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## George Buchanan as a historian of the Scottish Reformation, 1527–1559

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This paper considers George Buchanan's account, in his *Rerum Scoticarum Historia* (1582), of the pre-Reformation Scottish Church in the years from Patrick Hamilton's martyrdom in February 1527/8 through to May 1559.<sup>1</sup> The aim is to see if Buchanan's *Historia* adds anything to what is otherwise known, and also to test, as far as possible, how reliable Buchanan is as a historian. In other words, is Buchanan's *Historia* worth consulting for this period, and can anything be said about its accuracy?

### I. Criticism of Buchanan's reliability as a historian

The reason for attempting a survey of Buchanan's reliability as a historian for the period 1527/8–1559 is the very negative assessment of his *Historia* in the most recent major biography of Buchanan, that of I. D. McFarlane, which itself appeared forty-odd years ago in 1981:

Just how reliable Buchanan's narrative is, even for his own times, is something that must be left to competent historians; but it is disquieting how many recent scholars have come to the conclusion that where Buchanan overlaps with previous writers, he adds nothing to the corpus of knowledge, and where his contemporary facts can be checked against other sources, he is found wanting in accuracy and judgment. ... It is clear that Buchanan's memory of facts, even of his own life, was almost pathologically wild and eccentric.

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<sup>1</sup> G. Buchanan, *Rerum Scoticarum Historia* (Edinburgh: Alexander Arbuthnot, 1582). Further editions followed in 1583, 1584, 1594 and subsequently; see J. Durkan, *Bibliography of George Buchanan* (Glasgow, 1993), pp. 218–231. Various English translations have appeared, the earliest in 1690. We are using James Aikman's translation, *The History of Scotland, by George Buchanan* (4 vols., Glasgow, 1827) [cited hereafter as Aikman].

Eighteenth-century scholarship ... made such serious inroads into Buchanan's standing as a scholar that one cannot say he has recovered properly since. In the nineteenth century, some salvage operations were attempted: thus David Irving ... did much to restore confidence in Buchanan's reliability at least for the period in which he was an active witness; and Hume Brown concluded his study with a balanced, but generally favourable, assessment of Buchanan's use as a historian. More recent scholarship has however made further breaches in the wall of Buchanan's standing, and the *Historia* appears more interesting as an expression of the spirit of its age than as a contribution to our understanding of the events he describes.<sup>2</sup>

A more recent writer expressed the same judgement for the period under consideration, bracketing Buchanan's *Historia* along with Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie's *Historie and Cronicles* as 'wildly unreliable'.<sup>3</sup>

Buchanan's *Historia* (purportedly) covers over two thousand years of Scottish history from around 500 B.C. to the death of Regent Lennox in 1571. Inevitably, the usefulness of its twenty books is variable. The first two books deal with the geography and language of Britain, while the third contains supporting extracts from Tacitus, Bede, and other writers. The first two books, in particular, are regarded as of abiding value.<sup>4</sup> The fourth book is an account of the thirty-nine kings – for a long time now, considered to be legendary – from Fergus I in 330 B.C. to Eugenius I. Much of the onslaught on Buchanan's reputation as an historian has been directed against this part of the work, with Hugh Trevor-Roper to the fore.<sup>5</sup> Books 5 to 12 cover the period from Fergus II (i.e., Fergus

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<sup>2</sup> I. D. McFarlane, *Buchanan* (London, 1981), pp. 429, 440. For Hume Brown's more favourable assessment of the 'value of Buchanan's *History* for the first half of the sixteenth century', see P. Hume Brown, *George Buchanan: Humanist and Reformer* (Edinburgh, 1890), pp. 320-21.

<sup>3</sup> A. Ryrie, *Origins of the Scottish Reformation* (Manchester, 2006), p. 4. Pitscottie's editor, A. J. G. Mackay, passes quite a different judgement: 'In the third period [1542-1575], Pitscottie is substantially accurate, and in the portion which narrates the events between 1565 and 1575 he is as accurate as any diarist of the time.' Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie, *The Historie and Cronicles of Scotland* (3 vols., Scottish Text Society, Edinburgh, 1899-1911), pp. cxlvii-cxlviii.

<sup>4</sup> See W. Ferguson, *Identity of the Scottish Nation* (Edinburgh, 1998), pp. 87-88; R. A. Mason, 'From Buchanan to Blaeu: the politics of Scottish chorography, 1582-1654', in C. Erskine and R. A. Mason (eds.), *George Buchanan: Political Thought in Early Modern Britain and Europe* (Routledge, 2017), pp. 15-16, 24-28.

<sup>5</sup> H. Trevor-Roper, 'George Buchanan and the Ancient Scottish Constitution', *English Historical Review*, Supplement 3 (1966); *ibid.*, *The Invention of Scotland: Myth and History* (Yale, 2014), chapters 2 and 3.

I or Fergus Mór) in the fifth century A.D. to the death of James III in 1488. This material, of course, as a historical account has been entirely superseded and is now of interest only for historiographical purposes.<sup>6</sup> Books 13 to 16 describe the reign of James IV to his death at Flodden in 1513, of James V to his death in 1542, and the first part of the reign of Mary Queen of Scots from 1542 to 1560. The final part, Books 17 to 20, runs from 1560 to 1571.

From Book 13 onwards, Buchanan (1506–1582) had access to contemporary information so the importance of his work changes. In the late nineteenth century, Aeneas Mackay commented:

From the middle of the thirteenth book to the close Buchanan's history still retains a certain value. This portion from James V to the death of Lennox, where it somewhat abruptly stops, is practically the work of a contemporary, and though it is that of a partisan who vilifies Mary, panegyrises Moray, hates all the Hamiltons, and dislikes Morton, no future historian can safely neglect the view of Scottish history which impressed such an intellect, and was the popular opinion, not merely in his own time, but for two centuries after.<sup>7</sup>

In 1958, however, the final four books (17–20) were subjected to close scrutiny by W. A. Gatherer who summarised his very negative conclusions as follows:

Briefly, my general conclusion is that while [Buchanan's account of Mary's reign] has a substratum of truth, it is constructed on a mass of falsehood. That is to say, Buchanan had before him a sequence of events of undeniable authenticity, while there was also available to him a great deal of circumstantial evidence which could have been used against the Queen with much effect; but instead of relying upon irrefutable evidence he saw fit to build his indictment on allegations and insinuations which are demonstrably suspect. His case is blatantly over-stated: so much so that there is just cause for suspecting that he had much to hide. ... The truth about Mary's rôle in the action cannot be established from an examination of Buchanan's work: but what can be established is that his case against her is inaccurate and dishonest.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For discussion, see Hume Brown, *George Buchanan*, pp. 308–317.

<sup>7</sup> A. J. G. Mackay, 'George Buchanan', *Dictionary of National Biography* (1885–1900).

<sup>8</sup> W. A. Gatherer (ed.), *The Tyrannous Reign of Mary Stewart: George Buchanan's Account* (Edinburgh, 1958), p. ix. Gatherer's conclusions were somewhat softened and adjusted in a review by J. Hurstfield, *Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. 39, No. 127:1 (1960), pp. 57–59.

The effect of this hostile criticism, along with that of Hugh Trevor-Roper in 1966, was a widespread neglect of Buchanan's *Historia*. In 2014, Roger Mason lamented that Trevor-Roper's assault had 'led a whole generation of scholars to belittle or simply ignore' the *Historia*.<sup>9</sup>

All this might leave the impression that Buchanan's *Historia* is virtually worthless as a historical source, but we will see that this is far from the case, at least for the period under review. Buchanan does not add a great deal to what is available elsewhere, but, apart from the important work of corroborating other sources, he does make some original and interesting contributions, and these are consistent with what is otherwise known and can therefore be assumed – in the absence of any other evidence – to be reasonably accurate.

## II. Other histories of the period

The other major contemporary sources for the period under consideration are the histories or chronicles of John Knox (c. 1513–1572), John Foxe (1517–1587), John Lesley (1527–1596) (English in 1571 and Latin in 1578), and Robert Lindesay of Pitscottie (c. 1532–1578+),<sup>10</sup> to which might be added the *Memoirs* of John Maxwell, 4<sup>th</sup> Lord Herries (c. 1512–1583), the *Diurnal of Occurrents*, the *Memoirs* of James Melville of Halhill, and Robert Pitcairn's *Ancient Criminal Trials*.<sup>11</sup> In addition, there are the later writers such as Archbishop John Spottiswoode, David Calderwood, Sir James Balfour of Denmilne, Alexander Petrie, and Robert Keith, but all these had access to Buchanan's *Historia* so comparisons with them are to less purpose.

One question that arises is, How were these histories related to each other? The answer would seem to be, Not much. Pitscottie appears to have written his work around 1575 and 1576 but its earliest publication was

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<sup>9</sup> R. A. Mason, 'How Andrew Melville read his George Buchanan', in R. A. Mason and S. J. Reid (eds.), *Andrew Melville (1545–1622): Writings, reception, and reputation* (Farnham, 2014), pp. 11–45 (at p. 20). One recent exception to Mason's lament has been the use made of Buchanan's *Historia* in Amy Blakeway, *Regency in Sixteenth-Century Scotland* (Woodbridge, 2015), pp. 22, 38–42, 60–61, 151–2.

<sup>10</sup> W. C. Dickinson (ed.), *John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland* (2 vols., London, 1949); John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (1563, 1570, 1576, 1583), see TAMO online; John Lesley, *De Origine Moribus et rebus gestibus Scotorum* (Rome, 1578) [our references are to the 1675 edition]; John Lesley, *History of Scotland, from the death of King James I in the year MCCCCXXXVI to the year MDLXI* (Bannatyne Club, 1830); Pitscottie, *Historie and Cronicles of Scotland*.

<sup>11</sup> Lord Herries, *Historical Memoirs* (Abbotsford Club, Edinburgh, 1836); *Diurnal of Remarkable Occurrents* (Bannatyne Club, Edinburgh, 1833); Sir James Melville of Halhill, *Memoirs of His Own Life* (Bannatyne Club and Maitland Club, Edinburgh, 1827 and 1833); R. Pitcairn (ed.), *Ancient Criminal Trials* (3 vols., Bannatyne Club, Edinburgh, 1833).

in 1728;<sup>12</sup> and Buchanan, too, seems to have written most of his book before 1578 although the final publication was in 1582.<sup>13</sup> It is unlikely that either saw the work of the other; and where there is a significant overlap, as in their accounts of the death of George Wishart, the most natural explanation is that they were using a common source.<sup>14</sup> Lesley, likewise, was independent of Knox and Pitscottie. Buchanan may well have seen a copy of Lesley's *De Origine* (1578) before the publication of his own work, but by then he had written most of it. It is also possible that he had access to a manuscript copy of the English version of Lesley's history, and certainly his account of the early 1530s (when he was out of the country) seems to follow Lesley's quite closely. Knox's *History* was not published – and then only in part – until 1587, after Buchanan's death. Buchanan was certainly aware of Knox's manuscript and is credited with helping at one point,<sup>15</sup> but he seems not to have read Book I (see on David Straiton, below). We shall find below, however, that Buchanan does appear to have used material from Book II in his *Historia*.

Foxe issued four editions of his *Actes and Monuments* during his lifetime (1563, 1570, 1576, 1583), as well as two minor Latin precursors (*Commentarii* in 1554, and *Rerum* in 1559).<sup>16</sup> The two Latin precursors and the 1563 edition of the book contained little information on Scotland, and what there was was mainly from printed works such as Hector Boece's *Scotorum Historia*, John Bale's *Catalogus*, and the anonymous *The tragical death of Dauid Beato[n] ... wherunto is joyned the martyrdom of maister George Wyseharte* (discussed below).<sup>17</sup> Most of Foxe's Scottish information was probably received in 1564 – and probably from John Winram – and was

<sup>12</sup> Pitscottie, *Historie and Cronicles of Scotland*, Vol. 1, pp. xlvi, 1, 12; Vol. 2, pp. 329–330; D. Hay Fleming, *Critical Reviews relating chiefly to Scotland* (London, 1912), p. 508; W. W. Scott, 'Lindsay, Robert, of Pitscottie', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), online.

<sup>13</sup> McFarlane, *Buchanan*, p. 423.

<sup>14</sup> D. Hay Fleming thought it 'obvious' that Pitscottie had read Buchanan's *Historia* prior to writing his own account of Wishart's death, *George Wishart, the Martyr* (Knox Club Publication, No. 56, Edinburgh, 1923), p. 6, but the opinion expressed above seems simpler.

<sup>15</sup> P. Hume Brown (ed.), *Vernacular Writings of George Buchanan* (Scottish Text Society, Edinburgh, 1892), p. 58; David Laing (ed.), *Works of John Knox* (6 vols., Wodrow Society, Edinburgh, 1846–64), Vol. 2, p. 134.

<sup>16</sup> Our information is taken from the detailed and useful discussion of Foxe's treatment of Scottish pre-Reformation martyrs in Thomas S. Freeman, "'The reik of Maister Patrik Hammyltoun': John Foxe, John Winram, and the Martyrs of the Scottish Reformation", *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Spring, 1996), pp. 43–60.

<sup>17</sup> For Knox's use of Foxe's 1563 edition in his own *History of the Reformation*, mainly written before 1566, see e.g., Knox, *Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 14, 504–505.



included in the 1570 edition of the book.<sup>18</sup> The 1576 edition was unaltered as far as material on Scotland was concerned, and the final 1583 edition was the same except for the restoration of material on John Borthwick, omitted in the 1570 and 1576 editions, and the insertion of Emery Tylney's memoir of George Wishart. We shall see below (on David Straiton and George Wishart) that Buchanan appears not to have used any of Foxe's editions in the preparation of his own book.

The period that we are reviewing – 1527/8 to 1559 – occupies over a hundred pages in Aikman's translation of Buchanan's *Historia*,<sup>19</sup> and we have had to be selective in the material considered in this paper. We have concentrated on points of religious rather than political interest, of which there are a considerable number. We have not sought to examine Buchanan's accuracy as a general historian of the period, but certainly as a religious historian he is well worth consulting.

Buchanan was out of Scotland for most of the period under consideration. He studied in Paris from 1520 to 1522, undertook military service in the north of England in 1523, was in St Andrews in 1524 and 1525, and returned to Paris from 1526 to about 1535. He then came back to Scotland about 1535, but fled in 1539 at a time of anti-Lutheran persecution. He lived in France until 1547, and then moved to Portugal where he fell into the hands of the Lisbon Inquisition for eighteen months from August 1550. After further time in France and Italy, he returned to Scotland in 1561. Thus the material for his *Historia* between 1527 and 1559 must have been derived largely from others. Who these were is a matter of speculation, although we shall identify Knox as one of them below.

### **III. Discussion of Buchanan's contribution for the period**

1. Buchanan's first contribution of interest is a very brief account of Patrick Hamilton's death on 29<sup>th</sup> February 1527/8.

In the same year, Patrick Hamilton, a son of the sister of John, duke of Albany's, and a brother of the earl of Arran's, a young man of the greatest genius, and most singular erudition, was condemned, by a conspiracy of the priesthood, and burned alive at St. Andrews; not long after whose execution, the death of Alexander Campbell, attracted the public attention.

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<sup>18</sup> This point is established in Freeman, "The reik of Maister Patrik Hammyltoun": John Foxe, John Winram, and the Martyrs of the Scottish Reformation', pp. 50-55. Freeman is less convincing in his attempt to explain Winram's motivation in supplying Foxe with this material.

<sup>19</sup> Aikman, Vol. 2, pp. 297-404 (halfway through Book 14 to halfway through Book 16).

He belonged to the Dominican order, was himself a young man of good ability, and esteemed the most learned among the followers of the sect of Thomas Aquinas. Patrick had often disputed with this man, concerning the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, and in their controversies had brought him to confess, that almost all the points which were then held heretical, were true. Notwithstanding, Alexander, fonder of life than of truth, was persuaded by his friends, to become Hamilton's public accuser. Patrick, who was naturally very vehement, could not remain silent at the rhetorical declamation of this man, but exclaimed openly: I summon thee, thou most aggravated sinner, who knowest the things which thou condemnest are true, and didst confess so to me only a few days ago, to take thy trial before the tribunal of the living God; which address so disturbed Alexander, that he never from that hour enjoyed peace of mind, and not long after died mad.<sup>20</sup>

Buchanan was out of the country from about 1526 to 1535, as we have mentioned, and it is remarkable that most of the information that he gives regarding Hamilton's martyrdom relates to Hamilton's reproof of the Dominican friar Alexander Campbell, and to Campbell's death soon afterwards. This part of the story is also recounted by Knox, Foxe, Pitscottie, and Spottiswoode,<sup>21</sup> but Buchanan adds the details that Campbell was a young man and that he was 'esteemed the most learned among the followers of the sect of Thomas Aquinas'. This is no small praise when it is recalled that in 1525 five other Scottish Dominicans were licensed along with Campbell as Bachelors of Theology by the General Chapter of the Order, including the eminent John MacAlpine (Maccabeus).

Buchanan may well have known Campbell personally: Campbell is recorded as prior of the St Andrews Dominicans on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1526 and Buchanan was still in St Andrews in October 1525, not being incorporated in Paris until 10<sup>th</sup> October 1527. According to Pitscottie, during the attempts to speed up the burning of Patrick Hamilton, the east wind blew the flame onto Campbell, knocking him to the ground and burning part of his cowl. He died in a frenzy within forty days. Buchanan presumably knew Patrick Hamilton as well, but his apparently greater interest in the death of Campbell may reflect that his natural affinity was more with the irresolute character of Campbell than with the simple steadfastness of Patrick Hamilton.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 297–8.

<sup>21</sup> Dickinson, *John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Vol. 1, pp. 12, 14; for Foxe, see Knox, *Works*, Vol. 1, Appendix iv, p. 514; Pitscottie, *Historie and Cronicles of Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 312; J. Spottiswoode, *History of the Church of Scotland* (3 vols., Spottiswoode Society, Edinburgh, 1847–51), Vol. 1, pp. 126–7.

2. Buchanan describes at length the activities of the great faster John Scott in 1531 and succeeding years.<sup>22</sup> For much of this information, Buchanan is the principal source, and presumably he was writing from personal knowledge after his return to Scotland in 1535.<sup>23</sup> His account of the events of 1531 is confirmed by the *Diurnal* which mentions that Scott, being unsuccessful in a lawsuit, took refuge in Holyrood Abbey; was imprisoned in Edinburgh Castle in April 1531 where he fasted for thirty-two days (Buchanan says thirty days and Lesley forty days); and was then exhibited naked at the Cross of Edinburgh on 6<sup>th</sup> October where he attributed his astonishing ability at fasting to the Virgin Mary.<sup>24</sup>

Thereafter Scott went to Rome, where he was temporarily imprisoned by Pope Clement VII (who died on 25<sup>th</sup> September 1534), then to Venice, to Jerusalem, to London (where he declaimed in St Paul's churchyard against Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon), and back to Scotland. His continued favour with James V is witnessed by a payment of 22 shillings to 'John Scott, called the sanct' on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1541.<sup>25</sup>

3. Buchanan mentions very briefly the persecution of Lutherans in 1534 and the martyrdom of David Straiton in August. He says that Straiton was accused of Lutheranism simply because he had been slow in paying his tithes, and he seems to have been unaware of Straiton's subsequent Protestant conversion:

Next August (1534), a severe inquisition was made after those suspected of Lutheranism. Some were forced publicly to recant. Some, who when

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<sup>22</sup> Aikman, Vol. 2, pp. 304-5. Buchanan's account of Scott is summarised in D. Calderwood, *History of the Kirk of Scotland* (8 vols., Wodrow Society, Edinburgh, 1842-49), Vol. 1, pp. 101-102 and in Spottiswoode, *History of the Church of Scotland*, Vol. 1, pp. 136-7. Spottiswoode adds the information that on his return to Edinburgh, Scott lodged in the western part of the town.

<sup>23</sup> John Lesley also gives an account of Scott, mentioning that he had been in England, France, Italy, and the Holy Land; that James V shut him in up in David's Tower in Edinburgh Castle; and that he was reputed to have the spirit of prophecy; see *De Origine Moribus* (1675), p. 411; *History of Scotland*, p. 142; *Historie of Scotland [...] by Jhone Leslie [...] translated in Scottish by Father James Dalrymple*, ed. by E. G. Cody (2 vols., Scottish Text Society, Edinburgh, 1888-1895), Vol. 2, pp. 220-221.

<sup>24</sup> *Diurnal*, pp. 14-15. David Laing identifies John Scott with the Franciscan friar of the same name, Knox, *Works*, Vol. 1, p. 96n, but W. Moir Bryce gives good reason for rejecting this identification, *Scottish Grey Friars* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1909), Vol. 1, p. 292. He argues that when Knox says of Friar Scott in 1546 that he 'before had given himself forth for the greatest professor of Christ Jesus in Scotland, and under that colour had disclosed, and so endangered many', Knox was referring, not to some supposed fasting episode fifteen years earlier, but to Friar Scott's more recent appearance as a zealous Protestant.

<sup>25</sup> Knox, *Works*, Vol. 1, p. 96n; Pitcairn, *Ancient Criminal Trials*, Vol. 1, p. 311\*.



cited did not appear, were pronounced exiles, and two were burned, of whom, one, David Straiton, was perfectly clear of the crime alleged; but being rather tardy in paying his tithes to the collectors, he was accused of Lutheranism and suffered for his supposed crime.<sup>26</sup>

It is clear that Buchanan was not familiar with Foxe's account (apparently derived from Winram, as we have mentioned) in the 1570 edition of *Actes and Monuments* (repeated in 1576 and 1583); much less with the fuller and remarkable account of Straiton given by Knox in Book I of his *History*.<sup>27</sup>

4. For the year 1537, Buchanan comments on the attitude of the priests to Queen Madeleine (Magdalen) of Valois. Madeleine was married to James V on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1536/7, came to Scotland on 28<sup>th</sup> May 1537 but died on 7<sup>th</sup> July, 'to the inexpressible grief of all, except the priests, who feared that had she lived – as they knew she had been educated by her aunt, the Queen of Navarre – she would have kept their luxury and licentiousness within bounds'.<sup>28</sup> In his *Vita*, Buchanan says that Madeleine's arrival 'somewhat alarmed the priests, who feared lest the young bride, educated under the direction of her aunt the Queen of Navarre, might effect some change in religion'.<sup>29</sup>

Knox makes no reference to Queen Madeleine, and Lesley and Pitscottie speak only of the rejoicing at her arrival,<sup>30</sup> but her potential religious views must have been a concern for the Scottish ecclesiastical hierarchy because of the ongoing pressure that James V was under from his uncle Henry VIII. Buchanan was a member of the royal court by 1537, being the tutor of Lord James Stewart, so he may have been privy to some of the background discussions in high places at the time of the marriage.<sup>31</sup> Williamson thinks that, in his comments on Queen Madeleine, Buchanan

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<sup>26</sup> Aikman, Vol. 2, p. 311.

<sup>27</sup> See Knox, *Works*, Vol. 1, Appendix v, pp. 519–520 (for Foxe); Dickinson, *John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Vol. 1, pp. 24–25; Pitscottie, *Historie and Cronicles of Scotland*, Vol. 1, pp. 348, 351.

<sup>28</sup> Aikman, Vol. 2, p. 315. Buchanan's comment is repeated by Calderwood, *History of the Kirk of Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 112, and is also picked up by McFarlane, *Buchanan*, p. 72. Sir David Lindsay's court poem on her death, 'The deploration of the death of Queen Magdalen', gives various reasons for grief but, unsurprisingly, this is not one of them; D. Laing (ed.), *Poetical Works of David Lyndsay* (3 vols., Edinburgh, 1879), Vol. 1, pp. 117–124.

<sup>29</sup> Aikman, Vol. 1, p. lxxxiii.

<sup>30</sup> Lesley, *History of Scotland*, pp. 152–3; Pitscottie, *Historie and Cronicles of Scotland*, Vol. 1, pp. 362–369. Margaret H. B. Sanderson speaks of the 'satisfaction' of the 'orthodox pro-French party in Scotland' at James V's marriage to Madeleine, *Cardinal of Scotland: David Beaton, c.1494–1546* (Edinburgh, 2001), p. 64, but there must have been an element of apprehension among them as well.

<sup>31</sup> McFarlane, *Buchanan*, p. 48.

was expressing views that he did not in fact develop until the 1540s, but Williamson's argument is based on the three brief epigrams that Buchanan wrote on the death of Queen Madeleine which were silent regarding any religious 'dashed hopes', and this reasoning hardly seems conclusive.<sup>32</sup>

5. For 1539, Buchanan recorded the persecution of Lutherans and his own flight from Scotland.

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.<sup>33</sup>

The five who were burned were the Augustinian canon Dean Thomas Forret, the Dominican friars William Keillor and John Beveridge, the chaplain Duncan Simpson, and the 'gentleman' Robert Forrester. Other writers mention the martyrs, but Buchanan is the only one of the earlier historians to refer to those who recanted.<sup>34</sup> Calderwood names two of them as Walter Cousland and James Watson.<sup>35</sup> Fuller accounts of Buchanan's own escape (with the connivance of James V) were obtained by the Portuguese Inquisition, but it is only in the *Historia* that he mentions his escaping out of the window. He was staying with the king's secretary, Sir Thomas Erskine of Haltoun, at Linlithgow.<sup>36</sup>

6. Under the year 1540, Buchanan mentions that Sir James Learmonth of Dairsie and Sir James Kirkcaldy of Grange were 'friendly to the reformed religion'.<sup>37</sup> Sir James Learmonth was Provost of St Andrews

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<sup>32</sup> P. J. McGinnis and A. H. Williamson (eds.), *George Buchanan: the Political Poetry* (Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1995 [i.e., 2000]), p. 268.

<sup>33</sup> Aikman, Vol. 2, p. 317.

<sup>34</sup> Dickinson, *John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 26; *Diurnal*, p. 23; Lesley, *History of Scotland*, p. 157; idem, *Historie of Scotland*, Vol. 2, p. 244; Pitcottie, *Historie and Cronicles of Scotland*, Vol. 1, pp. 348-351; for Foxe (1576), see Knox, *Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 521-2; Calderwood, *History of the Kirk of Scotland*, Vol. 1, pp. 124-129; R. K. Hannay (ed.), *Rentale Sancti Andree, 1538-1546* (Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1913), pp. 64, 93; Pitcairn, *Ancient Criminal Trials*, Vol. 1, p. 209\*-210\*.

<sup>35</sup> Calderwood, *History of the Kirk of Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 125; Pitcairn, *Ancient Criminal Trials*, Vol. 1, p. 216\*; and for Walter Cousland, see T. M'Crie, *Life of John Knox* (Edinburgh, 1855), pp. 314, 317; entry in M. H. B. Sanderson, *Early Scottish Protestants, 1407-1560* (Scottish Record Society, Edinburgh, 2010), pp. 58-59.

<sup>36</sup> J. M. Aitken, *Trial of George Buchanan* (Edinburgh, 1939), pp. 7, 9, 59, 119, 123, 125.

<sup>37</sup> 'neuter a religione puriore alienus [neither of them strangers to pure religion]', Aikman, Vol. 2, p. 320. Calderwood (evidently following Buchanan at this stage) describes them as 'favourers and secret professors of the truth', *History of the Kirk of Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 140.

almost continuously from 1526 until his death at the battle of Pinkie in 1547, and was Master of the King's Household from 1537 to 1542.<sup>38</sup> For Sir James Kirkcaldy, there is plenty of evidence to confirm Buchanan's statement,<sup>39</sup> but for Learmonth rather less. He certainly had Anglophile and Protestant-leaning sympathies – the *Diurnal* mentions that he was imprisoned in January 1544 by Cardinal Beaton and Arran in their clampdown on 'heresy'; while Knox says that Cardinal Beaton had a plan to kill or capture Learmonth along with some of his associates, which was due to have come to fruition two days after Beaton was assassinated<sup>40</sup> – but Buchanan's assertion seems to be the most definite statement that there is about Sir James Learmonth's religious views.

Given his position as Provost, Sir James's reformed leanings are a significant background fact for St Andrews in the 1530s and 1540s. After his death, Sir James was succeeded as Provost by his son Sir Patrick, who seems also to have inherited his father's religious sentiments.<sup>41</sup> It is likely, therefore, that Patrick's younger brother James, who was Provost of St Mary's Kirk Hill in St Andrews from 1540 to 1578, was also friendly to the reformed religion in the 1540s and 1550s.

7. For January 1543/4, Buchanan records the visit of Cardinal Beaton and Governor Arran to Perth and Dundee to persecute Protestants.

First they came to Perth. There, four men were put to death for eating flesh on a forbidden day, and a woman, because she refused to implore the aid of the Virgin Mary during the time of her delivery, suffered along with them. They then directed their attention to crush the friends of reformation every where, and proceeded to Dundee, as they themselves declared, in order to bring to punishment all those who read the New Testament, for, in these days, that was numbered among the most heinous crimes, and such was the general ignorance, that many of the priests, offended at the term

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<sup>38</sup> See Knox, *Works*, Vol. 1, p. 174n; *Diurnal*, pp. 24, 31; R. Keith, *History of the Affairs of Church and State in Scotland* (3 vols., Spottiswoode Society, Edinburgh, 1844–1850), Vol. 1, p. 46n; M. D. Young (ed.), *The Parliaments of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1992–3), p. 417.

<sup>39</sup> For Sir James Kirkcaldy of Grange, see his entry in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004).

<sup>40</sup> *Diurnal*, p. 31; Dickinson, *John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 76.

<sup>41</sup> Pitscottie, *Historie and Cronicles of Scotland*, Vol. 2, p. 134 records Patrick Learmonth's refusal to be involved in the death of Walter Milne in 1558. In June 1559, following Knox's sermons, Patrick and the baillies of St Andrews agreed 'to remove all monuments of idolatry', Dickinson, *John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 182; and soon afterwards, Patrick appeared with 500 St Andrews men in support of the Congregation on Cupar Muir, Aikman, Vol. 2, p. 410.

New, contended that it was a book lately written by Martin Luther, and demanded the Old Testament.<sup>42</sup>

Much fuller accounts of the five Perth martyrs are given by Knox, Foxe, and Calderwood; while the punitive visit to Dundee on 28<sup>th</sup> January is confirmed by the *Diurnal*.<sup>43</sup> The possession of an English Bible had been permitted by act of Scottish Parliament on 13<sup>th</sup> March 1543, although Buchanan does not mention this. For a while, says Knox, ‘then might have been seen the Bible lying almost upon every gentleman’s table’.<sup>44</sup> This permission was never repealed when Arran returned to Romanism later in the year, but Gavin Dunbar, Archbishop of Glasgow, had protested against it at the time on behalf of all the Scottish prelates, and Buchanan’s statement shows that the Roman hierarchy felt free to resume their persecution of those who possessed Bibles. Marco Grimani, the papal legate to Scotland, notes in a letter that on 26<sup>th</sup> November 1543, ‘an immense number of New Testaments and books calculated to promote heresy were burned in the public square’ in Edinburgh.<sup>45</sup> In 1550, George Winchester of Kinglassie near Glenrothes was condemned for heresy *in absentia* by Archbishop John Hamilton. According to his posterity, he was condemned ‘for having in his custody, and reading a Bible in English’, but the family memory may have over-simplified the charge.<sup>46</sup> Patrick Waus, who was a schoolboy in Musselburgh, had a New Testament and a Psalm book. His letter recording this was written on 16<sup>th</sup> June but the year could be anything between 1540 and 1547.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Aikman, Vol. 2, pp. 350-351.

<sup>43</sup> Dickinson, *John Knox’s History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 75; for Foxe, see Knox, *Works*, Vol. 1, Appendix v, pp. 523-526, Calderwood, *History of the Kirk of Scotland*, Vol. 1, pp. 171-175. See also M. Verschuur, *Politics or Religion? The Reformation in Perth, 1540-1570* (Edinburgh, 2006), pp. 75-78. For Dundee, see *Diurnal*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>44</sup> See Dickinson, *John Knox’s History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Vol. 1, pp. 43-45; <https://www.rps.ac.uk/trans/1543/3/15>. See D. Hay Fleming, *Reformation in Scotland* (London, 1910), pp. 225-7 for references.

<sup>45</sup> R. K. Hannay, ‘Letters of the Papal Legate in Scotland, 1543’, *Scottish Historical Review*, Vol. 11 (1914), pp. 1-26 (p. 21).

<sup>46</sup> G. Martine, *Reliquiae Divi Andreae* (St Andrews, 1797), p. 144; see D. W. B. Somerset, ‘The *spirituali* movement in Scotland before the Reformation of 1560’, *SRSJH*, Vol. 8 (2018), p. 12 for other references (and to these, add that Winchester’s widow, Christian Martine, was subsequently married to William Cook, for whom see *The St Andrews Portion of the Protocol Book of William Gray, 1553-1559* (Scottish Record Society, Edinburgh, 2015), pp. 54-55.)

<sup>47</sup> R. V. Agnew (ed.), *Correspondence of Sir Patrick Waus, 1540-1597* (Edinburgh, 1882), pp. xxvii-xxviii; 3-4.

Buchanan's statement about many of the priests 'demanding the Old Testament' is hard to credit in its literal form and may have been based on a particular incident, or even a joke that was current at the time.<sup>48</sup> David Hay Fleming cites some pertinent considerations.<sup>49</sup> There were other parts of Europe, however, where some of the priests were 'ignorant almost beyond description', and about the same time the Jesuit Jerónimo Doménech, working in Sicily, found 'such an immense ignorance in the clergy that you would not believe it unless you saw it'.<sup>50</sup> The somewhat similar Pater Noster controversy of the early 1550s (about whether it was permissible to recite the Lord's Prayer to saints) was dismissed as unbelievable by several nineteenth-century historians but is now accepted as factual.<sup>51</sup>

8. Buchanan refers to a Provincial Council held in Edinburgh and beginning on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1545/6.<sup>52</sup> Pitscottie incorrectly gives the date as 28<sup>th</sup> January but provides the additional information that it was held at the Dominican friary in Edinburgh.<sup>53</sup> Both make some mention of its reform proposals: 'In this meeting, when there was much discussion about retaining the ancient liberty of the church, and punishing certain open crimes of the priests; before they came to any decision, information was brought to them that George Wishart ... was lodging with John Cockburn, a nobleman, about seven miles distant from the city, and a troop of horse were sent to seize the pestilent fellow.'<sup>54</sup> According to the *Diurnal*, the capture of Wishart occurred on 16<sup>th</sup> January.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> For a modern-day example of something that later generations may find it hard to credit, on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2021, the US Congressman Emanuel Cleaver, who is also a United Methodist minister, closed the daily prayer in Congress with the words 'Amen and A-Woman'.

<sup>49</sup> See Hay Fleming, *Reformation in Scotland*, pp. 92-3. Hay Fleming notes the suggestion that 'some may have contended that the New Testament was written by Luther in order to bring it within the scope of the Act of Parliament which forbade the importation of his books.'

<sup>50</sup> J. W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Harvard, 1993), pp. 203-204, 232.

<sup>51</sup> J. Lee, *Lectures on the History of the Church of Scotland* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1860), Vol. 1, p. 76; G. Grub, *An Ecclesiastical History of Scotland* (4 vols., Edinburgh, 1861), Vol. 2, p. 37; J. Robertson, *Concilia Scotiae* (2 vols., Bannatyne Club, Edinburgh, 1866), Vol. 2, p. 295; Flynn Cratty, "'To Whom Say You Your Pater Noster?': Prayer on the Eve of the Scottish Reformation', *Reformation & Renaissance Review*, Vol. 20:1 (2018), pp. 18-34.

<sup>52</sup> Aikman, Vol. 2, p. 352.

<sup>53</sup> Pitscottie, *Historie and Cronicles of Scotland*, Vol. 2, p. 52. Pitscottie's incorrect date of 28<sup>th</sup> may be derived from the adjourned or ensuing meeting which apparently met in St Andrews on 28<sup>th</sup> February: Knox gives the date as 27<sup>th</sup> February (Dickinson, *John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 72), the early printed source quoted by Foxe as 28<sup>th</sup> February (*ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 233), and the *Diurnal* as 28<sup>th</sup> March (p. 42). See also Robertson, *Concilia Scotiae*, Vol. 1, pp. cxliv-v.

<sup>54</sup> Aikman, Vol. 2, pp. 52-3.

<sup>55</sup> *Diurnal*, pp. 41-42.



Buchanan's account of the last days of Wishart has a large overlap with Pitscottie's – presumably drawing from the same source, as we have said – although Pitscottie also used the early printed material which Foxe (1563 edition onwards) and Knox (Book I) incorporated into their work.<sup>56</sup> Buchanan makes no use of this material printed by John Day but mentions several things not included in that material: the apprehension of George Wishart; the fact that Cardinal Beaton did not have the right to sit in capital cases; the letter from David Hamilton of Preston to the Governor Arran; details of Wishart's interview with John Winram; the sympathy of the captain of the castle with George Wishart in accommodating him in his own quarters and giving him breakfast on the last morning of his life; Wishart's sermon on that occasion, and the Protestant communion that he conducted;<sup>57</sup> and the gloating of the Cardinal as he watched Wishart's final sufferings.<sup>58</sup>

The origin of the material printed by John Day around 1548 has been discussed, but without conclusion. John Hill Burton and Andrew Lang suggested John Knox as the author, but as Hay Fleming observed, the way in which Knox introduced it in his own work rules out that possibility. More recently, John Winram has been suggested, but at that stage he lacked the robust Protestantism evident in the account.<sup>59</sup>

Some of the material that was used by Buchanan must have come, directly or indirectly, from Winram, but the immediate source of the rest is unknown. It must have derived, however, from the circle of family and friends of John Beaton (Bethune), the 8<sup>th</sup> laird of Balfour, who was the captain of St Andrews castle. He was a nephew of the Cardinal, being the

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<sup>56</sup> *The tragical death of Dauid Beato[n] ... wherunto is joyned the martyrdom of maister George Wyseharte* (London: Iohn Day, c.1548); see Dickinson, *John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Vol. 2, pp. 233-245; Pitscottie, *Historie and Cronicles of Scotland*, Vol. 2, pp. 57-75.

<sup>57</sup> On the basis of Knox's silence, both Charles Rogers, *Life of George Wishart* (Edinburgh, 1876), pp. 50-51 and David Hay Fleming, *Martyrs and Confessors of St Andrews* (Cupar, 1887), p. 164, query whether Wishart did administer communion on his final morning. It is easier, however, to think that Knox for some reason omitted to mention the communion than that Buchanan's and Pitscottie's source wholly invented it. For a fuller discussion, see 'Fresh light on George Wishart's last day', *Bulwark* (October-December 2023), pp. 11-18.

<sup>58</sup> Aikman, Vol. 2, pp. 352-358. Generally, Pitscottie's version of these events is more detailed than Buchanan's.

<sup>59</sup> A. Lang, *John Knox and the Reformation* (London, 1905), pp. 20-21; Hay Fleming, *Critical Reviews*, p. 235; Dickinson, *John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 74; A. Ryrie, 'George Wishart: Scotland's turbulent prophet?', in M. Holt Dotterweich (ed.), *George Wishart Quincentennial Conference Proceedings* (2014), pp. 7-15 (pp. 8-9).

son of his eldest brother, and died in 1560. In that same year, his daughter Margaret married John Row of Perth, the reformer, and this is certainly one route by which the knowledge of events in the castle in March 1545/6 could have come to the ears of Buchanan and Pitscottie. Other members of John Beaton's family were also active Protestants, and his widow, Agnes Anstruther, who may have been present in the castle on the morning of Wishart's death, lived until 1582, dying aged 76.<sup>60</sup>

9. Under the year 1558, Buchanan makes the following observation on the progress of Protestantism in Scotland in the 1550s:

The cause of religion, during this and the former year, appeared rather to stand still; for the one party, somewhat checked by the death of George Wishart, was satisfied with being allowed quietly to worship God in their native tongue and reason soberly about divinity; the other being deprived of a leader, by the death of the cardinal, showed that they wanted the power, rather than the inclination, to persecute; for his successor thirsted more after the money than the blood of his adversaries, nor almost ever behaved with cruelty, unless when the plunder afforded him the means of enjoying his licentious pleasures.<sup>61</sup>

Apart from the puzzling time-restriction to 'this and the former year', this statement seems to be a shrewd summary of the 'Nicodemite' period of Scottish Protestantism which lasted from around 1547 to 1556 and beyond.<sup>62</sup>

10. For April 1558, Buchanan records the martyrdom of Walter Milne.

In the month of April, Walter Mill, a priest of no great learning, yet being suspected by the clergy, because he had desisted from saying mass, was dragged before their synod. Although a weak old man, oppressed by years and poverty, yet when brought from his loathsome dungeon, and taunted with the most bitter reproaches, he answered not only with firmness, but so acutely, that such strength of mind, and such heroic confidence, in so emaciated a body, seemed, even to his keenest enemies, to be the effect of divine power. The inhabitants of St. Andrews were so much displeased

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<sup>60</sup> W. Macfarlane, *Genealogical Collections* (2 vols., Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1900), Vol. 1, pp. 11–12; W. Wood, *East Neuk of Fife: its history and antiquities* (Edinburgh, 1887), p. 376; *Rentale Sancti Andree, 1538–1546, passim*; M. H. B. Sanderson, *Cardinal of Scotland: David Beaton, c.1494–1546* (Edinburgh, 1986), p. 289; *Diary of John Lamont of Newton, 1649–1671* (Edinburgh, 1830), Appendix, p. 228.

<sup>61</sup> Aikman, Vol. 2, p. 396.

<sup>62</sup> See Ryrie *Origins of the Scottish Reformation*, Chapter 6; Somerset, 'The spiritual movement in Scotland before the Reformation of 1560'.

at his apprehension, that there could not be found one among them who would sit as judge upon him; and having shut their shops, not one of them would sell any article which could be employed in the execution. By this means his life was prolonged one day. Next day, however, the priests procured one of the archbishop's acquaintances, a profligate wretch, Alexander Sommerville, who undertook to sit as judge. The people were so deeply affected at Mill's death, that, lest the memory of his sufferings should pass away along with his life, they raised, on the place where he was burned, a large heap of stones, which the priests for some days caused to be removed; but still, as on one day they were thrown down, the people always re-collected them on the next, until at last the papists got the whole carried away to erect buildings throughout the town.<sup>63</sup>

The only point here not mentioned by other writers (Knox, Foxe, Pitscottie) is that Milne was 'of no great learning'. The demand for a secular trial following the ecclesiastical one was unusual;<sup>64</sup> and the 'profligate wretch' Alexander Somerville, who was eventually procured to conduct this trial, is also named by Foxe, who calls him 'more ignorant and cruel than the rest', and by Pitscottie who says that he was 'ane crapinell [knave] of the devill without ether faitht or reliegieoun'.<sup>65</sup>

11. Buchanan records the trial of Paul Methven in Edinburgh on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1558 as follows:

July 20<sup>th</sup> was the day appointed for the trial of Paul Methven, a preacher of the gospel; on which day, when a great number of the nobility assembled to assist upon the occasion, a tumult being dreaded, his trial was deferred, but a number who were absent were condemned; and that the severity of the punishment might not terrify them, they were ordered to attend on 1<sup>st</sup> September, and promised pardon on recanting their errors.<sup>66</sup>

Trying to piece together the various accounts, it would seem that David Ferguson, George Lovell, and 'certain utheris' from Dundee, were summoned on 7<sup>th</sup> July to compear in the Edinburgh Tolbooth before the justice and his deputies on 28<sup>th</sup> July for 'their wrongus using and wresting

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<sup>63</sup> Aikman, Vol. 2, pp. 396-397.

<sup>64</sup> Amy Blakeway, 'The Anglo-Scottish War of 1558 and the Scottish Reformation', *History* (2017), pp. 201-224 (p. 218).

<sup>65</sup> Knox, *Works*, Vol. 1, p. 555; Pitscottie, *Historie and Cronicles of Scotland*, Vol. 2, p. 135. For Somerville, see (probably), J. M. Anderson (ed.), *Early Records of the University of St Andrews, 1413-1579* (Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1926), pp. 123, 126, 227; J. Anderson (ed.), *Calendar of Laing Charters, 854-1837* (Edinburgh, 1899), No. 698.

<sup>66</sup> Aikman, Vol. 2, p. 397.

of the scripture and for disputing upon erroneous opinions, and eating of flesh in Lenterone and other forbidden times, contrary to the acts of Parliament'.<sup>67</sup> A separate summons was issued to Paul Methven and others for 20<sup>th</sup> July.<sup>68</sup> Lesley names the other parties of this second summons as John Willock, John Douglas, and others, but there seems to be confusion with the subsequent summons of Methven and these men issued at the end of December.<sup>69</sup> According to the *Miscellany*, Willock did not return to Scotland before October.<sup>70</sup> Pitscottie and the *Miscellany* name the other parties summoned for 20<sup>th</sup> July as 'certain brethren of Dundee', which is almost certainly correct. Pitscottie says that this summons was before the 'quene and secreit counsall'; Lesley says that it was before a convention or Provincial Council of clergy; and John Knox describes the Regent and bishops as meeting in a 'privy chamber', probably at Holyrood. Blakeway doubts that the citation would have been before the Privy Council because this 'would have encroached on ecclesiastical jurisdiction'.<sup>71</sup>

Paul Methven duly appeared on 20<sup>th</sup> July, and with him a considerable crowd of Protestant supporters. The response of the bishops was to secure a proclamation, 'That all men that were come to the town without commandment of the authority, should with all diligence repair to the Borders [i.e. to join the Scots army drawn up against the English], and there remain xv days.'<sup>72</sup> It happened, however, that the 'quarter of the West-land', many of whom were Protestant, returned to Edinburgh that day from military service on the Border, and the presence of these armed men persuaded the authorities to defer Methven's trial, apparently until 8<sup>th</sup> November.<sup>73</sup> The other Protestants summoned with Methven received a

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<sup>67</sup> M'Crie, *Life of John Knox*, Note GG, p. 359; Blakeway, 'The Anglo-Scottish War of 1558 and the Scottish Reformation', p. 219.

<sup>68</sup> Pitscottie, *Historie and Cronicles of Scotland*, Vol. 2, p. 137. Calderwood says that they were summoned for 19<sup>th</sup> July, *History of the Kirk of Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 344.

<sup>69</sup> *Miscellany of the Wodrow Society* (Edinburgh, 1844), pp. 55. Their summons at the end of December was to appear before the Archbishop in St Andrews on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1559/60.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 55, 262-3.

<sup>71</sup> Pitscottie, *Historie and Cronicles of Scotland*, Vol. 2, p. 137; *Miscellany of the Wodrow Society*, pp. 53-4; Lesley, *History of Scotland*, p. 266; Dickinson, *John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 126; Blakeway, 'The Anglo-Scottish War of 1558 and the Scottish Reformation', p. 222. It should be mentioned that Blakeway's paper is invaluable for understanding the political and military background to the religious events of 1558. To the references given there on the war with England, add Herries, *Historical Memoirs*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>72</sup> Dickinson, *John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 126.

<sup>73</sup> Aikman, Vol. 2, p. 398; Pitscottie, *Historie and Cronicles of Scotland*, Vol. 2, pp. 137-8.

second citation for 28<sup>th</sup> July;<sup>74</sup> and, according to Calderwood – who seems to have had an independent source – on failing to obey this citation, they were ordered to ‘abjure their errors at the Market Cross in Edinburgh’ on 1<sup>st</sup> September.<sup>75</sup>

At the same time, a petition on behalf of the Protestants by Sir James Sandilands of Calder was presented on 20<sup>th</sup> July to the Queen Regent in Holyrood Palace asking for common prayers in English, the preaching of the Word, and the administration of Protestant sacraments. A holding reply was received from the Queen Regent, and the Protestants started to implement the terms of the petition when they returned home.<sup>76</sup>

12. Buchanan mentions the theft of the image of St Giles in Edinburgh which was ‘secretly stolen from his church.’<sup>77</sup> The *Miscellany* likewise says that in the month of July, or slightly earlier, it had been taken out of the High Kirk ‘privately in the night’.<sup>78</sup> Knox says that it was it was ‘first drowned in the North Loch, and after burnt’.<sup>79</sup> Peter Murray tries to find a contradiction here, but it was hardly likely to have been stolen in broad daylight, and the subsequent drowning and burning may have been private occasions as well.<sup>80</sup>

For some reason, Archbishop Hamilton demanded that the Edinburgh town council replace the statue at its own expense. Murray speculates as to why Hamilton might have issued this demand, without really resolving the matter.<sup>81</sup> The Edinburgh council was reluctant to accede to the demand. According to Knox, they argued that ‘God in some places had commanded idols and images to be destroyed; but where he had commanded images to be set up, they had not read, and [they] desired the Bishop to find a warrant for his commandment.’<sup>82</sup> Murray rejects this assertion of Knox’s:

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<sup>74</sup> Blakeway, ‘The Anglo-Scottish War of 1558 and the Scottish Reformation’, p. 219. The *Miscellany of the Wodrow Society*, p. 54 says that ‘They were relieved upon security to enter upon eight days warning’.

<sup>75</sup> Calderwood, *History of the Kirk of Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 345; Lesley, *History of Scotland*, p. 266. Their sentence would suggest an ecclesiastical rather than a civil jurisdiction.

<sup>76</sup> *Miscellany of the Wodrow Society*, p. 53.

<sup>77</sup> Aikman, Vol. 2, p. 397.

<sup>78</sup> *Miscellany of the Wodrow Society*, p. 54.

<sup>79</sup> Dickinson, *John Knox’s History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 125.

<sup>80</sup> P. Murray, ‘The excommunication of Edinburgh Town Council in 1558’, *Innes Review*, Vol. 27 (1976), pp. 24-34 (p. 24). Michael Lynch likewise quarrels with Knox’s statement, *Edinburgh and the Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1981), p. 73.

<sup>81</sup> Murray, ‘The excommunication of Edinburgh Town Council in 1558’, pp. 26-27.

<sup>82</sup> Dickinson, *John Knox’s History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 127.



The motive of the town council in not replacing the image must, likewise, remain largely conjectural, but almost certainly had little basis in Knox's claim that it represented a protest against idolatry. The principal motive was quite simply, as the supplication itself says, that the council felt that they were not bound to replace it (*cum ad hoc non teneantur*). They made no attempt to pin-point with whom that responsibility lay but merely denied that it lay with the burgh. This may well have been coupled to a fear of the cost of replacement and to a feeling that the day of images was drawing to a close. The statue itself was large and probably ornate, 'a grate loge of wood'. The cost of replacement might be prohibitive. Moreover, the St Giles' day procession had already been under attack [in one of Sir David Lindsay's poems] and might have appeared to many by this time to be anachronistic. This does not, however, necessarily imply any Protestant bias.<sup>83</sup>

But Knox does not claim that the council was particularly protesting against idolatry, but simply against being required to pay for the setting up of an image. Even those who accepted images might object to paying for them, and might resist a command to do so in the terms that Knox mentions. Their reply certainly incensed the bishop who proceeded to excommunicate the council.

13. Buchanan gives a half-page account of the St Giles' Day procession of 1<sup>st</sup> September 1558 in Edinburgh, made famous by John Knox's humorous account of the 'Tragedy of Saint Giles'.<sup>84</sup> As quoted above (under 11), he mentions that the Dundee men were ordered to appear to make their recantation, but he gives no indication whether they did so. Lesley states that they did: 'but there was so great a tumult raised that day on the High Street of Edinburgh that they who was appointed to do open penance were suddenly carried away'.<sup>85</sup> If they were present, it was probably with the intention of joining the tumult rather than performing penance. Michael Lynch quotes from a rare Low German tract from January 1559 which he understands as stating that Paul Methven was present and was delivered from the choice between death and recanting by 'the jostling and clamour of the crowd'.<sup>86</sup> Another interpretation of the tract is more likely, however, and we hope to discuss this matter elsewhere.

<sup>83</sup> Murray, 'The excommunication of Edinburgh Town Council in 1558', p. 27.

<sup>84</sup> Aikman, Vol. 2, pp. 397-8; Dickinson, *John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Vol. 1, pp. 127-129.

<sup>85</sup> Lesley, *History of Scotland*, p. 266; D. Hay Fleming, *The Scottish Reformation* (Edinburgh, 1960), p. 30; Lynch, *Edinburgh and the Reformation*, p. 85.

<sup>86</sup> *Warhafftige tydinge vam vpgange des Euangelij und straffe der affgesechten dessüluigen Vienden, der Papistischen Papen in Schotlande* ([1559]); see M. Lynch, 'John Knox, minister

**14.** Buchanan describes the summons of Paul Methven to Edinburgh on 8<sup>th</sup> November 1559:

When the day [8<sup>th</sup> November] arrived, the clergy assembled in the church of the Dominicans, and cited Paul Methven by name, whom they had in the former meeting ordered to attend. He not appearing, they condemned him in his absence to banishment, and forbade any person to shelter or aid him, under most severe penalties. This threatening did not, however, in the least deter the inhabitants of Dundee from supplying him with the necessities of life, and receiving him into their different dwellings; they likewise, through the medium of some court favourites, endeavoured to procure a remission of his sentence of banishment from the queen regent, but as the priests opposed it, and, besides, offered a large sum of money, nothing could be effected.<sup>87</sup>

This account of the meeting of 8<sup>th</sup> November is confirmed by Pitscottie in very similar terms (probably once again relying on the same source as Buchanan) but is not mentioned by other writers.<sup>88</sup>

**15.** Buchanan gives an account of the final Provincial Council of the old Church before the Reformation, from 1<sup>st</sup> March 1558/9 to 10<sup>th</sup> April 1559:

The papistical synod at Edinburgh, returned nearly the same answer to similar demands [of reformation], presented to them by the nobility, with this addition to that part which regarded the election of ministers: – That in questions of such a nature, the canon law or the decrees of the council of Trent, must be the rule, but they determined upon nothing in this assembly respecting their own business, except, that they ordered the bishops to send secret spies through every parish of their diocese, who should give them information of all those who disobeyed the papistical laws, and although they now saw their threatenings openly disregarded, yet, trusting to the public authority which was on their side, and relying on the arms of the French, they lorded it as imperiously over their inferiors, as before.

On purpose to sooth their minds in some measure, and deprecate the severity of their sentence against the preachers of the gospel, John Erskine, laird of Dun, a learned, pious, and amiable gentleman, was sent to them, who entreated them, for the sake of that piety, which we ought all to cultivate toward God, and that love, which we ought to exercise

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of Edinburgh and Commissioner of the Kirk', in R. A. Mason (ed.), *John Knox and the British Reformations* (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 242-267 (pp. 242-4).

<sup>87</sup> Aikman, Vol. 2, p. 398.

<sup>88</sup> Pitscottie, *Historie and Cronicles of Scotland*, Vol. 2, p. 138.

toward man, that at least they would not refuse to allow the people, when assembled for prayer, to worship God in their native tongue, according to the divine law. They were, however, so far from granting his request, that they replied in more keen and haughty language, than they had ever used before, adding even severer threatenings, and greater abuse than usual, and lest it should be thought that they had done nothing in this assembly, they ordered some despicable popish legends (*protritas Papanorum leges*) to be printed, and affixed to all the church doors, which, as they were sold to the public for twopenny, were vulgarly called the twopenny, and sometimes, the three farthing faith.<sup>89</sup>

Other accounts of this council are given by Knox, Lesley, Pitscottie, the *Miscellany*, and Herries.<sup>90</sup> Buchanan does not mention the light penalties supposedly appointed for clerical uncleanness – referred to by Knox and Pitscottie – which have occasioned considerable debate. His reference to the ‘secret spies’ being sent into every parish is not mentioned by any other writer. Knox and Pitscottie also describe the ‘Twopenny faith’; Knox simply says that the bishops printed it that they ‘mycht geve some schaw to the People that thei mynded Reformatioun’, while Pitscottie describes it as the printing of ‘thir actis and constitutiounis’, including the doctrine of the Mass, Purgatory, and the invocation of saints.<sup>91</sup> The word *leges*, which Aikman translates ‘legends’, might simply mean ‘laws or precepts’ which would conform to Pitscottie’s description. In any case – as others have pointed out – it seems highly unlikely that the ‘Twopenny faith’ is to be identified with the very brief tract called the ‘Godlie Exhortatioun’, as it commonly is.<sup>92</sup>

According to the *Miscellany*, the Protestants also held a meeting in Edinburgh at the same time as the Provincial Council: ‘On the other part, the commissioners of the Faithful met by themselves at the same time in Edinburgh, and every day consulted for the furtherance of the Gospel.’

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<sup>89</sup> Aikman, Vol. 2, pp. 400–401.

<sup>90</sup> Dickinson, *John Knox’s History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Vol. 1, pp. 139–140; Lesley, *History of Scotland*, pp. 269–271; Pitscottie, *Historie and Cronicles of Scotland*, Vol. 2, pp. 140–142; *Miscellany of the Wodrow Society*, pp. 55–56; Herries, *Historical Memoirs*, p. 35. For the preliminaries and statutes of the council, see D. Patrick, *Statutes of the Scottish Church, 1225–1559* (Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1907), pp. 149–190.

<sup>91</sup> Dickinson, *John Knox’s History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 139; Pitscottie, *Historie and Cronicles of Scotland*, Vol. 2, pp. 141, 143.

<sup>92</sup> *Bannatyne Miscellany* (3 vols., Bannatyne Club, Edinburgh, 1827–1855), Vol. 3, pp. 313–320; D. McRoberts (ed.), *Essays on the Scottish Reformation, 1513–1625* (Glasgow, 1962), p. 360; A. Ryrie, ‘Reform without frontiers in the last years of Catholic Scotland’, *English Historical Review*, Vol. 119, no. 480, (2004) pp. 27–56 (p. 40).

Presumably it was this meeting that sent Erskine of Dun to the Council. Erskine's mission is confirmed by Pitscottie in very similar words:

Bot in this meane tyme thair come ane ambassadour fre the kirk of god that is to say frome the protestanttis nameit Iohnne Erskin of Dun quho desyrit hwmanitie at thair handis...

At this tyme the kirk of god, that is to say the trew protestanis and congregatioun thairof, send ane ambassadour to the bischoppis desyrand thame humanlie that they wald for the lufe they aught to god leif of thair pryd and presumptousnes and great furie and regor and malice that they beir towart the reliegieoun and poore kirk of god and the professouris thairof and be content that they might serue god according to his commandement and conforme to thair conscience and that they wald be content that they may haue the common prayeris in everie paroche kirk in Ingliche for ane quhill quhill thai saw farder about thame.

To this the bischopis wald in novayis consent bot grew werie proud and high myndit, thinkand that they had the quene and king of France on thair partie in Scotland, they cairit not christ thair maister nor the evangell bot presumptouslie caist thame to thair awin libertie and the popis conditions.<sup>93</sup>

Once again, it is evident that Buchanan and Pitscottie were here relying on the same source for their information.

**16.** The earliest event in Book II of Knox's *History* is the death of Walter Milne in April 1558, but this is one of the selected events among the preliminaries of that Book, and the history proper starts around April 1559. For the events of this final period, before the Reformation storm broke in Perth on 11<sup>th</sup> May 1559, there is a notable resemblance between Buchanan's account and those of Knox and Herries. Indeed, a close comparison soon suggests that the three of them were working from the same original source. Since Knox's Book II is understood to have been written during 1559 (although it was lightly revised afterwards),<sup>94</sup> it would seem that a manuscript of Knox's Book II was probably the original source for the other two.

We give a few examples to show the similarity. The first is the visit of Glencairn and Sir Hugh Campbell to the Queen Regent, with her reply:

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<sup>93</sup> *Miscellany of the Wodrow Society*, p. 56; Pitscottie, *Historie and Cronicles of Scotland*, Vol. 2, pp. 141, 142-3.

<sup>94</sup> Dickinson, *John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Vol. 1, pp. lxxxix-xci; Kenneth D. Farrow, *John Knox: Reformation Rhetoric and the Traditions of Scots Prose, 1490-1570* (Bern, 2004), pp. 200-204.

(Buchanan) A parliament was summoned to be held at Stirling, May 10th, and as the queen had been often heard to say, that now, being free from other cares, she would not suffer the majesty of the government to be degraded, but would restore it by some noble example, many warned by these indications of the future tempest, attempted to avert it. Among others, in order that the dignity of the petitioners might render their application more successful, Alexander Cunningham, earl of Glencairn, and Sir Hugh Campbell, sheriff of Ayr, an illustrious knight, were sent by the congregation to wait upon her in public, to whom she was unable to contain her indignation, but broke forth into this impious exclamation:– In spite of you and your ministers both, although they preached as sincerely as Paul, yet they, shall be banished. When they in an humble manner, requested her to remember what she had so often promised, she replied, that promises exacted from princes, were only to be kept by them as far as they found it convenient for themselves. On which they rejoined:– They then renounced all subjection and obedience to her, and advised her to consider what inconvenience must arise from this proceeding. Struck with so unexpected an answer, he said, she would think of it.<sup>95</sup>

(Knox) For incontinent sche caused our preachearis to be summoned; for whome, when we maid intercessioun, beseiching hir Grace not to molest thame in thare ministerie, onles any man war able to convict thame of fals doctrin, sche could not bryddill hir tounge from open blasphemy, but proudlie sche said, ‘In dispite of yow and of your ministeris boith, thei shalbe banisshed owt of Scotland, albeit thei preached als trewlie as evir did Sanct Paule.’ Which proud and blasphemous ansuer did greatlie astoniss us; and yit ceassed we not moist humilie to seak hir favouris, and by great diligence at last obteaned, that the summoundis at that tyme war delayed. For to hir wer send Alexander Erle of Glencarne, and Sir Hew Campbell of Loudoun knyght, Schiref of Air, to reassoun with hir, and to crave some performance of hir manifold promisses. To whome sche ansured, ‘It became not subjectis to burden thare Princess with promisses, farther then it pleaseth thame to keape the same.’ Boith thei Noble men faythfullie and boldly discharged thare dewitie, and plainlie foirwarned hir of the inconvenientis that war to follow; wharewyth sche somewhat astonied said, ‘Sche wald advise.’<sup>96</sup>

(Herries) There was a Convention called at Stirlin, upon the eighth day of May 1559, by [the] Queen Regent, unto which Alexander Earle of Glencairne, and Hugh Campbell, Shirreff of Air, were sent from the

<sup>95</sup> Aikman, Vol. 2, p. 402.

<sup>96</sup> Knox, *Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 315-6; Dickinson, *John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 159.



Congregation, to present there petition, whoe (after much argument) fynding [the] Queen Regent not so reddie as they desyred, to give full satisfaction to there demands, they declared publicklye, that unles she wold consent fulie to there desyrs, that they would renounce all oaths and tyes of fidelitie and obedience unto her; and then she might judge what wold follow.<sup>97</sup>

Herries was hostile to the Congregation, and therefore omitted the Queen Regent's provocative words in his version. It is not clear where he and Buchanan got the idea that there was a parliament or convention appointed for the beginning of May in Stirling, or whether there is any substance in their claim, but there seems to be no other mention of it.

A second example is the Queen Regent's conversation with Patrick Ruthven, and her command to James Haliburton:

(Buchanan) When this burst of passion had somewhat subsided, a new spark kindled it much more violently – she received intelligence that Perth had publicly embraced the reformed religion; on which she turned to Patrick Ruthven, the provost of the town, who happened to be accidentally with her at the time, and ordered him to suppress all these innovations in religion. To this he answered, that he held the command over the bodies and estates of the inhabitants; these, as within his power, he would carefully attend to, but he had no control over their mind; in a rage she replied, no one need be astonished, if in a short time he were made to repent his stubborn audacity. She also commanded James Halyburton, the provost of Dundee, to apprehend Paul Methven, and send him to her, but he, being warned by the provost that he should yield a little to the times, retired from the town.<sup>98</sup>

(Knox) In this meantyme did the toune of Perth, called Sanct Johnestoun, embrase the trewth, which did provok hir to a new fury; in which sche willed the Lord Ruthven, Provest of that toune, to suppress all suche religioun thare. To the which, when he ansured, 'That he could maik thare bodyes to come to hir Grace, and to prostrate thame selfis befoir her, till that sche war fullie satiate of thare bloode, bot to caus thame do against thare conscience, he could not promise.' Sche in fury did ansure, 'That he was too malaperte to geve hir suche ansure', affirmyng, 'that boyth he and thei should repent it.' Sche solisted Maister James Halyburtoun, Provest of Dundie, to apprehend Paule Methven, who, fearing God, gave secreat advertisement to the man to avoid the toune for a tyme.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Herries, *Historical Memoirs*, p. 36.

<sup>98</sup> Aikman, Vol. 2, p. 403.

<sup>99</sup> Knox, *Works*, Vol. 1, pp. 316-7; Dickinson, *John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 159.

(Herries) [The] Queen Regent, mightlie discontent at these insolencies, commanded the Lord Ruthven (whoe was both shirreff of Perth and provest of St Jhonstoune) to goe home and suppres these insurrections, within his jurisdiction at St Jhonstoune. My Lord refused, and answered plainlie, That in what concerned there bodie, his charge was to keep them in order, but what concerned there souls, or relligion, it was neither in his charge, nor would he medle with it. She commanded James Haliburtone (who was provest of Dundie) to apprehend Paul Meffon, a turbulent man, whoe had stirred all that toun to insurrection by his preachings. [He] promised to doe his endeavor, but in the mean tyme, he adverteised Paul, whoe slipt himself asyd untill a counterfitt search was made.<sup>100</sup>

For one further example, Knox describes the decision of the Congregation to support their preachers who had been summoned by the Queen Regent to Stirling:

(Knox) Whareto all men war most willing; and for that purpose the toun of Dundy, the gentilmen of Anguss and Mernis, passed fordwarthe with thare preachearis to Sanct Johnestoun, without armour, as peciable men, mynding onlie to geve confessioun with thare preachearis.<sup>101</sup>

(Buchanan) The news of this circumstance spreading abroad, the professors of the reformed religion exhorted each other mutually to attend, along with their ministers, to confess their faith, and such was the multitude of those who were crowding thither [Stirling], that although they came unarmed, the regent began to be terrified that her plan would not succeed ...<sup>102</sup>

(Herries) So all that were jovned with the Congregation flockt to Stirlin, in multitudes. They brought all there ministers alongst with them, and a Confession of there Faith, in wryte; which, in a turbulent way, they offred to present.<sup>103</sup>

Herries' idea of a written 'Confession of Faith' may have been derived from independent information or may just have been a misunderstanding or embellishment of Knox's statement.

We have not checked whether Buchanan continued to follow Knox in his account of the remainder of 1559. The volume of material increases considerably from May 1559 onwards and the labour of comparison becomes correspondingly greater.

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<sup>100</sup> Herries, *Historical Memoirs*, p. 37.

<sup>101</sup> Knox, *Works*, Vol. 1, p. 317; Dickinson, *John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland*, Vol. 1, p. 160.

<sup>102</sup> Aikman, Vol. 2, p. 403.

<sup>103</sup> Herries, *Historical Memoirs*, p. 37.

#### IV. Conclusion

Our survey has produced a substantial number of examples in the period 1527/8–1559 where Buchanan's *Historia* either corroborates his contemporaries or adds something that is original but consistent with what is otherwise known. We have seen little of this unreliability and lack of accuracy and judgement of which others have complained. Perhaps our selection has been unduly favourable, but we have covered most of the major religious events of the period. Buchanan has little to say about religion in the early 1550s – he is silent regarding the martyrdom of Adam Wallace in 1550 and the Pater Noster controversy of 1552 – but most other sources are equally scant; and, after all, Buchanan was writing a history of Scotland rather than a history of Scottish Protestantism.

Overall, we been pleasantly surprised with Buchanan's contribution to the period under review. He was out of the country for all but four years, and was therefore relying on sources rather than his memory, but he seems to have made good use of these sources, and he comes across as no less accurate than his contemporaries – Knox, Lesley, Pitscottie, and Herries. The fact that Book II of Knox's *History* was probably one of his sources seems not to have been noticed before. We have made no attempt to assess his general history of the period, but as a lesser Church historian he is of considerable value.