroes of civil and religious liberty. The extended pantheon had come to include such names as William Wallace, Robert the Bruce, John Knox, George Buchanan, James Guthrie, Alexander Peden, Robert Burns, and Thomas Muir. All members of the pantheon, regardless of their historical context, their aims or their understanding of liberty, had attained a degree of equality and could be linked together flexibly.

Examination of the reputation of George Buchanan has shed light on the logic by which Scottish users sifted and selected their heroes and ideological resources. This selection and rejection can be seen not only in the early modern period, but is a pursuit that numerous modern commentators have also indulged in. Paul Scott argues of Hugh MacDiarmid, "In his radical politics he was extending a tradition that goes back through MacLean, Muir of Huntershill, the Covenanters, the Reformation and George Buchanan to the Declaration of Arbroath."⁷ Just as Quentin Skinner has warned against the creation of 'mythologies' in the study of the canon of political theory, it appears that caution is also required in dealing with the Scottish pantheon of libertarian heroes, lest a 'mythology of equivalence' be created.

Uniting twentieth-century socialists; a reforming martyr of the 1790s; a band of insurrectionary theocrats of the seventeenth century; a humanist and Calvinist resistance theorist of the sixteenth century; and a group of medieval barons, Scott's

⁷ P. H. Scott, 'In Bed With an Elephant', in *Towards Independence: Essays on Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1991), 73.

obsession with a myth of Scotland's populist and egalitarian constitutional history is little different from Charles Rogers' interpretation in the mid-nineteenth century. As the changing reputations of George Buchanan show, then, the pantheon of Scottish heroes, like the canon of political theory, has been, and remains, a construct, dependent on a degree of distortion, and the decontextualisation of historical figures.

George Buchanan did not have one reputation, but many in the Atlantic World between 1638 and around 1832. The view of the history of political thought presented here is a celebration of originality and plagiarism, of coherence and incoherence, of ambiguity, of the constantly mutating effects of 'influence', and the absence of linearity in the transmission of political ideas and reputations. Study of Buchanan's posthumous career has thrown up constant reminders of the fickle and malleable nature of reputations. Exploitative users, not the texts he left to posterity, were the making of George Buchanan's reputation.

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