

Heinrich Bullinger and the Marian Exiles: The Political Foundations of Puritanism

by Andries Raath and Shaun de Freitas

The issues involved in the St. Bartholomew's Night massacre of August 1572 went much deeper than the religious differences between the Roman Church and Protestant beliefs only. The real issue was a matter of political ideology and political theory. Political systems in Europe were taking on the new form which Machiavelli had prognosticated. Political power was becoming centralized and it was this tendency in political development which was substantially opposed for the first time in Reformed circles by the Huguenot political theorists from a historical perspective and the views of natural and divine rights. In short, the struggle at a political level pertained to the form the new nation states should take; therefore, a struggle between secular absolutism and Reformed political pluralism evolved.

In the seven years that followed the St. Bartolomew's Night massacre, the Reformed view of political pluralism was expounded in at least three most influential works: Francois Hotman's *Franco-Gallia* (1573); Theodore Beza's *De Jura Magistratum* (1575) and the *Vidiciae Contra Tyrannos* (1579), most probably written by Duplessis – Mornay. These Huguenot authors developed two main lines of argument in opposition to absolute royal power: Firstly, the constitutional argument based on Biblical and secular history, proving that the law is above the king, that the king stands under contract with the people for their welfare, and that each people is subject to its own laws – a theory based on sovereignty of law and political pluralism; secondly, an argument based on the philosophical foundations of political power – they sought to show that absolute monarchy is contrary to universal rules of right supposedly underlying all government. These two lines of argument were closely connected and both were formulated in opposition to the upsurge of secular sovereignty and the rise of nation states based on absolute authority.

In this paper two fundamental issues related to the Reformed views on politics from the sixteenth century will be considered: Firstly, what the theoretical origin of these Reformed views were, and secondly, identifying the political basis for the views of the Huguenot theorists. It is contended that the theoretical origin of the Reformed views on these matters can be traced to Heinrich Bullinger's theological – political federalism and the work of the Marian exiles who had close contact with Bullinger in Zurich from 1545 to 1560.

Heinrich Bullinger and the Marian Exiles

The bloody persecutions of Mary Tudor at the middle of the sixteenth century, in her efforts to suppress Protestantism, forced many believers of Reformed persuasion to flee to Europe. The focal points of these Marian exiles were mainly Geneva (Calvin) and Zurich

(Bullinger). It was Heinrich Bullinger in particular with whom these exiles kept up an impressive correspondence.¹ Many prominent people associated with the English and Scottish Reformation corresponded with Bullinger, as a highly esteemed Reformed leader. In her correspondence with Bullinger, Lady Jane Grey referred to him as a “distinguished personage”² and mentioned his “great authority with all men”³, being a spreader of “true and sound doctrine”.⁴ In his letters to Bullinger, John Hooper described Bullinger’s writings as “exceedingly delightful and to all who have the true worship of God at heart”.⁵ Thomas Lever wrote that Bullinger “ alone have made a choice of poor exiles”⁶ to whom to address his midnight studies. The esteem the Reformed Protestants had for Bullinger’s writings were clearly expressed by John Willock, paying tribute to Bullinger’s “universally acknowledged learning and erudition”⁷, while Ralph Skinner also expressed his appreciation for Bullinger’s “learned writings”⁸. William Salkyns on occasion mentioned Bullinger’s fame on account of his learning⁹, while Thomas Wright mentioned the fact that Bullinger’s commentaries were becoming more esteemed at that time.¹⁰ When the harassed refugees from England came to Zurich in 1554, Bullinger began a detailed interpretation of the book of Revelation in the light of their persecutions. Throughout 1555 and 1556 Bullinger preached one hundred and one sermons which he published under the title of *In Apocalypsim Jesu Christi ... Conciones Centum* which he dedicated to all the exiles for the name of Christ in Germany and Switzerland, France, England and Italy. Bullinger’s Apocalyptic writings were translated into English and Bullinger’s commentary on Revelation was used as the basis for the marginal notes in the Geneva Bible, which, according to George Yule¹¹, probably more than any other single work, moulded the piety of English Puritans.

Among the Protestants associated with or who had ties with English Reformers who kept up a healthy correspondence with Bullinger, the names of John Ponet¹², Richard Cox¹³, Robert Horn¹⁴,

¹ See e.g. Parker Society, *Original Letters Relative to the English Reformation*, Hastings Robinson (ed.), Cambridge 1856, for the vast correspondence between English Reformers and Bullinger in Zurich.

² Ibid., 4: letter Lady Jane Grey – Bullinger, July 12, 1551.

³ Ibid., 9: letter Lady Jane Grey – Bullinger, June 1553.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 97: letter Bishop Hooper – Bullinger, October 27, 1551. Hooper was a strong supporter of Bullinger, and must have had a very strong influence among the Reformers in England. For Hooper’s following of Bullinger, see S. Carr, (ed.), *Early Writings of John Hooper*, Cambridge 1843, and W.M.S. West, ‘John Hooper and the Origins of Puritanism,’ *Baptist Quarterly* (1954), 356 – 359. Also cf. John T. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism*, New York 1954, 309.

⁶ Ibid., 169: letter Thomas Lever – Bullinger, October 5, 1557.

⁷ Ibid., 315: letter John Willock – Bullinger, May 12, 1552.

⁸ Ibid., 313: letter Ralph Skinner – Bullinger, January 5, 1550.

⁹ Ibid., 345: letter William Salkyns – Bullinger, November 26, 1554.

¹⁰ Ibid., 358: Thomas Knight – Bullinger, January 23, 1547.

¹¹ *Puritans in Politics. The Religious Legislation of the Long Parliament 1640 – 1647: The Courtenay Library of Reformation Classics*, 1981, 31.

¹² Cf. Parker Society, *Original Letters Relative to the English Reformation*, 115 – 118.

¹³ Cf. *ibid.*, 119 – 124.

¹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 129 – 134.

John Cheke¹⁵, Richard Morrison¹⁶, Thomas Lever¹⁷, Thomas Sampson¹⁸, Christopher Hales¹⁹, Richard Hilles²⁰, John Aylmer²¹, James Haddon²², Thomas Harding²³, Henry Siddall²⁴, Ralph Skinner²⁵, John Willock²⁶, William Salkyns²⁷, Francis Dryander²⁸, Thomas Knight²⁹, Augustine Bernher³⁰ and numerous others appear. Among the Protestants, relative to the English Reformation in this period, who visited Zurich, we find the names of John Hooper, Thomas Lever, Richard Hilles, Thomas Harding, Bartholomew Traheron, Hierome Massarius, Augustine Bernher and Michael Reniger.³¹ Three most important political authors who went into exile in Europe, namely John Knox, John Ponet and Christopher Goodman, also had direct contact with Bullinger. Leonard Pine describes Bullinger as a “tremendous organizer, and all consulted him much as one consults a library – he was both a clearing house of information and a reliable interpreter and compiler of that information.”³² John T. McNeil observed that if Calvin was the theologian of the Reformation beyond Switzerland, Bullinger was the personal friend and adviser of many of the leaders in this movement and that his skill in framing statements of belief was unsurpassed even by Calvin.³³ The point is, according to G.W. Bromiley, that by his hospitable treatment of many of the Marian exiles, Bullinger was able to establish the most cordial relationships with the future leaders of the Elizabethan church.³⁴ This is confirmed by John T. McNeill, who observes that it was not Calvin but Bullinger who was “probably the most respected” of the Reformers, and this ascendancy of Bullinger in English Protestantism was maintained during the period of Bucer’s stay in England and was later enhanced by the generous hospitality of Zurich to the Marian exiles and by their personal contacts with Bullinger, whose influence was extended through his voluminous and intimate correspondence with many Englishmen and which included his

¹⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 140 – 142, 145 – 147.

¹⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 148 – 150.

¹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 153 – 166, 169 – 170.

¹⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 172 – 180.

¹⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 188 – 191.

²⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 196 – 275.

²¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 275 – 279.

²² Cf. *ibid.*, 279 – 302.

²³ Cf. *ibid.*, 309 – 311.

²⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 311 – 312.

²⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 313 – 314.

²⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 314 – 316.

²⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 345 – 348.

²⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 348 – 351, 353 – 355.

²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 357 – 358.

³⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 360 – 361.

³¹ According to McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism*, 311, Bullinger’s role as aid and guide to refugees from England surpassed that of Calvin “so far as personal kindness to and friendship with the exiles is concerned.”

³² L. Pine, *Heinrich Bullinger: ‘The Common Shepherd of all Christian Churches’*, <http://www.wrs.edu/journals/jour896/bullinger.html>, 4.

³³ McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism*, 69.

³⁴ G.W. Bromiley, (ed.), *Zwingli and Bullinger*, Ichtus, (ed.), Philadelphia, 43.

celebrated *Five Decades of Sermons*, a work already well known when Archbishop Whitgift in Convocation made it required reading for a large class of the clergy in 1586.³⁵

Even before the middle of the sixteenth century the works of Bullinger were widely read. It was particularly his *Decades*, a series of sermons in five collections of ten sermons each (hence the name) on basic doctrines of the faith (similar in scope and purpose to Calvin's *Institutes*), that was particularly well received in England.³⁶ Lady Jane Grey responded very positively to the fact that the fifth decade was published under the auspices of her father, the Duke of Suffolk, in March 1551.³⁷ Numerous other correspondents of Bullinger mention his *Decades*. John Hooper raised the possibility of copying these, and expressed the idea that if Bullinger had any of the *Decades*, "which many godly persons are expecting from you every fair, already prepared, I would have you dedicate them to the Duke of Northumberland."³⁸ Correspondents like Richard Cox³⁹, Richard Hilles⁴⁰ and others made specific reference to Bullinger's *Decades*, while numerous other of his correspondents referred to his writings generally with appreciation or suggested the translation of his works into English.⁴¹ It is also noteworthy that Bullinger had dedicated a volume of his *Decades* to the Duke of Suffolk in March 1551.

According to Pine the impact Bullinger's *Decades* had in England, was the result of the Marian exiles, who became Puritans when they returned home to England and they so revered Bullinger's work that it became the official textbook of unlicensed ministers.⁴² Along with their Bible and a notebook, states Pine, "the *Decades* was the required text for studying theology and pastoral matters." Bullinger's theology and ecclesiology, therefore, according to Pine, became the foundation of English Puritanism and Presbyterianism, while Calvin waited in the wings for a revival of interest until the nineteenth century⁴³. Bullinger's exposition of Reformed doctrine, including the role of magistracy contained in his *Decades*, had a major impact on the Reformed world generally, and English Reformed circles in particular. On receiving a copy of Bullinger's fifth decade, John Calvin responded by stating his appreciation and that on his part, he was desirous to learn from Bullinger and that he was glad to profit by the writings of others⁴⁴.

All three principal authors of early Puritan political theory, John Knox, John Ponet and Christopher Goodman, had direct contact with Bullinger. Daniel J. Elazar states that Knox's flight

³⁵ McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism*, 310.

³⁶ Pine, *Heinrich Bullinger: 'The Common Shepherd of all Christian Churches'*, 5.

³⁷ Parker Society, *Original Letters Relative to the English Reformation*, 7.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 99: letter Bishop Hooper – Bullinger, February 28, 1553.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 121: Richard Cox – Bullinger, May 5, 1551.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 265: Richard Hilles – Bullinger, June 4, 1549.

⁴¹ Cf. e.g. *ibid.*, 7: letter Lady Jane Grey – Bullinger, July 12, 1551; 33: letter John Hooper – Bullinger, January 27, [probably 1546]; 89 – 90: letter Bishop Hooper – Bullinger, June 29, 1550; 228: letter Richard Hilles – Bullinger, December 18, 1542.

⁴² Pine, *Heinrich Bullinger: 'The Common Shepherd of all the Christian Churches'*, 5.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Ages Digital Library, *The John Calvin Collection*, (CD-ROM version, 1998), 317: letter John Calvin – Bullinger, March 12, 1551. Also cf. 35: letter John Calvin – Bullinger, March 28, 1554.

into exile in the year 1554 along with other Protestants, including Christopher Goodman and John Ponet, is directly related to the fact that all three developed covenantal views of civil society and resistance to tyranny; and it is in the work of the Marian exiles that one finds the genesis of Puritanism.⁴⁵

Having left England in 1554, Knox sailed to Dieppe, where he remained for about a month, after which he passed through France and Switzerland, visiting the Reformed churches, until he took up residence at Geneva, where he enjoyed the friendship of Calvin and other Swiss divines. The extent of the direct contact between Knox and Bullinger is evident in the more than 300 extant letters from Knox to Bullinger. In one of his letters Bullinger responded in particular to the issue of obedience to lawful magistrates in reply to some questions concerning the kingdom of Scotland and England.⁴⁶ This letter from Bullinger is addressed to Calvin, dated the 26th of March 1554, and contains a reference to the enclosed answer to “the Scotsman you commended to me”. David Laing has no hesitation to state that Knox was the individual alluded to, because it is certain that he visited Geneva in that month of March, and obtained from Calvin a letter of introduction to Bullinger.⁴⁷ This letter is most important for understanding Bullinger’s influence on Knox in political matters, as it contains the questions on which Knox expected answers from the Swiss divines, of which he wrote on the 10th May 1554 that he had traveled through all the congregations of Switzerland and had discussions with many learned men on many matters.⁴⁸ This letter from Bullinger responded to four important questions: Firstly, whether the son of a king, upon his father’s death, though unable by reason of his tender age to conduct the government of the kingdom, is nevertheless by right of inheritance to be regarded as a lawful magistrate, and as such to be obeyed as of divine right; secondly, whether a female may preside over, and rule a kingdom by divine right, and so transfer the right of sovereignty to her husband; thirdly, whether obedience is to be rendered to a magistrate who enforces idolatry and condemns true religion, and whether those authorities, who are still in military occupation of towns and fortresses, are permitted to repel this ungodly violence from themselves and their friends, and fourthly, to which party must godly persons attach themselves, in the case of a religious nobility resisting an idolatrous sovereign.

John Ponet corresponded directly with Bullinger while exiled at Strasburgh, where he also died in 1556, the same year in which his political treatise, *A Shorte Treatise of politike power, and of the true Obedience which subiectes owe to kynges and other civile Governours, with an*

⁴⁵ D. J. Elazar, *Covenant & Commonwealth. From Christian Separation through the Protestant Reformation: The Covenant Tradition in Politics Volume II*, London 1996, 273 – 274.

⁴⁶ In D. Laing, *The Works of John Knox, Volume Third*, Edinburgh 1855, 221 – 226.

⁴⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 219.

⁴⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 230 – 236 for Knox’s *Comfortable Epistle* and his report on his travels through Switzerland and other countries in Europe.

Exhortacion to all true naturall Englishe men, appeared. References to Ponet appear in letters from John Hooper to Bullinger⁴⁹ and John Cheke forwarded works by Ponet to Bullinger⁵⁰.

Christopher Goodman was Knox's co-pastor in Geneva when his well-known work, *How Superior Powers Oght To Be Obeyed Of Their Subjects*, appeared in 1558. Goodman was strongly attached to Knox⁵¹ and when Knox lost his first wife, who had been the companion of his exile on the continent, this domestic grief was announced to Calvin by Goodman in a letter of 13th February, 1561⁵². Associated with the vicissitudes of Knox's life on the continent⁵³, Goodman returned to England in 1559, and he repaired to Scotland the year following, and visited his efforts with those of the Lords of the Congregation for the establishment of the Reformation in his country. Charles H. McIlwain, in his biographical note to a later edition of *How Superior Powers Oght To Be Obeyed Of Their Subjects*⁵⁴ stated that it certainly is one of the dozen most important political writings appearing in English in the latter half of the sixteenth century. Together with Knox's *The First Blast Of The Trumpet*, his *Appellation* and Ponet's *Treatise Of Political Power*, it marks the first definite shift of opinion "under the pressure of religion", away from the doctrines of almost unlimited obedience which characterize the political thought of the first half of the century⁵⁵. McIlwain states that these books are the work of the English Marian exiles all of whom held rather extreme Protestant views, but are nevertheless one of the chief sources of all later theories of political obedience in whatever religious group these are to be found.⁵⁶ Like the works of Knox and Ponet, Goodman's book too is a *livre de circonstance*, its bitterness arising from the author's hopelessness of religious reformation in England except by revolt so long as Mary lived.⁵⁷

It is claimed that Knox, Ponet and Goodman based their pioneering efforts on Reformed political theory and squarely on Bullinger's theological – political federalism. Their works partially served as the conduit through which flowed the political influence to later works by Buchanan, Beza,

⁴⁹ Cf. Parker Society, *Original Letters Relative to the English Reformation*, 115 – 117: letter John Ponet – Bullinger, April 14, 1556 and 117 – 118: letter John Ponet – Bullinger, June, 1556. A note annexed to this letter, in Bullinger's hand, states this to have been Ponet's last letter to him, and adds, that he died at Strasburg, in August 1556.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 142 – 144, at 142.

⁵¹ This close relationship is also reflected in the similarity of the contents of Knox's *Appellation* and Goodman's *How Superior Powers Oght To Be Obeyed Of Their Subjects*. It is also remarkable that both these books as well as the *First Blast* were published at Geneva, and that Beza, writing to Bullinger in 1566, asserts that both Goodman's book and the *Blast* were published without their (probably his and Calvin's) knowledge, and that their sale was subsequently forbidden.

⁵² Ages Digital Libraray, *John Calvin Collection*, 484, note 169.

⁵³ The close association between Knox and Goodman appears from the fact that Knox's *First Blast of the Trumpet*, which appeared about the same time as Goodman's *How Superior Powers Oght To Be Obeyed Of Their Subjects*, was even wrongly attributed by some to Christopher Goodman. Cf. Laing (ed.), *The Works of John Knox, Volume Fourth*, 355 – 362.

⁵⁴ Reproduced from the original in 1931.

⁵⁵ Ibid., Biographical Note.

⁵⁶ Ibid., Biographical Note.

⁵⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

Hotman and Duplessis – Mornay. It is furthermore claimed that the constitutional arguments of the sovereignty of law, political pluralism and absolute monarchy being contrary to universal norms of right underlying all government as developed by the later Huguenot authors, found their basis in these early Puritan sources on political theology.

Heinrich Bullinger and Puritan Conceptions on the Sovereignty of Law

Almost two years prior to the first publication of Calvin's *Institutes* in 1536, Heinrich Bullinger published his *De testamento seu foedere Dei unico et aeterno* (1534). In this seminal work Bullinger set forth the one and eternal covenant of God.⁵⁸ The very God who has graciously deigned to call this mystery of the unity and fellowship with the divine by human expression has at the same time followed human custom, on account of the weakness of man's nature, in making the covenant.⁵⁹ The words of the covenant contained in Genesis, chapter 17, provide evidence of the parties who bound themselves together, namely God and the descendents of Abraham; of the conditions under which they bound themselves together, specifically that God wished to be the God of the descendents of Abraham and that they ought to walk uprightly before God; they explain that the covenant is made between them forever, and this entire covenant is confirmed with a specific ceremony.⁶⁰ The gist of Bullinger's argument in his reasoning on the covenant is that Scripture in its entirety taught the covenant and its conditions. The moral law was a restatement of these conditions, and the magistrate had been designed to enforce the conditions of the covenant among God's people. In his *De Testamento*⁶¹ Bullinger stated that the judicial and civil laws which admonish about maintaining public peace, about punishing the guilty, about waging war and repelling enemies, about the defense of liberty, the oppressed, widows, orphans and the fatherland, about laws of justice and equity, about the purchase, the loan, possessions, inheritance, and about legal subjects of this sort, are also included in that part of the covenant that prescribes integrity and commands that we walk in the presence of God. Considering the deeds of Abraham shows that as far as judicial, civil or external things were concerned, he conformed to certain principles, and these principles are nothing else but what the purity of the soul, the sincerity of faith, and the love of truth and the neighbor dictated. The task of the magistrate, therefore, was to enforce the covenant conditions in society, among God's people. The covenant was the standard for life in the commonwealth, both for those who willingly attempted to keep its conditions and for those whom the magistrate had to force to observe the

⁵⁸ *A Brief Exposition of the One and Eternal Testament or Covenant of God*, Zurich, 1534, fol. 4b, in Charles S. McCoy and J. Wayne Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism. Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenantal Tradition*, Louisville, Kentucky 1991, 101 – 138.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, fol. 4b, 103.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, fol. 5a – 5b, 104.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, fol. 18a – 19b, 113 – 114.

condition of piety. The duty of the Christian magistrate was to make the covenant conditions clear to all God's people with his just law, based on God's law.

In his *Decades* Bullinger devotes considerable attention to the duties and functions of the magistrate in the Christian commonwealth.⁶² To Bullinger magistracy is an office, and an action in executing the duties attached to such office.⁶³ Magistracy, according to Scriptures, may be defined to be a divine ordinance or action, whereby the good being defended by the prince's aid, and the evil suppressed by the same authority, godliness, justice, honesty, peace, and tranquility, both in public and privately.⁶⁴ In essence this means that to govern a commonwealth, and to execute the office of a magistrate, is a worship and service to God himself.⁶⁵ In the preceding decade Bullinger devoted some attention to the meaning of magistracy, concluding that princes and magistrates are also reckoned under the name of fathers and overseers.⁶⁶ To Bullinger the magistrate's office is ordained by God for men's benefit, and by the magistrate God bestows on us "very many and great commodities."⁶⁷ Justice and innocence are closely knit to the "higher power and magistrate's authority" and in the sixth precept "both public and private peace and tranquility are hedged in and enclosed against open tumults and secret discords."⁶⁸ As every magistrate is ordained by God, and is God's minister, so must he be ruled by God, and be obedient to God's holy word and commandment, "having evermore an eye unto that, and depending still upon that alone."⁶⁹ The prince is the living law, "if his mind obey the written laws, and square not from the law of nature", which means that power and authority are subject to laws, "for unless the prince in his heart agree with the law, in his breast do write the law, and in his words and deeds express the law, he is not worthy to be called a good man, much less a prince."⁷⁰ A good prince and magistrate has power over the law, and is master of the laws, not that they may turn or undo them at their pleasure, but because he may put them in practice among the people and apply them to the necessity of the state.⁷¹ Bullinger states that the sum of all laws is the love of God and our neighbor.⁷² Some laws are of God, some of nature, and some of men. The law of nature is an instruction of conscience, and a certain direction placed by God himself in the minds and hearts of men, to teach them what they have to do and what to eschew.⁷³ The law of nature is not called the law of nature, because in the nature and disposition

⁶² See *The Decades of Henry Bullinger*, 4 vols., ed. for the Parker Society, Cambridge 1849 – 1852, 2: 267 (decade 2, sermon 5 [II:5]) – 2: 435 (decade 2, sermon 10 [II:10]).

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 2: 308 (II: 6).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 2: 309 (II: 6).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 2: 268 (II: 5).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 2: 279 (II: 5).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 2: 298 (II: 6).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 2: 334 (II: 7).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 2: 339 (II: 7).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*, 2: 193 (II: 1).

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 2: 194 (II: 1).

of man there is of or by itself that reason of light exhorting to the best things, but because God has imprinted or engraven in our minds some knowledge, and certain general principles of religion, justice, and goodness, which, “because they be grafted in us and born together with us, do therefore seem to be naturally in us.”⁷⁴ The two points pertaining to the law of nature is, firstly, acknowledge God, and worship him; the second is, keep or maintain society and friendship among men.⁷⁵ Because the law of nature is seen as the opposite to the written law of God, it is requisite that it be answerable also to the law of God.⁷⁶ The law of God, openly published and proclaimed by the Lord our God himself, sets down ordinary rules for us to know what we have to do, and what to leave undone, requiring obedience, and threatening utter destruction to disobedient rebels.⁷⁷ This law is divided into the moral, ceremonial, and judicial laws. The moral law is that which teaches men virtue; “declaring therewithal how great righteousness, godliness, obedience, and perfectness God looketh for at the hands of us mortal men.”⁷⁸ The laws of men are those which are ordained and published by men for the preservation of the commonwealth and church of God.⁷⁹ Bullinger distinguishes between political laws and ecclesiastical laws: political laws are those which the magistrate, according to the state of times, places, and persons, ordained for the preserving of public peace and civility; ecclesiastical laws are those which, being taken out of the word of God, and applied to the state of men, times, and places, are received and have authority in the church among the people of God.⁸⁰ The moral law still endures, for the ten commandments are the very absolute and everlasting rule of true righteousness and all virtues, set down for all places, men, and ages, to frame themselves by, for “the sum of the ten commandments is this, to shew our love to God, and one love another; and this doth the Lord require at all times, and every where, of all kind of men.”⁸¹ The Christian magistrate then could depend only on divine law, which had been written on the hearts of men at the beginning of the world. This diminished understanding of divine law was called natural law.⁸² The divine law was given to Moses, written on two tablets of stone. The Decalogue, the summary of divine law, applied to all God’s people in every age and all of mankind was deemed to be subject to this law – including the office of magistracy who had to enforce this law.

In his answers to questions by Knox concerning obedience to lawful magistrates, Bullinger considered the question whether a female may preside over, and rule a kingdom by divine right and, with reference to the validity of God’s law, advised that the law of God ordains women to be

⁷⁴ Ibid., 2: 194 (II: 1).

⁷⁵ Ibid., 2: 196 (II: 1).

⁷⁶ Ibid., 2: 197 (II: 1).

⁷⁷ Ibid., 2: 209 (II: 2).

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 2: 206 (II: 1).

⁸⁰ Ibid., 2: 206-207 (II: 1).

⁸¹ Ibid., 2: 211 (II: 2).

⁸² Cf. J. Wayne Baker, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant. The Other Reformed Tradition*, Athens, Ohio 1980, 115.

in subjection, and not to rule, which is clear from the writings of both the Old and New Testament.⁸³ The importance of Bullinger's contribution to political theory in the early phases of the Reformation in general, and Puritanism in particular, is situated in his views on magistracy being an *office*. The Biblical idea of office, to Bullinger, is based firstly on the covenant, and secondly, is subject to the rule of God's law. The idea of *office*, therefore, contains in itself the principle of public power being subject to law, and universal rules of right and wrong.

The impact of Bullinger's views on the sovereignty of the law and the king being subject to law, is clearly evident from the early Puritan expositions of the relationship between the office of magistracy and law. John Knox followed Bullinger's line of argument regarding the overriding importance of the covenant and the universal validity of God's law. In line with Bullinger's covenantal approach, Knox takes God's covenant to be the embracing paradigm for the Christian community: God's justice, being infinite and immutable, requires obedience in matters of religion of all within his covenant throughout the ages.⁸⁴ All that are in this covenant form one body, including men, women, children, servants, princes, priests and others who are included in this covenant.⁸⁵ Accordingly, it is plain that if there is one body, there must also be one law, because whatever God requires of one, he requires the same of all, for his justice is immutable and he is righteous without partiality.⁸⁶ For those who wish to remain in the covenant with God, there is his express word (law).⁸⁷ To the question whether all idolators in the realm must be slain forthwith Knox answers that it means that all participants and those keeping the company of idolators (including magistrates) must be avoided, and that the slaying of idolators does not pertain to every particular man.⁸⁸ The condition of the covenant between God and the people in the Christian community is such that "he is my tower of defense against my enemyis, preserving and nourishing both the bodie and soule, so must I be wholie his in bodie and soule, for my God is of that nature, that he will suffer no portioun of his glorie to be gevin to another."⁸⁹ God's covenant is conditional upon our obedience to him. Our obedience is the reason why God is merciful to us.⁹⁰

⁸³ *Certain Questions Concerning Obedience to Lawful Magistrates, with Answers by Bullinger*, 1554, Laing (ed.), *The Works of John Knox, Volume Third*, 217 – 226, at 222 – 223.

⁸⁴ *A Godly Letter sent to the fayethfull in London, Newcastle, Bartwyke, and to all other within the realme off Englande, that love the cominge of oure LORDE Jesus*, Rome 1554, in Laing, *The Works of John Knox, Volume Third*, 191.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 192.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 195 – 196.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 193, 195.

The duty of the magistrates, in obedience to God's word, is to "slay all ydoleris";⁹¹ this applies to both idolatrous kings as well as to idolatrous commoners.⁹² In his *Appellation*⁹³ Knox stresses the principle that the temporal magistrate is bound by God's law to hear the cause of God's pastors and to defend them from tyranny. It is the duty of the magistrate, to whom the lawful power is given, "for maintenance of innocents, and for the profitt and utilitie of theyr subjects"⁹⁴, to enforce God's law. No offender can justly be exempted from punishment, and the ordering and reformation of religion, belong especially to the civil magistrate.⁹⁵ When God established his law, statutes, and ceremonies in the midst of Israel, he did not exempt the matters of religion from the power of Moses, but he gave him charge over the civil polity.⁹⁶ The essence of Knox's theonomic position in this treatise is formulated with reference also to the office of magistracy being subject to God's law: one of the most important precepts in the Old Testament commanded the king, on ascending the throne, to write the example of the book of God's law, "that it should be with hym, that he might read in it all the daies of his life, that he might learn to fear the Lord his God, and to kepe all the wordes of his Law, and his statutes to do them. This precept requireth, not onlye that the King should hymselfe fear God, kepe his Law and statutes, but that also he, as the chefe ruler, should provide that Goddes true religion should be kept inviolated of the people and flock, which by God was committed to his charge."⁹⁷ What God requires of the civil magistrate, is that he should "most diligently observe his law, statutes and ceremonies."⁹⁸ The rulers, magistrates and judges now in Christ's kingdom, are no less bound to obedience unto God, then were those under the law in the Old Testament.⁹⁹ Kings serve the Lord in fear, by punishing and by godly severity, forbidding those things which are done against the commandments of the Lord.¹⁰⁰ The duty of rulers is to hear the voice of the eternal God and "unfainedly to studie to folow his preceptes; who, as is before said, of especiall mercie hath promoted you to honours and dignitie."¹⁰¹ The implication of the sovereignty of God's law is spelled out by Knox in this same treatise: offenders of God's law ought to be punished without respect of persons – no idolatour can be exempted from punishment by God's law.¹⁰² Furthermore, the punishment of such crimes

⁹¹ Ibid., 193.

⁹² Cf. *ibid.*, 184. Also cf. *Appellation*, 491.

⁹³ *The Appellation of John Knoxe from the cruell and most iniust sentence pronounced against him by the false bishoppes and clergie of Scotland, with his supplication and exhortation to the nobilitie, estates, and comunaltie of the same realme*, Geneva 1558, in Laing (ed.), *The Works of John Knox, Volume Fourth* Edinburgh 1855, 472.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 485.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 486.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 487.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 490.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 491.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 493.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 495.

¹⁰² Ibid., 500 – 501.

as are idolatry, blasphemy, and others, that touch the majesty of God, is not the duty of kings and chief rulers only, but of the whole body of that people and to every member of that people.¹⁰³ Although Knox seldom referred to natural law, in his *First Blast of the Trumpet*,¹⁰⁴ he refers to natural law consistent with God's law in so far as it confirms arguments already established by Biblical exegesis.¹⁰⁵ He concludes that "by the ordre of Nature; by the malediction and curse pronounced against Woman, by the mouth of S. Paule, the interpreter of Goddes sentence; by the example of that Common welth in whiche God by his Word planted ordre and policie; and finallie, by the judgement of the most godlie writers, God hath dejected Woman from rule, dominion, empire, and authoritie above man"¹⁰⁶ The point is, however, that Knox argues primarily from Scripture and not from natural law.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, political office bearers are deemed to be subject to God's law and not everything is lawful that is contained in statute or civil law.¹⁰⁸ It also means that in so far as kings and people are subject to the preaching of God's Word, all men are equal : "dear Brethren, to you it doth no lesse appertaine, then to your Kinge or Princes, to provide that Christ Jesus be truly preached amongst you, seing that without his true knowledge can neither of you both attaine to salvation. And this is the poynt wherein, I say, al man is equal"¹⁰⁹ Implicit in Knox's views on the office of magistracy, is the concept of covenant; magistracy as "the ordinance of God", flows from meeting the qualifications for civil magistracy as founded in God's law, and ruling with the consent of the people and the investiture of the ruler in office, based upon the covenant between himself, God and the people. In his summary of the proposed *Second Blast of the Trumpet*¹¹⁰, Knox explicitly states that it is not birth only, nor propinquity of blood, that makes a king lawfully to reign over a people professing Christ Jesus and his eternal verity (the Christian community), but in his election the ordinance, which God has established in the election of inferior judges, must be observed; but if either rashly they have promoted any manifestly wicked, or yet ignorantly have chosen such a one, and afterwards declares himself unworthy to rule over the people of God (such as done by all idolators and cruel persecutors), the same people may depose and punish the ruler nominated, appointed, and elected by them.¹¹¹ Subjection to civil magistracy is based on the institution of the magistrate in

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* 1558, in Laing (ed.), *The Works of John Knox, Volume Fourth*, 347 – 421.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 416.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 417.

¹⁰⁷ Glenn A. Moots, *The Evolution of Reformed Political Thought and the Revival of Natural Law Theory*, Michigan 1993, 9.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. *Two Comfortable Epistles to his Afflicted Brethren in England* 1554, in Laing (ed.), *The Works of John Knox, Volume Third*, 227 – 249, at 236.

¹⁰⁹ *A Letter Addressed to the Communalitie of Scotland* 1558, in Laing, *The Works of John Knox, Volume Fourth*, 521 – 538, at 528.

¹¹⁰ Laing, *The Works of John Knox, Volume Fourth*, 539 – 540.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

office on these conditions.¹¹² Although Knox, according to Elazar, while always concerned with the covenant within a political context, at the beginning essentially argued for a theological covenant (God demanding of His human covenant partners to stamp out idolatry), within two years had moved beyond the theological issue to consider the covenant as a political device, designed to establish regimes, bind rulers and ruled, and offer the possibilities not only for a religiously correct polity, but also for one in which the ruled could call their rulers to account.¹¹³

The impact of Bullinger's views on magisterial office is also clearly seen in the political approach of John Ponet. In the second chapter of his work *A Short Treatise of Politike Power, and of the true Obedience which Subiectes owe to Kynges and other Civile Governors, with an Exhortacion to all true naturall Englishe men*¹¹⁴, John Ponet deals explicitly with the question whether kings, princes, and other rulers have absolute power and authority over their subjects and in the next chapter devotes considerable attention to the question whether kings, princes and other political powers must be subject to God's law.¹¹⁵ In his treatise Ponet elaborated on the lines of reasoning introduced by Bullinger: in the beginning of the world God planted and grafted in the mind of man the law of nature¹¹⁶; after man's mind was defiled by sin, God set this rule forth in giving the Decalogue, and after that reduced by Christ to just two commandments¹¹⁷; in this law is compiled all justice, the perfect way to serve and glorify God, and the right means to rule each and every man, and the only way to maintain every commonwealth¹¹⁸. This is the touchstone to try every man's works, whether he be king or beggar, whether he be good or evil. By his ordinance and law God instituted political power and gave authority to men to make more laws, because He would have man to live quietly with man so that all might serve Him quietly in holiness and righteousness all the days of his life¹¹⁹. The rulers in the world cannot claim and exercise absolute power; they cannot dispense with laws as it pleases them, freely and without correction or offence contrary to the law of nature, the law of God, and the positive laws and customs of their countries, or break them and use their subjects as men do their animals, and as lords do their villains and bondsmen, getting their goods from them by hook and crook, with *sic volo, sic*

¹¹² Cf. Knox's exposition of Romans 13 in his *Appellation from the Sentence pronounced by the Bishops and Clergy: Addressed to the Nobility and Estates of Scotland*, in Laing (ed.), *The Works of John Knox, Volume Fourth*, 490 – 491.

¹¹³ Elazar, *Covenant and Commonwealth. From Christian Separation Through the Protestant Reformation: The Covenant Tradition in Politics: Volume II*, 272 – 273. The blending of his political thought with the idea of the covenant is clear from his *Appellation*.

¹¹⁴ Published in Strasburg in 1556.

¹¹⁵ In chapters 2 and 3. The original text has no pagination.

¹¹⁶ Chapter 1: "This rule is the lawe of nature, furst planted and grafted only in the mynde of má, thá after for that his mynde was through synne defiled, filled with darknesse, ád encóbred with many doubtés / set furthe in writing in the decaloge or ten cómaundemétes: and after reduced by Christ our saveour í to these two wordes: Thou shalt love thy lorde God above all thinges, ád thy neighbour as thy self."

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

jubeo, and spending it to the destruction of their subjects¹²⁰. Kings and political rulers are not collaborating makers of God's laws (by which name also the laws of nature are comprehended), and therefore, they may not claim any interest or authority to dissolve or dispense with them¹²¹. A king may not more commit idolatry than a private man; he is bound and charged under great pains to keep God's commandments more than any other person, because he is both a private man in respect of his own person, and a public figure in respect of his office¹²². After having quoted numerous examples from scripture to prove this point, Ponet proceeds to the question whether kings, princes, and other political office bearers ought to be obedient to the positive laws of their country. He concludes that kings and political leaders ought, both by God's law, the law of nature, man's law, and good reason, to be obedient and subject to the positive laws of their country, and may not break them, and that they are not exempt from them, may not dispense with them, unless the makers of the laws give them express authority to do so¹²³

Christopher Goodman followed the same lines as Knox and Ponet, both with regard to the supremacy of law and to the distinction between the Decalogue and natural law. In his work *How Superior Powers Oght To Be Obeyed Of Their Subjects*¹²⁴ Goodman, who had close contact with John Knox while in exile, already in the preface points out that man's natural inclinations have led him to subvert the truth: men have subverted the laws of God and of nature, but are, notwithstanding, called defenders of the faith, maintainers of true religion, authors of peace, teachers of obedience, and most discreet governors of commonwealths and policy.¹²⁵ Goodman now takes it upon him to uncover the false pretences under which obedience is demanded notwithstanding the false nature thereof.¹²⁶ He points out that demands of obedience to political rulers contrary to God's ordinances are also contrary to all natural reason.¹²⁷ Nature teaches all men, who are not destitute of their common sense and reason, that God ought rather to be obeyed than man.¹²⁸ No authority of man, or power of princes may blare our eyes: there is none so ignorant whose conscience does not bear him witness, that God is most worthy of all honor.¹²⁹ Obedience is to hear God rather than man, and to resist man rather than God, wherein we may see how little commandments, threatening, power, authority, or punishments of any king, prince

¹²⁰ Chapter 2.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Chapter 3.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ *How Superior Powers Oght To Be Obeyed Of Their Subjects: And Wherin They May Lawfully By God's Worde Be Disobeyed And Resisted*, Geneva [1558] 1931, (reproduced from the 1558 edition with a biographical note by Charles H. McIlwain).

¹²⁵ Ibid., 12 – 13.

¹²⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 13 – 14.

¹²⁷ Ibid., pp. 30 – 31.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 85.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

or emperor, ought to prevail with us against the commandment of God, wherewith we are charged.¹³⁰ We are bound as well in conscience as by the law of God, to deliver the souls and bodies of the children of God from the attacks by God's enemies.¹³¹ Goodman calls upon princes and rulers to study with all diligence and apply the same law of God – then they would learn to obey God, and to follow the examples of the godly kings and rulers, having the Book of the Lord ever with them.¹³² To Goodman obedience is commanded of all men, but under condition of justice and equity.¹³³ Where kings or rulers have become murderers of their subjects, they are not to be accounted for kings or lawful magistrates, but as private men, and to be examined, accused, condemned, and punished by the law of God, where unto they are subject.¹³⁴ Both rulers and their people are subject to God's law.¹³⁵ The paradigm within which Goodman presents his theory of the supremacy of law, is the idea of the covenant. Although he presents his account of the covenant only in chapter twelve of his *Superior Powers*, all the major elements of federal constitutionalism are to be found there: after having cited God's agreement with Moses, he argues that this remains a model to "all such as are or would be God's people", since it reveals "what God requires of them and what they have promised to Him".¹³⁶ It shows that every individual of the Christian community, as a signer of the covenant, is called upon above all to assist in promoting and maintaining the rule of godliness, and ensuring that this commonwealth is "ruled by no other Lawes and ordinances, then by such as God had geven them".¹³⁷ Clearly this is an implicit reference to Knox's approach in his *Appellation* to the solemn oath and covenant which God made with Asa, and next to the covenant with Moses, made it the duty of every man to declare himself enemy to that which so highly provokes the wrath of God.¹³⁸ Implicitly Goodman follows the same line of argument as Knox: all Christians in the Christian community are equally bound by the same league and covenant that God made with his people from Biblical times to remove all abominable things from their midst.¹³⁹ Anthony Gilby, also one of the Marian exiles and, together with John Knox and Christopher Goodman, one of the leaders of the English congregation in Geneva, in his work *An Admonition to England and Scotland to Call Them to Repentance*¹⁴⁰, called the people of England and Scotland to repentance in the light of their

¹³⁰ Ibid., 84 – 85.

¹³¹ Ibid., 90.

¹³² Ibid., 105.

¹³³ Ibid., 113.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 139 – 140.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 152.

¹³⁶ Goodman, *How Superior Powers Ought To Be Obeyed Of Their Subjects*, 164 – 165.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 163.

¹³⁸ Laing, *The Works of John Knox, Volume Fourth*, 500 – 503.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 506.

¹⁴⁰ This work was published, together with Knox's summary of his proposed *Second Blast of the Trumpet*, in the volume of Knox's *Appellation* at Geneva in 1558. He also worked in close association with both Goodman and Knox on the translation of the Bible at Geneva, cf. Laing, *The Works of John Knox, Volume Fourth*, 543 – 552. The *Admonition* was taken up by Laing in the same volume, 553 – 571.

transgressions of God's law; the theme of the work being that rulers and princes of both realms, had to repent their treason and bemoan their unthankfulness, for by no other means could they escape God's judgments.

Puritan views on Tyranny and Universal Standards of Right

In his *Decades* Bullinger made an analysis of the universal standards of right pertaining to the office of magistracy. These views had a profound effect on the development of puritan political theories dealing with tyranny and unjust rulers shortly after the second half of the sixteenth century. In his discussion of the fifth precept of the second table of the Decalogue, Bullinger includes princes and magistrates among those institutions who serve as fathers and pastors to the people and to whom honor is due.¹⁴¹ He subscribes to Xenophon's view that a good prince does not differ from a good father.¹⁴² Bullinger appeals to the reader to acknowledge and confess that the magistrate's office is ordained of God for men's commodity, and that God bestows upon us many benefits.¹⁴³ God attributed to the magistrate the use of his own name, and called the princes and senators of the people gods, to the intent that they by their very name should be put in mind of their duty, and that their subjects might thereby learn to hold them in reverence.¹⁴⁴ God is just, good, righteous, and has no respect of persons: such the good judge or magistrate ought to be.¹⁴⁵ If the prince faithfully discharges his office in the commonwealth, he heaps upon himself a number of very good works and praise that never shall be ended; therefore, the magistrate must be obeyed, and all his good and upright laws.¹⁴⁶ Every nation should give to his magistrate that which by law, or by custom, or by necessity, it owes him.¹⁴⁷ For a magistrate to govern a commonwealth, and to execute the office of magistrate, is a worship and service to God himself, for "the office of a magistrate is a thing most excellent, and abounding with all good works"¹⁴⁸ Having distinguished the three kinds of magistracies or governments, Bullinger states that the monarchy may be called a kingdom, wherein one alone by just and upright laws rule all things and causes in the commonwealth.¹⁴⁹ If, in such a commonwealth, justice and equity are neglected, and the magistrate rules against all right and reason, that is to say, "wrong and injury; which is a disease of that troubled kingdom, and a vice that is, as it were, set opposite to be the destruction of that commonweal", then such a ruler is a tyrant.¹⁵⁰ The good magistrate is he who, being lawfully ordained, lawfully executes his office and duty; the evil magistrate is he which,

¹⁴¹ Bullinger, *Decades* 2: 268 (II: 5).

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 2: 279 (II: 5).

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 2: 279 – 280 (II: 5).

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 2: 280 (II: 5).

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 2: 281 (II: 5).

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 2: 309 (II: 6).

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 2: 310 (II: 6).

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

when he has by evil means got the authority, turns and disposes it as he wishes.¹⁵¹ The question whether an evil, that is tyrannical, magistrate is of God or not, is answered negatively by Bullinger, because “God by nature is good, and all his purposes are good, being directed to the health and preservation, not to the destruction, of us men.”¹⁵² Therefore, the good and healthy ordaining of the magistrate, without doubt, is of God himself, who is the author of all goodness.¹⁵³ Furthermore, Bullinger draws a distinction between the office which is the good ordinance of God, and the evil person that does not rightly execute the good office. If, therefore, evil is found in the magistrate, and not the good for which he was ordained, that comes from other causes, and the fault thereof is in the men and persons, which neglect God and corrupt the ordinance of God, and not in God, nor in his ordinance: “for either the evil prince, seduced by the devil, corrupteth the ways of God, and by his own fault and naughtiness transgresseth God’s ordinance, so far, that he doth worthily deserve the name of devilish power, and not divine authority”¹⁵⁴ So then, we ought not at any time, according to Bullinger, defend the tyrannical power, and say that it is of God: for tyranny is not a divine, but a devilish, kind of government; and tyrants themselves are the servants of the devil, and not of God.¹⁵⁵ The people’s sin is another cause that evil magistrates are found in commonwealths, and God may institute evil magistrates as punishment of sin and wickedness.¹⁵⁶ The subjects of evil magistrates ought not obey the wicked commandments of godless magistrates, because it is not permitted for magistrates to ordain or appoint any thing contrary to God’s law, or the law of nature.¹⁵⁷ Although, God sometimes stirs up men to displace tyrants, the possible abuse flowing from this practice, makes it incumbent on men to consider their calling by God, and if they do not have such a calling could make the evil double so much as it was before.¹⁵⁸ Although Bullinger strongly held to the view that tyrants ought not to be obeyed, he was hesitant to subscribe to the killing of tyrants. This is evident from his answers to Knox on certain questions concerning obedience to lawful magistrates.¹⁵⁹ The question whether obedience is to be rendered to a magistrate who enforces idolatry and condemns true religion, is answered by Bullinger with reference to the history of Daniel, and the express command of God.¹⁶⁰ From numerous examples from scripture, Bullinger infers that kings or magistrates must not be obeyed when their commands are opposed to God and his lawful

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 2: 314 (II: 6).

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 2: 315 (II: 6).

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 2: 315-316 (II: 6).

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 2: 316 (II: 6).

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 2: 318 (II: 6).

¹⁵⁹ Laing, *The Works of John Knox, Volume Third*, 217 – 226. Although J.W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, London 1977, 108, states that “Bullinger’s ambiguous and carefully hedged answers can have given him (Knox) no comfort”, he loses from view the influence of Bullinger’s *Decades*, which explicitly recognized the principle of active resistance to tyranny.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 224.

worship, but rather that we should expose our persons, and lives, and fortunes to danger. The Holy Scripture, though, not only permits, “but even enjoins upon the magistrate a just and necessary defense.”¹⁶¹ Bullinger then adds: “But as other objects are often aimed at under the pretext of a just and necessary assertion or maintenance of right, and the worst characters mix themselves with the good, and the times too are full of danger; it is difficult to pronounce upon every particular case.”¹⁶² However, in his *Decades*, Bullinger did, however, not totally exclude the possibility of killing tyrants. The implications were clear: those contemplating the killing of tyrants first had to consider their calling by God; which calling if they have not, “or else do prevent”, they are so far from doing good in killing the tyrant, that it is to be feared lest they “do make the evil double so much as it was before.”¹⁶³ It is noteworthy that while Bullinger left open the possibility of killing tyrants, Calvin in his first edition of the *Institutes* (1536) was strongly opposed to this idea.¹⁶⁴ The fact that Bullinger was more inclined to recognize the principle of active resistance (including killing of tyrants) than Calvin, provided the English political authors with a basis for further developing this line of thought. Bullinger’s recognition of the principle of active resistance to tyranny anticipated the views of the Marian exiles, which found strong expression in the writings of Knox and Goodman, and the Huguenot pamphlets after 1572. It was Bullinger’s views on resistance to tyranny which provided the reasons why the “Knoxian Calvinists repudiated Calvin.”¹⁶⁵ It was the view of Bullinger rather than that of Calvin that tended to prevail among authors of Reformed persuasion after 1560.

John Knox closely associated himself with Bullinger’s theoretical approach to tyranny. In his *Appellation*¹⁶⁶ Knox makes an appeal to the political authorities for protection against the abuse of the church. The underlying motive in Knox’s appeal is that the civil magistrate is entrusted with the protection of the people against abuse and tyranny of the church¹⁶⁷ : “I stand in your presence, whome God hath made Princes, your power is above their tyrannie, before you do I expone my cause, I am in your handes, and can not resist to suffer what ye think just.”¹⁶⁸ The Holy Spirit testifies that all “lawfull powers be God’s ministers, ordered for the welth, profitt, and salvation of their subjects, and not for theyre destruction.”¹⁶⁹ To Knox (using the same line of argument as Bullinger) it is not enough that magistrates abstain from violent wrong and oppression, which ungodly men exercise against their subjects, but they are further bound to rule

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid., 224 – 225.

¹⁶³ Bullinger, *Decades* 2: 318 (II: 6).

¹⁶⁴ *Onderwysing in die Christelike Godsdiens*, Basel 1536, chapter 6.3, 524 – 573.

¹⁶⁵ Although Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century*, 103, detects such a repudiation of Calvin by the Marian exiles, he wrongly attributes this ‘repudiation’ to the influence of the *Bekennniss* of Magdeburg of 1550.

¹⁶⁶ Laing, *The Works of John Knox, Volume Fourth*, 465 – 520.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 473.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 474.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 483.

over them for their well-being.¹⁷⁰ To lawful powers is given the sword for punishment of malefactors, for maintenance of innocents, and for the utility of their subjects.¹⁷¹ By their offices magistrates are bound to repress the tyranny of the priests, to punish them as thieves and murderers, as idolators and blasphemers of God.¹⁷² It belongs to the office of magistrate to order and reform religion. When God established his law, statutes and ceremonies in the midst of Israel, he did not exempt the matters of religion from the power of Moses, but he also gave him charge over the civil polity.¹⁷³ One of the chief precepts commanded of the king, was to write the example of the book of the Lord's law, that it should be with him, that he might read it all the days of his life, that he might learn to fear the Lord, and his statutes to do them.¹⁷⁴ In opposition to the views which hold that kings must be obeyed, whether they are good or bad, Knox holds that the vengeance of God shall be poured forth upon such blasphemers of God, his holy name and ordinance. For it is blasphemy to say that God has commanded kings to be obeyed, when they command impiety.¹⁷⁵ Although God has commanded that kings be obeyed, they command no obedience when they act contrary to the glory of God, like the example of Daniel and his three friends shows.¹⁷⁶

In his summary of the proposed *Second Blast*¹⁷⁷ Knox went further by stating that no manifest idolator, nor transgressor of God's holy precepts ought to be promoted to any public office, honor, or dignity; neither can oath nor promise bind any such people to obey and maintain tyrants against God and against his truth, and if either rashly the people had promoted any manifestly wicked person, or ignorantly have chosen such a one, which later proves himself unworthy of governing the people, "moste justely may the same men depose and punishe him, that unadvysedly before they did nominate, appoint, and electe."¹⁷⁸ The basis for Knox's strong theory of resistance flows from his arguments pertaining to the promises binding the individuals in the Christian community to God in terms of the covenant: each individual has, in terms of the covenant, the solemn duty to help resist and remove all idolatrous magistrates. In his *Appellation* he reaches the climax of his covenantal argument: not only magistrates, but also the people are bound by their oath which they have made to God to uphold the rule of godliness and revenge to the utmost of their power;¹⁷⁹ punishment of idolatry and tyranny is, therefore, a sacred duty

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 485.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 486.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 487.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 496.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Laing, *The Works of John Knox, Volume Fourth*, 539 – 540.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Laing, *The Works of John Knox, Volume Fourth*, 506.

placed by God not just on kings and chief rulers, but also upon the whole body of the people – required of the whole people and every man in his particular vocation.¹⁸⁰

In his *Short Treatise on Political Power* John Ponet follows the same line of argument as do Bullinger and Knox regarding the limited nature of magisterial authority. Kings, princes, and governors of commonwealths have not, nor can justly claim absolute authority, but the end of their authority is the maintenance of justice, to defend the innocent, and to punish evil.¹⁸¹ As the body of man is knit and kept together in due proportion by the sinews, so every commonwealth is kept and maintained in good order by obedience.¹⁸² But as the sinews are racked and stretched too much, or shrink together too much, it breeds great pain and deformity in a man's body: so if obedience is too much or too little in a commonwealth, it causes much evil and disorder. For too much makes the governors forget their vocation, and to usurp the positions of their subjects; too little breeds a licentious liberty, and makes the people forget their duty. And so in both ways the commonwealth grows out of order, and at length comes to havoc and utter destruction.¹⁸³ When the worldly powers have violently, tyrannously, excessively, and wrongfully oppressed and condemned innocents, God has many times in all ages mightily and miraculously delivered his people from the power of tyrants.¹⁸⁴ As there is no better nor happier commonwealth nor no greater blessing of God, than where one rules, if he is a good, just, and godly man, so there is no worse nor none more miserable, nor greater plague of God, than where one rules, who is evil, unjust and ungodly.¹⁸⁵ If it is lawful for the body of the church to depose and punish a pope, much more may emperors, kings, princes and other governors abusing their office, be deposed and removed from their places and offices, by the body or state of the realm or commonwealth.¹⁸⁶ God Himself gave the example of punishment of evil governors, for when the children of Israel had committed idolatry, he commanded Moses to take the princes of the people, and to hang them up against the sun, that his wrath and fury might be turned from Israel.¹⁸⁷ According to Ponet the body of every state may and ought to redress and correct the vices and heads of their governors; kings and princes have no absolute power over their subjects, they are and ought to be subject to the law of God, and the wholesome positive laws of their country; they may not lawfully take or use their subjects' goods at their pleasure; the reasons, arguments, and law that serve for the deposing and displacing of an evil governor, will do as much for the proof, that it is lawful to kill a tyrant, if they may be indifferently heard; as God has ordained magistrates to hear and determine private men's matters, and to punish their vices, so also will he, that magistrates

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.,501, 504.

¹⁸¹ Chapter 2.

¹⁸² Chapter 4.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Chapter 6.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

will be called to account and reckoning, and their vices corrected and punished by the whole congregation or commonwealth.¹⁸⁸ Ponet bases the lawfulness of killing tyrants on the principle that it is not a private law to a few or certain people, but common to all; not written in books, but grafted in the hearts of men; not made by man, but ordained by God; which we have not learned, received or read, but have taken, sucked, and drawn it out of nature: “wherunto we are not taught, but made: not instructed, but seasoned: and (as S. Paule saieth) mannes conscience bearing witness of it. This lawe testifieth to every mannes conscience, that it is naturall to cutte awaie an incurable membre, which (beig) suffred wolde destroye the hole body.”¹⁸⁹ Ponet stresses that kings, princes, and governors, although they are the heads of a political body, yet they are not the whole body; although they are the chief members, yet they are but members; the people are not ordained for them, but they for the people.¹⁹⁰ Although all things in the Christian commonwealth ought to be done decently and according to order and charity, according to Ponet, it cannot be maintained by God’s word that no private man may kill, except where execution of just punishment on tyrants, idolators, and traitorous governors is either by the whole state utterly neglected, or the prince with the nobility and council conspire the subversion or alteration of their country and people – any private man has some special inward commandment or definitely proved motion of God: as Moses had to kill the Egyptian, Phineas the Lecherous, and Ahud King Eglon, with such life, or be otherwise commanded or permitted by common authority on just occasion and common necessity to kill.¹⁹¹ The principle that tyrants may be killed by individuals if they do not execute their office according to universal standards of right, formulated by Bullinger, was taken over by Ponet and accommodated within his theory of political resistance.

The principles of Reformed political theory in Bullinger’s theological – political federalism, also profoundly influenced Christopher Goodman’s views on universal criteria of right and political resistance to tyranny. In his treatise *How Superior Powers Oght To Be Obeyed Of Their Subjects*¹⁹² Goodman takes his point of departure from the Biblical command that all men are bound to obey such magistrates, whom God has ordained over us lawfully, according to His word, who rule in His fear according to their office, as God has appointed. Although the Apostle says: “There is no power but of God”, he means such powers as are orderly and lawfully instituted by God.¹⁹³ God never ordained any laws to approve, but to reprove and punish tyrants, idolators, papists, and oppressors – when they are such, they are not God’s ordinance, and in disobeying and resisting such powers, we do not resist God’s ordinance, but Satan’s, and our sin, which is the cause thereof.¹⁹⁴ Although God requires of all men, tribute, fear, and honor, these are under

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Chapter 9, from 106.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 109–110.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 110.

the condition of justice and equity, to render these duties to them that have just title thereto.¹⁹⁵ To Goodman it pertains not only to the magistrate and all other inferior officers to see that their princes are subject to God's laws, but to the common people too, whereby the tyranny of the princes may be avoided.¹⁹⁶ To resist evil and to maintain goodness, to honor God truly and to expel idolatry, are good and godly acts, but if the superior power is an idolator or a cruel tyrant suppressing true religion and murdering the saints of God, who are so ignorant of God, or destitute of all humanity or natural judgment, such a ruler will be unworthy of the society of the godly and honest and should not have authority and rule over nations and kingdoms.¹⁹⁷ Firstly, Goodman, therefore, advances the principle that tyrants and evil rulers should not be obeyed; secondly, people upholding and keeping the laws of God are called on to punish rulers who neglect them – such punishment being lawfully executed on magistrates as private persons transgressing the Lord's precepts¹⁹⁸, which means that if magistrates would wholly despise and betray the justice and laws of God, subjects shall be condemned except if they maintain and defend the laws of God against them, and all others to the utmost of their powers, "that is, with all your strength, with all your harte and with all your soule, for this hath God required of you, ad this have you promised unto him not under condition (if the Rulers will) but without all exceptions to do what so ever your Lorde and God shall commande you."¹⁹⁹ Although it appears to be a great disorder, that people should take unto themselves the punishment of transgression, yet when the magistrates and other officers cease to do their duty, they are as it were, without officers, worse then if they had none at all, and then God gives the sword into the hands of the people, and He Himself has immediately become their head (if they will seek the accomplishment of His laws) and has promised to defend them and bless them.²⁰⁰ Finally, states Goodman, the only remedy left to the poor and afflicted servants of God, when they are destitute of all outward means and support of men against tyranny and unjust rulers, would be to endure the persecution or to flee.²⁰¹

The basis of Goodman's theory of political resistance is the direct result of his acceptance of the covenant between king and people as the basis for rooting out tyranny. In the light of each member of the Christian commonwealth having covenanted to follow the commands of God, the main duty of every individual is to uphold God's laws, to root out evil, and to repudiate all forms of idolatry and tyranny.²⁰² If magistrates wholly despise and betray the justice and laws of God, it becomes the sworn duty of every person, of the whole multitude, to whom a portion of the sword

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 113.

¹⁹⁶ Chapter 11, from 142

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 142.

¹⁹⁸ Chapter 13, from 175.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 180 –181.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 185 –186.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 215 – 218.

²⁰² Goodman, *How Superior Powers Ought To Be Obeyed Of Their Subjects*, 180 – 181.

of justice is committed, to maintain and defend those laws against their magistrates, and thereby resisting and repudiating the idolatry and tyranny of political government.²⁰³ The implications of this covenantally based theory of resistance are far – reaching: all three authors, Knox, Ponet, and Goodman, agree that failure to resist tyranny will be tantamount to breaking the covenant between God and the people and bring severe punishments for breaking the oath and covenant.²⁰⁴

Conclusion

Almost twenty years before the publication of the political works of the Huguenot authors Hotman, Beza, and Duplessis – Mornay; the Marian exiles, Knox, Ponet, and Goodman, published most important political treatises as the direct result of the influence of Heinrich Bullinger’s theologico – political federalism. These views of the Marian exiles provided a clear framework, based on the principle of the sovereignty of law, and the conception that absolute monarchy is contrary to universal rules of right supposed to underlie all government. Both these principles were intimately connected to Bullinger’s Biblical idea of office, formulated in opposition to the upsurge of secular sovereignty and the rise of the nation state based on absolute authority. The direct implication of Bullinger’s conception of magisterial office being subject to law, was a development of the Reformed theories of magisterial power subject to law and universal rules of right underlying all political government.

The work of the Marian exiles provided the basis for the political theories of the Huguenot authors Hotman, Beza, and Duplessis – Mornay. In particular the theories of Knox, Ponet, and Goodman, provided the Huguenot authors with a framework for expanding Bullinger’s views on tyranny and sovereignty of law. The theories of legal sovereignty and popular resistance developed by the Marian exiles in the 1550’s were destined to enter the mainstream of modern constitutional federalism through the works of the Huguenot authors, thereby ensuring that their contribution was profound.

²⁰³ Ibid., 180 – 182.

²⁰⁴ Cf. Knox, *Appellation*, 498, 505; Ponet, *Short Treatise*, ‘An exhortation, or rather, a warning, to the Lords and Commoners of England’, and Goodman, *How Superior Powers Oght To Be Obeyed Of Their Subjects*, 11, 93.