'The infyrmitie of fayth'

Anti-Nicodemism and religious insecurity in Marian and early Elizabethan England

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Contents

Abstract

Anti-Nicodemites condemned all religious conformity during the Reformation. They did so in general terms but did not openly condemn named individuals. Anti-Nicodemism was a reflection of religious insecurity and did not indicate the real existence of a hidden group that identified as Nicodemites and had a clear religious identity. The thesis argues that the study of anti-Nicodemism in Marian and early Elizabethan England helps historians understand less about the lived experience of Nicodemism than it does the anxieties of the anti-Nicodemites themselves. In essence, Nicodemism was a loose and generalised negative stereotype with very little reference to real people, and not a lived identity or a true representation of the experiences. It can only ever be understood from the available historical evidence as an externally imposed identification, rather than a coherent and articulated theological position developed and held by adherents.

The thesis explores whether the acts of dissimulation and conformity led to individual stigma. It uses many private letters and evidence of relationships between conformists, exiles and martyrs. The sources are split between those which would have been public and general, and those which are private – especially letters. Protestants in Mary's reign had their works published in Emden, Geneva, Strasbourg, and other centres of the European Reformation, whilst works by Catholics in the early years of Elizabeth's reign were published in Louvain and Antwerp, which were the centres of English Catholic exile. William Cecil was a prominent leader in the Elizabethan Settlement, and the source materials reflect this – this thesis includes detailed analysis of Cecil, and his religious conformity and relationships with anti-Nicodemites.

This thesis adds to the scholarship by concluding that whilst there may have been many individual justifications of conforming to another confessional practice, there was no cohesive theory, theology or Nicodemite community in the way imagined by anti-Nicodemites. Anti-Nicodemism was indicative, and an expression, of more generalised religious insecurity; the corpus of anti-Nicodemite writing is not a useful source for understanding religious conformity in Reformation England.

Acknowledgements

I love history and that was the reason for starting the PhD - it has always been a selfish endeavour. However, I hope that the outcome is something that others might find useful and contributes to the scholarship. The study began looking for Protestant Nicodemites, and when I could not find any supposed Nicodemites, I began to wonder why. I think I have come up with an intelligible and defensible solution to that problem. I also came to the slow realisation that the development of archetypical enemies to express insecurity is not an irrelevant topic to the current age. The more I looked, the more I found examples in the world around me.

There are obviously a lot of people to thank, so my apologies to those whom I do not explicitly mention here. A significant period of this study was undertaken during a global pandemic, and I would have had to have stopped without the internet, the online archives and the wonderful people who have scanned in so many manuscript collections; so thanks to the British Library, and those incredibly patient people who have made precious and fragile documents available to me at my kitchen table. I also want to thank everyone at Nottingham University Library. They respond so quickly to every request and have given me access to all sorts of obscure books – again at my kitchen table. There are always small kindnesses that make a big difference, and one I would like to acknowledge was from Anne Overell who shared an unpublished chapter of an upcoming book (now published as *Nicodemites: faith and concealment between Italy and Tudor England*).

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Abbreviations

Additional	British Library, London, Additional MSS.
BL	British Library.
Cotton	British Library, London, Cotton MSS.
Coverdale	Coverdale, Miles, *Certain most godly, fruitful, and comfortable letters of such true saintes and holy martyrs of God, as in the late bloodye persecution here within this realme, gaue their lyues for the defence of Christes holy gospel: written in the tyme of their affliction and cruell imprisonment* (London, 1564).
CP	Hatfield House Library, Herfordshire, Cecil Papers.
CSP	*Calendar of States Papers.* Footnotes will specify whether domestic or foreign, the volume and years.
ECL	Emmanuel College Library, Cambridge, Western Manuscripts.
GN	The Gospel of Nicodemus
Harley	British Library, London, Harley MSS.
Lansdowne	British Library, London, Lansdowne MSS.
NRSV	*New Revised Standard Version Bible,* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1989).
ODNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* ed. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison. 60 volumes (Oxford, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com>.
SP	The National Archives, London, State Papers. Footnotes will specify the volumes.
TAMO	Foxe, John, The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online, <http//www.johnfoxe.org>, accessed 10.9.2018. Footnotes will specify the edition.
TNA	The National Archives, London.
USTC	*Universal Short Title Catalogue*, <https://www.ustc.ac.uk/index.php>, accessed 16.2.2019.
ZL	*The Zurich Letters, Comprising the Correspondence of Several English Bishops and Others, With Some of the Helvetian Reformers, During the*

Early Part of the Reign of Queen Elizabeth, trans. and ed. by Hastings Robinson (Cambridge, 1842–1845).

Note on conventions

The original spellings have been used wherever possible, without replacing ‘v’, ‘j’ or ‘vv’. However, contractions in sentences have been silently expanded and thorns have been transcribed as 'th' for ease of reading. Where modernised translations have been used they have been taken from edited or translated sources – often from the Latin. Modern dating conventions have been used, with the year starting on 1 January, not 25 March.

Bible references come from the 1561 *Geneva Bible* where early modern interpretation is important to understanding the other sources. Where the analysis of biblical texts themselves is important – particularly in Chapter 1 – the modern translation of the *NRSV* is used.

The *USTC* has been used to show numbers of extant print editions because of its international reach.

Note on the terminology of Nicodemism

Nicodemite, Nicodemism, and anti-Nicodemism are capitalised throughout the thesis, but that does not imply that they existed as cohesive concepts – as is explored in detail throughout the thesis. Nicodemism is entirely the creation of historians and never used in the sixteenth century. Anne Overell uses the lowercase ‘nicodemite’ and ‘nicodemism’ to reflect this, but most other scholars simply use ‘Nicodemite’ and ‘Nicodemism’. This thesis uses these with full consciousness that both words reflect a polarity created by anti-Nicodemites and historians – historians have essentially worked with anti-Nicodemites to create this artificial dichotomy. However, they are convenient shorthand, and most often used in this thesis to reflect how anti-Nicodemites were using it.

Introduction

In 1555, the anonymous English translator of Wolfgangus Musculus' play, *The Temporysour*, wrote in a note that the 'the trew Image of Ingland' was full of those 'who haue presently forsaken the trew religion, the which ye haue publikely mayntayned, and are now reuoulted & tourned backwarde into thesame myre and puddle, from the which sometyme ye were yssewed out, & delyuered.'[1] Musculus had his hero, Eusebio, state that these people 'we wyl call Nicodemistes' who had an 'infyrmitie of fayth'.[2] These Nicodemites were the unspecified, imagined group of Protestants hiding their religious beliefs, attending Mass, and apparently justifying their behaviour to avoid persecution. This is the heart of the argument in this thesis: that anti-Nicodemites like Musculus and his English translator condemned all conformity in general but did not openly condemn particular people. Anti-Nicodemism was a reflection of religious insecurity and did not indicate the real existence of a hidden group that identified as Nicodemites and had a clear religious identity.

The thesis argues that the study of English anti-Nicodemism helps historians understand less about the lived experience of Nicodemism than it does the anxieties of the anti-Nicodemites themselves.[3] In essence, Nicodemism was a loose and generalised negative stereotype with very little reference to real people, and not a lived identity or a true representation of the experiences. It can only ever be understood from the available historical evidence as an externally imposed identification, rather than a coherent and articulated theological position developed and held by adherents.

As Alec Ryrie writes, 'Protestantism was born in conflict', in large part as a result of its rejection of Papal authority.[4] The Reformation made religious identity a choice, even if that meant a choice to adhere to the authority of the Roman Catholic Church.[5] Diarmaid

[1] Wolfgangus Musculus, *The Temporysour (that is to saye: the observer of tyme, or he that changeth with the tyme) / Compyled in Latyn by the excellent Clarke Wolfgangus Musculus, and translated into Frenche by M. Dallerain Pullain, And out of Frenche into Inglishe by R. D. 1555* (1555), sig. F.iiiv.
[2] Musculus, *The Temporysour*, sigs. [F.vi]r, [F.vii]r.
[3] In this thesis, 'anxiety' does not refer to the medical condition, but to the more generalised concern and worry that religious identities were under threat.
[4] Alec Ryrie, *Protestants: the radicals who made the modern world* (London, 2017), p. 61.
[5] Alec Ryrie, *Unbelievers: an emotional history of doubt* (London, 2019), p. 60.

MacCulloch describes the Reformation as 'a fault line' through the Christian culture of Latin Europe.[6] It was a split that took away previous religious certainties and led to personal, societal, moral, and spiritual disruption, as people were dislocated from their cultural and religious imagined communities. None of this was truer than in England, where Mary's conservative reforms and dismantling of Edward's Protestant Church was followed five years later by the reversion to Protestantism in Elizabeth's reign. This thesis is firmly grounded within the wider context of the Reformation, and it aims to situate anti-Nicodemism as one of the many symptoms of dislocation. This is true for anti-Nicodemism as a European phenomenon – although the focus of this study is on England. This thesis is about the Reformation, but also about a very human set of reactions and emotions in a difficult and unsettling time.

Nicodemism itself is hard to define. No evidence of self-identified Nicodemites exists.[7] Overell states that 'of course, no one admitted to being a Nicodemite: that was a role reserved for the other, the stranger, the social sinner'.[8] Anti-Nicodemites condemned those they perceived as putting forward the false justification for religious dissembling, but the arguments of anti-Nicodemism were used far and wide with little clarity. The Nicodemite was a useful constructed target because it could only ever be inherently invisible. Anti-Nicodemites were able to blame Nicodemites for perceived failures, such as the destruction of Edwardian Protestantism by Mary's government, and to emphasise their own continued faithfulness – it distanced the 'faithful' from the challenges faced by the particular confession.

Nicodemism was a charge levelled at those who outwardly conformed to the practices of a confession other than their own to avoid persecution. For Protestant anti-Nicodemites

[6] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's house divided; 1490 - 1700* (London, 2004), p. xx.
[7] In many ways, Nicodemism is a similar word to Puritan in the mid-sixteenth century. It was a pejorative term used to describe a diverse 'enemy', and linked in their first references to the Donatists (see Chapter 1 for the similarities). 'Puritan' was a term of opprobrium for people who were perceived to value religious purity above a life well-lived; Collinson records the wonderfully evocative words of the diarist John Manningham, that a Puritan 'is such a one as loves God with all his soul, but hates his neighbour with all his heart.' Randall J. Pederson, *Unity in diversity: English Puritans and the Puritan Reformation, 1603-1689* (Leiden, 2014), p. 24; Patrick Collinson, 'A comment: concerning the name Puritan', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 31/4 (Cambridge, UK, 1980), p. 487; Susan Brigden, *London and the Reformation* (Oxford, 1989); J. W. Martin, 'The Protestant underground congregations of Mary's reign', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 35/4 (1984), pp. 519–538.
[8] M. Anne Overell, *Italian reform and English reformations, c.1535-c.1585* (Aldershot, 2008), p. 147.

across Europe, the charge was levelled against a nebulous group who, so it was thought, justified their attendance at Mass, and for Catholics, those who attended Protestant services. It was a word that referred to a perceived justification for action, derived from the biblical figure Nicodemus who, in John 3, came to Jesus at night and spoke to him in secret, whilst keeping up his role as a member of the ruling Jewish council by day.[9] The references from the sixteenth century are to 'Nicodemites', rather than Nicodemism, which is a modern derivation used to describe the phenomenon of Nicodemites.[10] 'Nicodemite' and 'Nicodemism' were not words used by English Catholics. Catholic conformists were referred to as 'schismatics' and 'church papists', among other derogatory terms that developed throughout Elizabeth's reign. Yet, the ideas behind these terms did not differ between Catholic and Protestant, and thus 'they showed that concepts of ideological purity cut across confessional boundaries and inadvertently laid the foundations for respect for the rights of an erroneous conscience.'[11]

Anti-Nicodemites constructed Nicodemism as a deviant outgroup to strengthen boundaries of acceptable behaviour within a conforming member of a particular confessional identity. As social identity theory has shown, the identification of otherness is a critical foundation on which identity is based.[12] Neal Ascherson summarises the perspective of Ryzsard Kapuściński that 'the recognition of selfhood – can only be brought about by contact with and recognition of the Other, the being who is external to oneself and yet a reflection of oneself.'[13]

The development of confessional identity in the context of persecution was contrasted with the identification of those who did not conform. The outgroup identity of competing confessions was externally imposed to create the boundaries of the ingroup and give meaning to that community. This does not mean that there were no meaningful differences between the confessions, but rather that Nicodemism should be seen in the context of the

[9] John 3:2.
[10] Timothy George, 'Nicodemism', in Hans Hillerbrand, ed., *The Oxford encyclopedia of the Reformation,* <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195064933.001.0001/acref-9780195064933-e-0997>, accessed 13.1.2019.
[11] Alexandra Walsham, *Catholic Reformation in Protestant Britain* (Aldershot, 2014), p. 15.
[12] Robert Nola, *Foucault* (Abingdon, 2013), p. 18; Andrew C. Okolie, 'Identity: now you don't see it; now you do', *Identity*, 3/1 (2003), p. 2.
[13] Neal Ascherson, 'Introduction', in Ryszard Kapuściński, *The Other* (London, 2008), p. 8.

identification of others and not the theological and philosophical differences between Catholic and Protestant. Anti-Nicodemism served a purpose, in that it set limits of acceptable practice – which was enforced more rigidly because the social identities of each group were not secure.[14] As Kenneth Woo summarises, 'Nicodemism functioned for Calvin and his admirers as a means for demarcating social boundaries and group identities'.[15]

The language of anti-Nicodemism was particularly strident because a Nicodemite was supposed to be a member of the ingroup and instead acted as a member of the outgroup. This phenomenon, the 'black sheep effect', describes where action contrary to ingroup norms is judged more harshly than if someone from outside the group were to act in the same way.[16] Nicodemites, the 'black sheep', were essentially a challenge to confessional identity and all that that entailed for the individual's sense of self and meaning. As Giovanni Travaglino summarises, 'breaches of the loyalty norm may be perceived more negatively when the positive ingroup distinctiveness is threatened' – threatened through persecution, in the case of anti-Nicodemites in the reigns of Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth.[17]

The threat to positive distinctiveness is important for the study of Nicodemism. Marquez notes that the question of identity is relevant only when there is a challenge to norms that were being used by the members of the ingroup *in that specific time and context.*[18] If a change in context meant that a certain norm was no longer relevant, then nor would be the negative perception of the identified norm-deviant behaviour. This is important to Chapters 4 and 6, which look at the relative lack of anti-Nicodemism in Protestants and Catholics during the first decade of Elizabeth's reign. The chapters will argue that this is because of the comparative absence of religious persecution – the specific conditions for anti-Nicodemism did not exist to the same degree as they had previously for either confession during this decade.

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[14] S. Alexander Haslam, *Psychology in organizations: the social identity approach* (London, 2004), p. 25.
[15] Kenneth J. Woo, *Nicodemism and the English Calvin, 1544-1584* (Leiden, 2019), p. 16.
[16] José M. Marques, Vincent Y. Yzerbyt, and Jacques-Philippe Leyens, 'The "Black Sheep Effect": extremity of judgments towards ingroup members as a function of group identification', *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 18/1 (1988), pp. 1–16; Giovanni A. Travaglino, Dominic Abrams, Georgina Randsley de Moura, José M. Marques, and Isabel R. Pinto, 'How groups react to disloyalty in the context of intergroup competition: evaluations of group deserters and defectors', *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 54/C (2014), p. 179.
[17] Travaglino, et al., 'How groups react to disloyalty', p. 185.
[18] Marques, Yzerbyt, and Leyens, 'The "Black Sheep Effect"', p. 5.

For the Protestant reformers, Catholics were the outgroup. To take the words of one English reformer, John Olde, the Catholic Church was the 'very hoore of Babilon… the sinful synagoge of sathan, the most cursed kenel & cathedral churche of Antichrist.'[19] In anti-Nicodemite writing, such words were often a precursor to similar insults levelled at those Protestants who conformed under the pressure of persecution. Indeed, association with the Catholic Church was a central aspect of the ingroup norm deviance of Nicodemites – they were separated from the faithful because of their engagement with the enemy in Rome.

For English Catholics during the first decade of Elizabeth's reign, whilst Protestants were the outgroup, the identification of ingroup deviants was harder. Widespread religious conservatism, the time it took for Protestant reform to affect religious practice across the country and the lack of a clear concept of Catholicism in England, all meant that worry about the survival of conservative religious practice was reduced. This changed in the 1570s, when Elizabethan policy drew closer associations between conservative practice and traitorous intentions, meaning conditions for the development of Catholic anti-Nicodemism were present.[20] This demonstrates the thesis' argument that anti-Nicodemism was a reaction to situational religious insecurity, rather than a response to the existence of a specific, if hidden, Nicodemism.

The elusive nature of Nicodemism

Scholarship has focused on two different aspects addressed by this thesis: first, on religious observance and conformity for Protestants during Mary's reign, and for Catholics during Elizabeth's; second, on the relationships that shaped Protestant and Catholic identities. Much of the existing scholarship on religious conformity relies on the work of Andrew Pettegree and Carlos Eire, who both argued that the role of Nicodemites has been underestimated.[21] They agree that there is no defining characteristic or theology of Nicodemism apart from the objective of avoiding persecution. As Overell argues, 'anti-nicodemite polemic makes these dissimulators appear homogenous and boring, just

[19] John Olde, *A confession of the most auncient and true christen catholike olde belefe* (Sothewarke [i.e. Emden], 1556), p. 9.
[20] Walsham, *Catholic Reformation*, p. 87.
[21] Andrew Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism: six studies* (Aldershot, 1996); Carlos Eire, 'Calvin and Nicodemism: a reappraisal', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 10/1 (1979), pp. 44–69.

spineless deceivers on their way to damnation', but instead these were really just 'frightened people acting in various ways thought to characterise deceivers'.[22] Furthermore, Susan Brigden and J. W. Martin have shown that Nicodemism was not a consistent identity in Marian England.[23]

These studies begin to unpack the challenges of understanding religious observance proceeding from the analysis of the extant sources; but this thesis argues that the relationships between former exiles and those who remained in England were not greatly affected by anti-Nicodemite terminology and invective. Ruth Ahnert and S. E. Ahnert, as well as William Hudson, emphasise the strength of relationships between exile, martyr, and conformist, and how these relationships sustained a Protestant community during Mary's reign.[24] Pettegree, along with Brett Usher and Stephen Alford, all note the easy cooperation of exiles and former conformers during the early years of Elizabeth.[25] The thesis brings together the two areas of historiography and argues that Nicodemism was not an insult applied to individuals, but it was a constructed identification designed as the target for anti-Nicodemite religious insecurity.

Woo's recent study of John Calvin's anti-Nicodemist *Quatre sermons*, preached to a French-speaking audience, and their English reception is important. It is complementary to this thesis, especially in unpacking the role of anti-Nicodemism in strengthening social boundaries.[26] Woo provides a detailed textual and theological analysis of the *Quatre sermons* and their English translations to show the inherent malleability of anti-Nicodemite theology. His approach is different from that taken in this thesis, which is more historical in nature, but the conclusions of the respective works support one another. If, as Woo contends, anti-Nicodemism was a theology wheeled out by Calvin and his supporters as a response to diverse threats, then it is important to understand whether it was less prominent when those threats retreated – even when the central charge of confessional

[22] M. Anne Overell, *Nicodemites: faith and concealment between Italy and Tudor England* (Leiden, 2019), pp. 4, 6.
[23] Brigden, *London and the Reformation*; Martin, 'Protestant underground congregations'.
[24] Ruth Ahnert and Sebastian E. Ahnert, 'Protestant letter networks in the reign of Mary I: a quantitative approach', *ELH*, 82/1 (2015), pp. 1–33; Winthrop Still Hudson, *The Cambridge connection and the Elizabethan settlement of 1559* (Durham, 1980).
[25] Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*; Brett Usher, *William Cecil and episcopacy: 1559-1577* (Aldershot, 2003); Stephen Alford, *Burghley: William Cecil at the court of Elizabeth I* (New Haven, 2008).
[26] Woo, *Nicodemism*, p. 16.

unfaithfulness could have continued to taint relationships. This present study answers that question by historical methods, arguing that analysis of both published work and private correspondence confirms that anti-Nicodemism did not play a defining role in personal relationships.

There is less in the current scholarship on perceptions of Nicodemism within the early Elizabethan Catholic community. Scholars have emphasised the difficulty in distinguishing between conservative religion and Catholicism in early Elizabethan England.[27] Alexandra Walsham's work tracked the development of anti-Nicodemism in Catholic writing, but has found evidence of this only after the arrival of the Jesuit missionaries in 1574.[28] Thus, reasons for the lack of development of concepts of Catholic anti-Nicodemism in the first decade of Elizabeth's reign have yet to be explained – explaining anti-Nicodemism as a response to religious fragility provides a framework for understanding this later development.

Recent scholarship has concentrated on the relationship among Catholicism, Protestantism, and what is variously called traditional or conservative religion. Conservatives are defined by Neil Younger as those who 'accepted the royal supremacy, but showed little zealous attachment to Protestantism.'[29] As Chapter 6 argues, conservative belief and practice were widespread early in Elizabeth's reign, and this was important in the slow development of Catholic anti-Nicodemism. This group has been described as 'traditional', notably by Eamon Duffy, but this thesis prefers 'conservative' because it makes no claim to historicity – an important distinction, related to a central argument between Catholic and Protestant writers reflected in Chapters 2 and 6. The use of the term 'conservative' is in line with Younger, Michael Questier, and others.[30]

[27] Michael Questier, *Catholicism and community in early modern England: politics, aristocratic patronage and religion, 1550–1640* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 66.
[28] Walsham, *Catholic Reformation*, p. 87.
[29] Neil Younger, 'How Protestant was the Elizabethan regime?', *English Historical Review*, 133/564 (2018), p. 1065.
[30] Younger, 'How Protestant?', p. 1065; Lake and Questier, *Trials of Margaret Clitherow*, p. 24.

The historiography of English Protestant Nicodemism

Pettegree's *Marian Protestantism* is foundational to the modern study of English Protestant Nicodemism, and to its reappraisal. Pettegree's objective is to demonstrate that Marian Protestantism 'remained much more important, and was a much more diverse movement, than the small numbers involved would initially indicate'.[31] Pettegree criticises the historiographical overemphasis on exiles and martyrs, which he claims 'risks presenting an oversimplified picture of residual English Protestantism during Mary's reign.'[32] Instead, he gives clear examples of the diversity he contends was present within Marian Protestantism in order to demonstrate its strength and resilience, describing it as the 'defiant survival' of Protestantism.[33]

To understand the development of scholarship on English Protestant Nicodemism, Pettegree's work must be seen in the wider historiographical context of the Elizabethan Settlement. In particular, Pettegree argued in support of Norman Jones' refutation of J. E. Neale, and Jones' thesis that the Elizabethan Settlement was the outcome Elizabeth and William Cecil worked to achieve.[34] Central to Jones' argument is that there were no fundamental theological differences between the exiles and the Nicodemites.[35] Supporting Jones' perspective, Pettegree maintains that a better understanding of the experiences of Protestant Nicodemites under Mary is critical to any study of how the Elizabethan Church developed; indeed, evaluating the role of Nicodemites deserves 'to be treated with greater seriousness and respect than has so far been the case.'[36] He states that 'many of those who remained in England during Mary's reign did not play a particularly heroic role; but their commitment to Protestantism need not have been any less sincere for all that.'[37]

Pettegree holds that the phenomenon of Nicodemism 'obsessed' Marian exiles, and he estimates that two-thirds of the literature they produced dealt with it.[38] He notes a number of these outspoken criticisms of Nicodemites: for example, Richard Horne, a Protestant exile

[31] Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 3.
[32] Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 6.
[33] Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 167.
[34] Norman L. Jones, *Faith by statute: parliament and the settlement of religion, 1559* (London, 1982), p. 2.
[35] Jones, *Faith by statute*, p. 67.
[36] Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 117.
[37] Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 117.
[38] Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 88.

in Mary's reign and Bishop of Winchester from 1560 to 1580, argued that 'the most insidious and corrupting argument apparently advanced to defend Nicodemism was that those who remained true to the Gospel in their hearts could be permitted a degree of outward conformity', whilst Thomas Sampson, another prominent Marian exile and Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, in Elizabeth's reign, criticised the parishioners of All Hallows Bread Street for their 'inconstancy and cowardice'.[39] However, these criticisms did not have a widespread impact on many; as much of the historiography concedes, these theological distinctions were secondary to the practical concerns of survival.[40]

Pettegree's work was a watershed in the scholarship on Protestant Nicodemism because it rightly argued that the historical study of the Marian persecution is important to understanding the Elizabethan Settlement. However, the distinctions he drew to do this, between Nicodemite and exile, are not the right categories of analysis to understand how personal relationships were formed, endured, and developed in this period. The differences between Nicodemite and exile may be immediately apparent in published and public sources, but this thesis will demonstrate that Nicodemism was never a clearly definable identity. The ease of relations between those who had gone into exile and those who had not during the subsequent formation of the Elizabethan Settlement was an indication that the Nicodemite/exile dichotomy was always generic for the purposes of anti-Nicodemite invective, not a vehicle for personal or specific condemnation. The distinctions Pettegree drew have cast a long shadow on subsequent scholarship.

Despite the call to take it seriously, Pettegree's evaluation of the role of Nicodemites is based mainly on the perceptions of exiles, particularly their published work. This exemplifies the challenge for those who wish to study Nicodemism: since by nature the subjects were not vocal in defending their position, there is a significant lack of evidence from supposed 'Nicodemites' themselves of what they thought and how they justified their decisions to conform.

[39] Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 95; Eamon Duffy, *Fires of faith: Catholic England under Mary Tudor* (New Haven, CT, 2009), p. 14.
[40] Duffy, *Fires of faith*, p. 163; Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 94; Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 628.

The lack of evidence for a unified concept of Nicodemism is seen across the relevant scholarship. Brigden notes that the identities of Protestant Londoners were complex, formed by the many compromises made throughout the Marian era by the Protestant population. She provides examples of criticisms of Nicodemites, summarising contemporary attitudes that 'reconciliation to the Catholic Church was the path of least resistance; it was also the "broad pathway" which led to everlasting pain.'[41] However, she describes the conflict for London's Protestant population between their religious conviction and their loyalty to Mary as Queen, and notes that, 'the City's gospellers, although hating Mary's religion, would not oppose her.'[42] Whilst 'exile for conscience's sake was the only way to keep the faith inviolate and to live freely during Mary's reign', the choices facing England's Protestants – especially those who could not afford to go into exile – were real and difficult.[43] Again, Brigden's work emphasises that Nicodemism was not necessarily a theological position, but a pragmatic response to physical threat.

Martin builds on this argument, asserting that underground Protestant congregations were motivated by the maintenance of shared belief and support for one another's survival, rather than resistance to Mary's regime or Church.[44] He states that they generally conformed to those whom John Hooper, Bishop of Gloucester until his execution as a Protestant in 1555, described as 'certain... lovers of the truth, instructing them how to behave themselves in that woeful alteration and change of religion'.[45] It is interesting to note that Hooper praised their resilience and support, rather than castigate their dissimulation.

Martin identifies three categories within the Protestant underground congregations in Mary's reign: first, those supported by an ordained minister in hiding – for example those led by John Rough and Thomas Bentham in London. These congregations are perhaps the most understood due to the evidence from Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* and letters from their leaders. Second, he notes the hidden congregations of long-term persecuted groups, such as the Freewillers of Bocking. Due to their established patterns of dissimulation to

[41] Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 569.
[42] Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 545.
[43] Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, p. 561.
[44] Martin, 'Protestant underground congregations', pp. 533–8.
[45] Martin, 'Protestant underground congregations', p. 520.

avoid persecution, the theology of these groups is hard to understand with any clarity, especially in their own words. Third, Martin classifies the orthodox Protestant congregations who did not have a minister – again these are hard to study in great detail as they did not leave much evidence.[46] Martin claims that within each group it is probable that conformity with Catholicism was seen as sinful, but beyond this there is very little evidence for how underground congregations understood and rationalised Nicodemism.[47]

Martin recognises that there is no way to estimate how many underground Protestant congregations there were in Mary's reign, but that it is fair to surmise that they were relatively common.[48] However, he highlights the inevitable problem of evidence in his study: most comes from Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, which is focused on the congregations and individuals caught and prosecuted by the authorities. The evidence for underground congregations is sparse and concentrated on either the occasions they were called on to defy interrogating bishops or their bravery when numbers were executed by the authorities, and not on the compromises they made for survival. This is a challenge for understanding Nicodemism, as Martin makes clear, and it tends to prejudice our understanding of these religious communities. Most of the congregations did not aim for martyrdom but to sustain their faith – in other words, secret religious gatherings should 'not to be equated with public testimony; it was a means, not an end.'[49] These congregations were predominantly 'a simple gathering of those feeling close enough to each other in their religious concerns to worship together and to find spiritual support in so doing.'[50]

It is important not to view the English Reformation outside of the pluralistic, complex, and European context.[51] Eire argues that Nicodemism was essentially a reaction to fear of persecution and not a cohesive and unified theological position. His central premise is 'that Nicodemism was an amorphous phenomenon. Being an attitude rather than a movement, Nicodemism was composed of various types of dissemblers whose intellectual motivation

[46] Martin, 'Protestant underground congregations', pp. 522–3.
[47] Martin, 'Protestant underground congregations', pp. 531–2.
[48] Martin, 'Protestant underground congregations', p. 525.
[49] Martin, 'Protestant underground congregations', p. 522.
[50] Martin, 'Protestant underground congregations', p. 538.
[51] MacCulloch, *Reformation*, p. xxiii; David Scott Gehring, 'From the strange death to the odd afterlife of Lutheran England', *The Historical Journal*, 57/3 (2014), p. 829.

was diverse and far from unified'.[52] He further argues that the word was not always used in an entirely insulting manner. Eire cites Calvin, who believed that Nicodemus was not the right model for the dissembling that he was describing, including in the 1544 tract *Excuse à messieurs les Nicodémites*. Indeed, Eire points out that Calvin had stopped using the word by 1562, as shown by his letter to Dirk Coornhert.[53]

To make his case, Eire disassembles two schools of thought: first, the position outlined by Albert Autin and Francis Higman, who argue that Nicodemism was the theological basis for Lefevre's attempt to reform the Church in France.[54] Using Calvin's definition of Nicodemism, Cavaillé similarly argues that Nicodemism effectively undermined the confessional political settlement in Europe in the sixteenth century.[55] Eire claims these arguments are not based on evidence, and whilst 'there might have been some humanists who timidly adhered to Catholicism while harboring evangelical ideas[…] there is little evidence suggesting that their reluctance to break with Rome was normative for French Protestantism, or that it developed into a systematic form of religious deception.'[56] In the English context, Heal and Kirby both argue that the use of history to attack sacramentalism was an important part of Protestant language – an identity that depended on the outward expression of a reconstituted liturgical and institutional order.[57] Indeed, Eire argues that in linking Nicodemism and antinomianism, Autin overcomplicates the question and distances Nicodemism from its true source – fear of persecution.[58]

Second, Eire attacks the argument espoused by Carlo Ginzburg, who uses the example of Otto Brunfels to argue that Nicodemism was the passive internalisation of reformed

[52] Eire, 'Calvin and Nicodemism', p. 69.
[53] Eire, 'Calvin and Nicodemism', p. 47.
[54] Eire, 'Calvin and Nicodemism', pp. 48–9; Albert Autin, *La crise du Nicodémisme 1535-1545* (Toulon, 1917); John Calvin, *Three French treatises*, trans. Francis Montgomery Higman (London, 1970).
[55] Jean-Pierre Cavaillé, 'Nicodemism and deconfessionalisation in early modern Europe', 2010, <https://journals.openedition.org/dossiersgrihl/5376#article-5376>, accessed 21.9.2019.
[56] Eire, 'Calvin and Nicodemism', p. 50.
[57] Kirby takes aim at Robert Scribner and Eamon Duffy who argue, from the basis of Max Weber's thesis, that the Reformation represented the 'disenchantment' of society; W. Kirby, 'Signs and things signified: Sacramental hermeneutics in John Jewel's "Challenge Sermon" and the "Culture of Persuasion" at Paul's Cross', *Reformation & Renaissance Review*, 11/1 (2009), pp. 64–5, 67, 86; Felicity Heal, 'Appropriating history: Catholic and Protestant polemics and the national past', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 68/1–2 (2005), p. 114.
[58] Eire, 'Calvin and Nicodemism', p. 51.

theology.[59] Eire claims that this is based on a selective reading of Brunfels' *Pandectae,* which was a compendium of biblical passages and not a treatise on a separate theory of Nicodemism.[60] In line with Ginzburg, Maghenzani contends that Nicodemism in Italian Protestantism was not just about conformity but a doctrinal understanding of adiaphora.[61] In this sense, Ginzburg and Maghenzani both interpret Bucer as arguing that external religious observance was adiaphora and unimportant for salvation. Eire disagrees, stating that Bucer called for tolerance and not deception, in line with a wider willingness to accept a progressive realisation of reform in communities.[62]

Eire's conclusion is that sixteenth century Nicodemism was an attitude, not a unified theology, that it 'covered a very diverse group of people', and that it was a fear of persecution, which 'needs no theory to support itself internally.'[63] Indeed, Higman has revised his previously expressed view and states that 'it is more likely that the "typical" Nicodemite was not a crypto-spiritualist but rather a concerned Protestant, and that his motivation was at first largely atheoretical.'[64] Woo's work on Calvin's anti-Nicodemism has built on this, and shown how inconsistencies in the arguments employed by Calvin, notably in the *Quatre sermons,* demonstrate that he did not have a single anti-Nicodemite target, but how he 'might wilfully have used the ambiguity of his audience to his advantage.'[65]

Nicodemism itself is elusive, and so is its effect on the Elizabethan religious settlement. There appears to have been little expression of resentment in the relationship between former Nicodemites and the anti-Nicodemite exiles, who had previously expended significant effort criticising those who had conformed; instead, they worked together. Why this was the case has been a challenge for scholars to explain, and by articulating anti-Nicodemism as a response to religious insecurity, rather than doctrinally different, anti-

[59] Carlo Ginzburg, *Il Nicodemismo. Simulazione e dissimulazione religiosa nell'Europa del 1500* (Turin, 1970); Eire, 'Calvin and Nicodemism', p. 52.
[60] Eire, 'Calvin and Nicodemism', pp. 55–6.
[61] Simone Maghenzani, 'The Protestant Reformation in counter-Reformation Italy, c. 1550–1660: an overview of new evidence', *Church History*, 83/3 (2014), p. 576.
[62] Eire, 'Calvin and Nicodemism', p. 61.
[63] Eire, 'Calvin and Nicodemism', pp. 67, 69.
[64] Francis M. Higman, 'The question of Nicodemism', in Wilhelm H. Neuser, ed., *Calvinus ecclesiae Genevensis custos: die Referate des Congrès International des Recherches Calviniennes ... vom 6. - 9. September 1982 in Genf* (Frankfurt am Main, 1984), p. 166.
[65] Woo, *Nicodemism*, p. 16.

Nicodemism should be disassociated from Nicodemism – this explains the relatively easy collaboration that marked the beginning of Elizabeth's reign.

The case for seeing ambiguity in the actions of supposed Nicodemites is supported by a statistical study on the 'significant body of letters' left behind by Protestants in Mary's reign.[66] The study by Ahnert and Ahnert demonstrates that whilst those who were martyred played an important role in the Marian Protestant community, there were also some other central figures who do not receive much attention from historians: these include Anne Smith, Barthram Calthorpe, William Bowyer, Augustine Bernher, and Margery Cooke. The study concludes that during Mary's reign 'we see that many of the most "influential" people in this community were not those dying for their faith, but rather those infrastructural figures who served the needs of others.'[67] They argue that, whilst the Protestant network was put under 'systematic attack', with fourteen of the top twenty letter-writers killed, the network did not fragment and retained 'its infrastructural backbone'.[68] For Ahnert and Ahnert, this should rebalance scholarship from an over-emphasis on martyrs (and exiles) to those who quietly maintained the Protestant network during Mary's reign.[69]

As one of the most high-profile people described as a Nicodemite in the scholarship, William Cecil demands a particular focus. His impact is seen throughout this thesis, over several chapters. He was Queen Elizabeth's principal bureaucrat and 'the most powerful man in Elizabethan England.'[70] He was also a useful figure in understanding anti-Nicodemism. Cecil was the Principal Secretary and had a defining role in the development of the Elizabethan Settlement – religious ideology and practice are important in seeking to understand Cecil's political career.

There is little in the existing scholarship to suggest that the relationships of the early Elizabethan Protestants were fractured because of the exile. Pettegree uses Cecil as an example of how the exiles and those in prison depended on supporters who remained at

[66] Ruth Ahnert and S. E. Ahnert, 'A community under attack: Protestant letter networks in the reign of Mary I', *Leonardo*, 47/3 (2014), p. 275.
[67] Ahnert and Ahnert, 'Community under attack', p. 275.
[68] Ahnert and Ahnert, 'Community under attack', p. 275.
[69] Ahnert and Ahnert, 'Community under attack', p. 275.
[70] Stephen Alford, *Burghley: William Cecil at the court of Elizabeth I* (New Haven, CT, 2008), p. xi.

liberty in England fighting their cause.[71] He claims that, for the exiles, Cecil's 'remaining in England was in some respects quite convenient to them, particularly to those to whom he was connected by ties of friendship and kinship, whose interests he could watch over during their time abroad.'[72] This is quite a significant claim, as it implies both that Cecil was active in his advocacy for the exiles' interests and that there was some degree of recognition within the exile community that this was the role he played.[73] The evidence to support this claim, and its implications on the thesis, are explored in Chapter 3, which argues that too much can be made of scant evidence to explain away the apparently easy relationship that Cecil – a 'Nicodemite' – had with the Protestant Marian exiles.

Pettegree also argues that the presence of Nicodemism allowed a smooth transition to open Protestantism following the end of Mary's reign. He states that 'after Elizabeth's accession, leading members of the Edwardian Church hurried back to England to petition for the Church's restoration, but they found that a community had already gathered to meet informally, made up of those who had remained in London through the dark days of Mary's reign.'[74] This leads Pettegree to conclude that 'to a very large extent the Elizabethan Settlement was a Nicodemite Reformation'.[75] This is a critical insight into the role played by Cecil, Elizabeth, Archbishop Matthew Parker and the others who remained and conformed in Marian England: rather than diminishing Nicodemism, as many have done, Pettegree argues that it was central in the formation of the Elizabethan Settlement.

Pre-Marian ties are critical to understanding the formation of the early Elizabethan administration. Hudson's work builds a body of evidence to advocate that the important relationships that formed the early Elizabethan administration were rooted in the 'Athenian tribe' of Cambridge in the late 1530s and 1540s. Hudson centres the connection firstly on John Cheke and secondly on Cecil, and argues that it makes sense of the level of consensus in the early Elizabethan period, especially in the formation of the Elizabethan Settlement.[76]

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[71] Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, pp. 101–2.
[72] Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 104; This is a view supported by Stephen Alford who cites the letters between Cecil and his father-in-law, Anthony Cooke, in Alford, *Burghley*, p. 76; Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 104.
[73] Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 105; Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 104.
[74] Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 53.
[75] Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 106.
[76] Winthrop Still Hudson, *The Cambridge connection and the Elizabethan settlement of 1559* (Durham, NC, 1980), p. 77.

Hudson is important to the historiography, as he provided a necessary corrective with claims that the 'Athenian tribe' had been largely overlooked by historians because they have attempted to impose a partisan narrative on the early Elizabethan period, rather than reflecting the evidence.[77] Hudson believes this to be a damaging oversight because it means missing the important 'shared outlook' held by the 'Cambridge connection', and particularly how this was rooted in the theology of Martin Bucer and Peter Martyr.[78] Hudson and Basil Hall argue that the toleration of adiaphora in Bucer's theology explains the moderate nature of the Elizabethan Settlement, and for Pettegree it is central to understanding perceptions of those who conformed, as opposed to a general perception of Nicodemism.[79]

Usher agrees that pre-Marian connections were more important for forming the early Elizabethan episcopacy than conformity or non-conformity during Mary's reign. He argues that Elizabeth's main concern in the complex process of developing the early Elizabethan episcopacy was the preservation and growth of her authority, rather than a confrontational reform.[80] Cecil's *List of Spiritual Men* and subsequent lists of potential bishops in July and October 1559 were dominated by prominent Edwardian Protestants who went to Cambridge and were close associates of Cecil; indeed the first four of seven names on the July list were fellow former students of Cheke.[81] Usher argues that 'his [initial] list was essentially a round-up of known Protestant survivors: the method by which they had negotiated their way through Mary's reign was a matter for their own consciences'.[82] In

[77] Hudson, *The Cambridge connection*, p. 5.
[78] Peter Matheson agrees, and states that Bucer's theology of community meant an emphasis on the need to spread the gospel without undermining social harmony, and to work in existing communities by transforming society through relationship. As a result, there are many historians who have emphasised the influence of Bucer's theology over the Elizabethan Settlement: William Haugaard sees this influence in the compromises of the Thirty-Nine Articles, and Brett Usher sees it in Archbishop Parker's increasing insistence on adiaphora as a principle for enforcing conformity in the vestiarian controversy. Hudson, *The Cambridge connection*, p. 6; Peter Matheson, 'Martin Bucer and the old Church', in David F. Wright, ed., *Martin Bucer: reforming church and community* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 13; William P. Haugaard, *Elizabeth and the English Reformation: the struggle for a stable settlement of religion* (Cambridge, 1968), p. 267; Brett Usher, 'The Deanery of Bocking and the demise of the vestiarian controversy', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 52/3 (2001), p. 443.
[79] Hudson, *The Cambridge connection*, p. 58; Basil Hall, 'Martin Bucer in England', in David F Wright, ed., *Martin Bucer: reforming church and community* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 146; Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 95.
[80] Brett Usher, *William Cecil and episcopacy: 1559-1577* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 18–19.
[81] Usher, *William Cecil and episcopacy*, pp. 23, 28.
[82] Usher, *William Cecil and episcopacy*, p. 23.

other words, Nicodemism or anti-Nicodemism during Mary's reign were of no concern when considering preferment in the Elizabethan Protestant Church.

Alford notes that the 'Cambridge connection' was important for both the consistency of Cecil's approach to policy-making and the continued use of these relationships throughout the early Elizabethan period.[83] In seeking to explain Cecil's religious convictions, Alford claims that by 1551 Cecil was 'ideologically committed' to evangelical reform, as demonstrated by his instrumental role in the development of 1552 prayer book.[84] He summarises Cecil's struggle as 'light against dark, truth against lies, Christ against Antichrist. His was a personal and passionate war to protect the realm from its enemies.'[85]

Yet, Alford's work fails to shed any real light on Cecil's conformity in Mary's reign; he simply states that 'labelling him a [religious] conformist is too limited', and that 'more research needs to be done on Cecil's relationship with the theory and the practice of "Nicodemism" and the underground support for Protestantism in the 1550s'.[86] Alford argues that 'we find two William Cecils in Mary's reign: one is a secret critic of the Queen and her government; the other is a loyal subject who is happy to live with a Catholic monarch', but Alford's conclusion is that 'he was no hero of the resistance against Mary, and he had no intention of throwing himself into the flames of martyrdom'.[87]

Current scholarship sheds no light on how Cecil reconciled his religious beliefs with his actions and especially how he effectively made the transition from conformist under Mary to the champion of reform in Elizabeth's reign.[88] Alford asserts that there is a 'paradox of William Cecil', who was passionate about religion, yet conformed easily under Mary, concluding rather unsatisfactorily that Cecil simply must have felt he had always been loyal to God, country and Elizabeth, even in Mary's reign.[89] This thesis aims to unravel the paradox – Chapter 4 contends that understanding anti-Nicodemism as a reflection of

[83] Alford, *Burghley*, p. 22.
[84] Alford, *Burghley*, p. 45.
[85] Alford, *Burghley*, p. 104.
[86] Stephen Alford, *The early Elizabethan polity: William Cecil and the British succession crisis, 1558-1569* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 26, 218.
[87] Alford, *Burghley*, pp. 65, 71.
[88] Alford, *Burghley*, p. 80.
[89] Alford, *Burghley*, p. 93.

insecurity explains how Cecil never owned a Nicodemite identity, and it had little impact on his relationship with former exiles.

Alford also argues against discounting the unrecorded influence of others on Cecil's actions, especially his well-educated wife Mildred.[90] He makes the point that Cecil was surrounded by strong, clever and devoutly Protestant women including his wife, Queen Elizabeth, Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk, Queen Katherine Parr, and Anne Seymour.[91] Other scholars assert the important role of women to support the Protestant network in Marian England, but they also point out that little evidence remains to determine the full extent of this influence.[92] It is important not to discount the role of women and their experiences and perceptions of Nicodemism, and Chapter 5 argues that anti-Nicodemism had a significant impact on gender norms.

The evolution of Catholic identities and perceptions of Nicodemism

There is very little scholarship on Catholic perceptions of the concept of Nicodemism in the first decade of Elizabeth's reign. Indeed, Peter Holmes argues that Catholicism *per se* in the first decade of Elizabeth's reign has been neglected by historians.[93] Holmes notes that the traditional view of the demise of Catholicism in the 1560s ignored much of the existing evidence, including the large number of clergy who refused to conform to the Elizabethan Settlement and the publication of leaflets and books by an organised group of non-conformists living in exile in the Netherlands.[94] Duffy represents a foundational thinker in this revision. Duffy's overall objective is to demonstrate how conservative religion 'had about it no particular marks of exhaustion or decay' and that the Reformation was a 'violent disruption' – a view supported by Margaret Aston, who argues that objectives set at the beginning of the English Reformation often took almost a century to achieve.[95]

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[90] Alford, *Burghley*, p. 30.
[91] From this point onwards, Katherine Bertie [née Willoughby; other married name Brandon] will simply be referred to as Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk – this approach avoids misunderstanding, whilst emphasising her status. Alford, *Burghley*, p. 36.
[92] Ahnert and Ahnert, 'Community under attack', p. 275.
[93] Peter Holmes, *Resistance and compromise: the political thought of the Elizabethan Catholics* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 11.
[94] Holmes, *Resistance and compromise*, p. 11.
[95] Margaret Aston, 'Cross and crucifix in the English Reformation', *Historische Zeitschrift. Beihefte*, 33 (2002), p. 253; Duffy, *The stripping of the altars*, p. 4.

Scholars have claimed that in the first decade of Elizabeth's reign, conservative belief and practice were widespread; however, there was no uniformity in translating conservative belief and practice into Catholicism in England. Questier has contributed extensively to the development of a historiographical concept of Catholicism, and its distinction from conservative religion. He and Peter Lake argue that, at 'some point in the mid- and later 1570s, English Catholics started to move inexorably into a different relationship with the Elizabethan State', and that before that 'Catholicism in the national Church was little more than an expression of popular conservative sentiment, essentially backward looking and largely politically inert.'[96] In part, the lack of clear distinctions were because the slow, gradual and deliberate process of Church reform took time to change Church practice; it was also because the definition of Catholicism was not clear in 1559.[97] Questier makes the important terminological distinction that 'there were many aspects of what historians have chosen to term Catholicism, often fragmented and subfragmenting […and] there was certainly no single social or political or religious structure which we can label exclusively as Catholicism.' [98] Instead, 'certain patterns of behaviour, informed by particular political, social and religious structures, often looked to contemporaries like Catholicism.'[99]

As Patrick Collinson has concluded, the difference between recusant and church papist was inexact.[100] Collinson argues that there are many examples of people who were clearly Catholic by confession who took part in the political aspects of Protestant English religion, such as Anthony Browne, Lord Montague.[101] Collinson writes that this poses the interesting question of when 'a non-recusant Catholic cease[d] in any meaningful sense to be a Catholic'.[102] There were significant shades of grey between total conformity and outright dissent, and religious conservativism was a powerful political force in Elizabethan history.[103]

[96] Lake and Questier, *Trials of Margaret Clitherow*, p. 24.
[97] Questier, *Catholicism and community*, pp. 32–3.
[98] Questier, *Catholicism and community*, p. 66.
[99] Questier, *Catholicism and community*, p. 66.
[100] Patrick Collinson, 'The politics of religion and the religion of politics in Elizabethan England', *Historical Research*, 82/215 (2009), p. 86.
[101] Collinson, 'The politics of religion', pp. 86–7.
[102] Collinson, 'The politics of religion', p. 92.
[103] Younger, 'How Protestant?', p. 1087.

As Kelly and Royal point out, the development of Catholicism in England; was one of 'slow recognition of religion as separate from the political apparatus of the state'.[104]

Walsham has argued that, 'in a context in which ideological differences were becoming a permanent, ineradicable and tacitly accepted feature of the contemporary landscape, the cultural practices which distinguished individuals who professed rival creeds probably became commensurately more important.'[105] In the 1560s, in line with Catholics across Europe, English Catholics built their cultural practice on the authority of the papacy, but this was not a developed confessional identity, and the Elizabethan state was neither able nor inclined to enforce conformity on a largely conservative country.[106] This began to change in 1569, in large part because of the Northern Rebellion, when non-conformity came to be perceived as an existential threat to the Elizabethan state and linked with the risk of foreign invasion. This change in outlook from the state essentially forced religious conservatives to choose between outward conformity to the English Church and non-conformity as a Catholic; this process accelerated in the 1570s when *Regnans in Excelsis* – the Papal Bull excommunicating Elizabeth – was published and the Jesuit missions to England began.[107]

Holmes notes that in the early Elizabethan period, 'the dominant theme in the political statements of the early Catholics is that of political non-resistance'.[108] He argues that even the Catholic exiles in Louvain echoed the Marian prelates' expressions of 'loyalty to the Queen and their support for a policy of non-resistance'.[109] At Mary's funeral, Bishop White had laid out an uncompromising approach that almost resembled resistance theory, but Holmes argues that it was not until the late 1560s, during increasing tensions with Spain and the outbreak of religious war in the Netherlands, France, and Scotland, that increasing radicalism in English Catholic thinking became something resembling a theory of resistance.[110] Holmes claims that this was influenced by wider trends in European Catholicism towards politically conservative thinking, and is exemplified in Harding's

[104] J.E. Kelly and S. Royal, 'Introduction', in J. E. Kelly and S. Royal, eds., *Early modern English Catholicism: identity, memory and counter-Reformation* (Boston, MA, 2016), p. 5.
[105] Walsham, *Catholic Reformation*, p. 98.
[106] Walsham, *Catholic Reformation*, p. 88.
[107] Walsham, *Catholic Reformation*, p. 89.
[108] Holmes, *Resistance and compromise*, p. 12.
[109] Holmes, *Resistance and compromise*, p. 14.
[110] Holmes, *Resistance and compromise*, p. 23.

polemical response to Jewel. Whilst Harding vehemently opposed Jewel's religious views, he argued that political resistance could not be tolerated.[111]

Stefania Tutino contends that dissimulation was viewed by the English Catholic community as an understandable defence mechanism. Although much of her work is concerned with the Jesuit missions later in Elizabeth's reign, it helpfully delineates the perceived moral distinction drawn between honest and offensive dissimulation, pointing out that both were often practiced together.[112] She notes that that the same conditions that led to Nicodemism, as 'honest' dissimulation, also created more 'offensive' dissimulation, and that they coexisted in Elizabethan England.[113] Sandeep Kaushik similarly claims that Catholic belief was tolerated by the Elizabethan regime until *Regnans in Excelsis* was published in 1570, and that consequently no clear Catholic theory of recusancy was articulated until later in Elizabeth's reign.[114]

Walsham's work has brought back the concept of the 'church papist', which Tutino summarises as 'those men and women who did not think that attending Protestant services was necessarily incompatible with being a good Catholic, despite the Catholic and Jesuit hierarchy's official position of non-conformity'.[115] Balancing this was the Elizabethan state's inability to implement a policy of religious conformity – as Walsham argues, religious toleration was 'the unforeseen by-product and side-effect of incapacity and exhaustion, a second-best solution to the phenomenon of unwanted religious pluralism.'[116]

The main challenge with finding consistent concepts of English Catholic Nicodemism in the first decade of Elizabeth's reign is that Catholicism in England was evolving.[117] As Patrick Collinson has concluded, 'Questier has taught us that the simple dichotomy of recusant and church papist is itself too crude.'[118] Recent historiography has highlighted the multifaceted

[111] Holmes, *Resistance and compromise*, p. 16.
[112] Stefania Tutino, 'Between Nicodemism and "honest" dissimulation: the Society of Jesus in England', *Historical Research*, 79/206 (2006), p. 543.
[113] Tutino, 'Between Nicodemism', p. 536.
[114] Sandeep Kaushik, 'Resistance, loyalty and Recusant politics: Sir Thomas Tresham and the Elizabethan State - The Midland History Prize Essay', *Midland History*, 21/1 (1996), p. 40.
[115] Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, conformity and confessional polemic in early modern England* (Woodbridge, 1999); Tutino, 'Between Nicodemism', p. 535.
[116] Alexandra Walsham, 'Toleration, pluralism, and coexistence: The ambivalent legacies of the Reformation', *Archiv Für Reformationsgeschichte*, 108/1 (2017), p. 183.
[117] Questier, *Catholicism and community*, p. 66.
[118] Patrick Collinson, 'The politics of religion', p. 86.

and developing nature of identity, and that a simple scheme of conformity, Nicodemism, Catholicism, and dissenting Catholicism is not possible.

Examples of specific people castigated as Nicodemites in Marian and Elizabethan England are scarce. Rather, much of the scholarship suggests that in the English context, Nicodemism was often simply used by the Protestant and Catholic anti-Nicodemites as a rhetorical device to rationalise their own choices. This thesis examines the evidence of anti-Nicodemism, and the available evidence of those who conformed, to argue that Nicodemism was an anti-Nicodemite construction and not a unified theological identity. Studying anti-Nicodemite rhetoric really tells us about a dislocated, and insecure people, who lashed out at an ill-defined foe to reinforce their social identity.

Anti-Nicodemism in the sources and chapter plan

The critical question to address is whether the acts of dissimulation and conformity led to individual stigma. To do this, the thesis has used many private letters and evidence of relationships between conformists, exiles, and martyrs. The sources are split between those which would have been public and general, and those which are private – especially letters. Protestants in Mary's reign had their works published in Emden, Geneva, Strasbourg and other centres of the European Reformation, whilst works by Catholics in the early years of Elizabeth's reign were published in Louvain and Antwerp, which were the centres of English Catholic exile.

There are practical challenges with evidence from the sixteenth century, particularly with private correspondence. The first challenge is that one can only read what was written down, kept, archived, and survived. Thomas Cranmer wrote a letter to Peter Martyr in 1555 noting that, 'letters are then only necessary, when the messenger is either not sufficiently discreet, or is unacquainted with the circumstances we wish to communicate, or not thought worthy to be entrusted with secrets'.[119] A letter from John Bradford to his mother in 1555 gives another reason why evidence may have not survived: the messages contained

[119] Thomas Cranmer to Peter Martyr, n.d. 1555, *ZL*, 3, p. 29.

in letters were often dangerous. He tells his mother that she 'shoulde geue my letters to father Traues to be burned'.[120]

The second challenge is that letters mostly survived for a reason – often as source material for hagiographical or propagandist works, such as Henry Bull and Miles Coverdale's *Certain most godly, fruitful, and comfortable letters*, published in 1564, and John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments.* The latter was first published in 1563, with revisions and additions in 1570, 1576 and 1583. *Certain letters* is simply an edited set of letters from prominent martyrs, whilst *Acts and Monuments* uses the letters and other materials to support a narrative study of, and argument regarding, the martyrs. Both works need to be treated with caution. Ahnert states that Bull and Coverdale were guilty of 'racking and dismembering texts in the very way that the authorities had acted on the bodies of their authors', especially concerning the removal of some personal content from the original letters in order to emphasise their universal relevance.[121] As she points out, Foxe's project also developed from 'arguing that such persecution was a sign that the Protestant martyrs were numbered amongst God's elect […to] the establishment of Protestantism as an authorised faith'.[122] As a result, much of the surviving source material comes from collections that existed to emphasise the faithfulness of Protestants, and these collections do not include much about those who were unfaithful or who conformed to avoid persecution.

A significant number of the sources for both *Certain letters* and *Acts and Monuments* still exist in manuscript form.[123] Many of the letters in these manuscripts are not original but are copied versions used by Bull, Coverdale and Foxe before the final edit.[124] As Ahnert notes, the main differences between them and the printed versions are that the manuscripts include more personal detail, particularly at the beginning and end of each letter – the relevance of these personal details to the gendered language of anti-Nicodemism is covered in Chapter 5. In addition, the published collections only include letters from men, whilst the manuscripts have several letters from women. Nevertheless, evidence from the manuscript

[120] Coverdale p. 454.
[121] Ruth Ahnert, *The rise of prison literature in the sixteenth century* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 191, 189–9.
[122] Ahnert, *Prison literature*, p. 192.
[123] The letters are mainly in BL, Additional, MS 19400, BL, Harley MSS 416-26, and ECL MSS 260-262.
[124] Montague Rhodes James, *Western Manuscripts in the Library of Emmanuel College Cambridge: a descriptive catalogue* (Cambridge, 1904), p. 166.

sources should be seen as complementary to, rather than in conflict with, the published material. This is not to draw a different conclusion from Ahnert; rather, it is to make clear that the references to fidelity to Protestant articles of faith do not suffer from the editors' attentions in the same way that other details do. Where there have been relevant edits in the published collections, reference to the manuscripts is often possible.

The third challenge is that the remaining sources are heavily weighted towards those with a focus on governance and are not necessarily a good barometer of personal relationships. For Elizabeth's reign, the State Papers provide an important resource, as do the Cecil Papers at Hatfield House. Cecil's proclivity to keep records is useful to all students of Elizabeth's reign, and there is often a heavy emphasis on his records: the State Papers – both foreign and domestic – the Lansdowne, Cotton, and Harley collections, are all reliant to a large degree on Cecil's decisions about what papers to keep for his records. Given Cecil's role as Principal Secretary, this source material has a focus on the governance of the realm, rather than personal relationships. The *Zurich Letters* are also used for this study; these were letters written to and from mainland European reformers and English Protestants. Finally, the last important collection are the letters of John Knox – both the copies collated in Knox's letters, and replies extant in the State Papers and British Library collections. The *Zurich Letters* and the letters of Knox are more personal, but their focus is still largely on the process of Church reform.

The challenges in the sources are not insurmountable. Careful analysis of each of the main collections and archives allows identification of letters and papers which might have relevance or include personal notes about former Marian exiles or conformists. Identified materials were read and analysed. Given the opaque nature of religious dissimulation, it was important to conduct a methodical review of the materials to build an overall picture, pick out unusual aspects, and analyse how relationships developed over time. The study also analyses the biblical and theological references because they were often shorthand for a significant point – for example, as discussed in Chapter 2, John Jewel's statement that many remained in 'the cave of Abdias' has great significance for how conformity could be

justified.[125] This interpretation is only possible through an exploration of its theological consequence.

Understanding both the significance of specific phrases and historical contexts is important because one or two sentences in a single letter could either demonstrate a critical change in relationship or be used as a proof-text when the overall emphasis of the letters differs. Key texts and quotations must be understood and analysed in their context. It is worth illustrating this approach with two examples. In Chapter 3, a letter from John Cheke to Cecil in 1556 is discussed. In this letter, Cheke argued that it was important 'to content god quietlie' during times of persecution – a statement which has been taken, rightly, as an affirmation of Cheke's agreement with Bucer's theology.[126] It has also been argued to be an indication of Cheke's sympathetic position towards Nicodemites.[127] However, as Chapter 3 argues, this interpretation is not consistent with Cheke's advice to Cecil to avoid deceiving himself by calling 'gud bad, and bad gud.'[128] The second example, in Chapter 4, is of Knox's letter to Cecil criticising his actions during Mary's reign - in a highly critical letter, Knox wrote that Cecil had fallen into 'common iniquitye'.[129] This example could be used to build an argument on the importance of Nicodemism in shaping Knox's relationship with Cecil, but, as Chapter 4 argues in detail, this was an instance of Knox attempting to browbeat Cecil into acting on his behalf – the attempt failed, and Knox moved swiftly to flattery. Neither browbeating nor flattery truly sum up Knox's relationship with Cecil – it is important to understand each example in its context to glean its true meaning.

In this consideration of Knox's anti-Nicodemism, the thesis provides a new angle. Jane Dawson has noted Knox's strongly held anti-Nicodemism, stating that he 'declared it impossible to conform outwardly to Roman Catholic worship while keeping a Protestant faith in the heart'.[130] Whilst not successful in the short-term, Knox's approach to Cecil and

[125] John Jewel, 'The letter of a certain Englishman, in which is asserted the consensus of true religion, doctrine, and ceremonies in England, against the empty scoffing of some, by which they try to impugn this truth in their sermons to the simple people', in John E. Booty, trans., *John Jewel as apologist of the Church of England* (London, 1963), p. 217.
[126] Woo, *Nicodemism*, p. 81.
[127] Overell references Diarmaid MacCulloch to support the view that this 'sounds like advice to act like a nicodemite.' Overell, *Nicodemites*, pp. 183–4.
[128] Cheke to Cecil, 18 February 1556, BL, Lansdowne, MS 3, fol. 103r.
[129] John Knox, *The works of John Knox,* 6 (Edinburgh, 1895), p. 16.
[130] Jane E. A. Dawson, *John Knox* (New Haven, CT, 2015), p. 84.

Elizabeth was more astute than may initially appear. He understood the political value of his words and letters, and his correspondence reflected his willingness to avoid openly condemning important potential allies. Chapter 5 shows that Knox's letters to Anne Locke demonstrate his willingness to allow women religious agency in addressing difficult contexts – especially when there was a choice in how to approach religious confessional difference. Knox afforded Locke significant agency in how she decided to act in Elizabethan England. Knox's anti-Nicodemism was not the inflexible dogma that his published work can sometimes be seen to portray.

Private correspondence among Catholics in early Elizabethan England is harder to find. There were no great collections and, supposing they had been written in larger numbers, the long persecution of Elizabethan and later English Catholics meant that many letters would have been destroyed. Not much remains from private correspondence, unlike for Marian Protestants, because, when Elizabeth came to the throne, private correspondence from the Marian period had political value and was no longer a risk; that did not happen for Catholics, and their surviving correspondence was not published in great collections like those of Coverdale or Foxe. As Walsham has concluded, 'no doubt this is due in large part to its inherent invisibility: by its very nature conformity leaves little mark on the historical record. It is also slippery and difficult to identify and pinpoint with accuracy.'[131] The lack of significant collections of letters that circulated in England between those who came to be defined as Catholic conformists presents a methodological challenge in understanding how concepts of anti-Nicodemism developed in practice.

Again, these challenges are possible to overcome – publications from Louvain, Antwerp and other Catholic centres provide a clear picture of the theological evolution of Catholic identity, and the priorities of Elizabethan Catholic authors. The thesis works through a wide range of sources to analyse the relationship between conservatives, the Elizabethan state, and the evolving Catholic confession. Letters about religious conservatives by Elizabethan Protestants gives an important picture of the developing threat they perceived from English Catholicism; and charting some of the stories of religious conservatives helps to unpack how they lived in Protestant England.

[131] Walsham, *Catholic Reformation*, p. 87.

The structure of the thesis is as follows. Chapter 1 demonstrates that the word 'Nicodemite' was based on inherent ambiguity. It derived from the biblical character of Nicodemus, who, though he became synonymous with religious dissimulation in the sixteenth century, had been viewed in previous Christian tradition much more positively. There are only three references to Nicodemus in the Bible, and in each of these he plays a minor role in setting up a revelation of Christ's nature: through his act of questioning in John 3, his defence of Jesus to fellow Pharisees in John 7, and his support in the burial of Jesus in John 19. Calvin portrayed Nicodemus as a leading Pharisee who hid a faith in Jesus, but this is only one of the many interpretations of Nicodemus' role in the Gospel of John. Nicodemus cannot be easily characterised as a figurehead for religious dissimulation, and the instrumentalisation of him in attempts to turn acts of dissimulation into an identification demonstrate how ambiguous Nicodemism was from the outset.

Chapter 2 contends that the ambiguous word, 'Nicodemite', was principally used polemically in Protestant published books and tracts, and often explicitly to act as a warning to promote more fulsome faithfulness. The chapter traces the origins of the terminology of Nicodemism, with its very pan-European roots, and argues that there was significant consistency in anti-Nicodemism. The word, 'Nicodemite', was not used in reference to named individuals, but as a reflection of Protestant insecurity. Calvin's work and the English anti-Nicodemite tradition that closely copied him were responses to the strain placed on the English Protestant leaders by Catholic persecution by the Marian government. Protestants faced the challenge that, under the Catholic authorities, attendance at Mass was perceived to be a choice to prioritise personal safety over faithfulness to the Reformation. Anti-Nicodemite writers emphasised the risks of Nicodemism to ensure Protestants knew the dangers of attending Mass for their souls. This can be seen clearly in the anti-Nicodemism of the Marian exiles who followed Calvin in attacking Nicodemites for attending Mass, used gendered language, and sought pre-emptively to undermine any biblical defence of Nicodemism.

Chapter 3 argues that dominant anti-Nicodemite tropes are broadly absent from personal correspondence among Protestants. There was a significant difference during Mary's reign between the way Nicodemism was discussed in private and in public: for those who remained in England and conformed to avoid persecution, there was not always a clear

distinction between what was perceived as Nicodemism and faithful action to protect the Protestant community. Away from the rhetoric of the published works, private perceptions of individual Nicodemites were not condemnatory – the emphasis in personal correspondence was on concern about the safety of individuals and promoting positive visions of faithfulness and loyalty. As Overell states, 'both catholics and protestants thought that nicodemism was a sin, but they did not allow that to interfere with their consolation of sinners'.[132] Personal relationships, as expressed in the extant sources, were driven by individual worries and there was little incentive to identify friends and co-religionists with the derogatory terminology of Nicodemism or non-conformity.

Chapter 4 shows that once Mary had died and Elizabeth had come to the throne, the divisions between former conformists, exiles, and Protestant prisoners were not emphasised, as concern over the progress of reform eased. There are very few occasions where perspectives and relationships were shaped by previous religious conformity alone. The power dynamics between former exiles and Nicodemites, pre-Marian relations and the emphasis on future reform all meant that attacking the behaviour of those who had conformed did not further the shared religious and political agenda. Whilst consistency between action and belief was highlighted by some, this was often in the context of future action as opposed to a reflection on the past. As a result, anti-Nicodemism joined Nicodemism in the shadows; it may still have shaped personal views, but there is little evidence that anti-Nicodemite tension affected the development of the Elizabethan Settlement, understood as a process between 1558 and 1569.

Chapter 5 argues that insecurity over the need to promote religious faithfulness led to an emphasis on women's agency, particularly on societal expectations that promoted religious purity over the need for female obedience to men. Conformity was perceived, largely by imprisoned and exiled men, as a threat to women's faithfulness, and by extension as a risk to the maintenance of Marian Protestant communities. Avoiding religious conformity, when the societal expectation demanded submission to men in all things doctrinal, was a significant challenge for many women – it was, in practice, less clear than portrayed in anti-Nicodemite writing. Yet, where women had to choose between obeying men and avowing

[132] Overell, *Nicodemites*, p. 222.

Nicodemism, the argument from the Protestant hard-line correspondence was clear: they were to avoid Nicodemism at all costs.

Chapter 6 demonstrates that anti-Nicodemism was common across confessions as a reaction to religious fragility. Until Elizabethan Catholics experienced coercion to conform, there was little emphasis on Nicodemism in Catholic writers. The worry for Catholic leaders in exile was not about the religious practice of attending services – in the first decade of Elizabeth's reign there was opportunity for most either to avoid services or attend churches where practice was not aligned with the Act of Uniformity. Catholics focused on the religious authority of the Queen, as opposed to the Roman Church, which was expressed by the act of taking the Oath of Supremacy. Until *Regnans* was published in 1570, there were still significant grey areas in religious practice, and the concerns of Catholic leaders in exile focused more on this doctrinal question of authority than an individual action. This changed when Elizabethan leaders began to perceive non-conformity as a political threat, and policy essentially forced religious conservatives to choose between outward conformity to the English Church or non-conformity as a Catholic. The beginning of the Jesuit mission in 1574 increasingly clarified the definition of Catholicism as conservative, and distinct from Protestant. As Walsham has shown, the evolving Catholic identity included the creation of English Catholic anti-Nicodemism.[133] This demonstrates that when coerced conformity was present, so were the conditions for anti-Nicodemism, irrespective of religious confession.

Anti-Nicodemism was the process of othering in response to external pressure on confessional identity. This thesis is concerned with a particular set of circumstances, but, in showing the similarity between Protestant and Catholic anti-Nicodemism, it argues that anti-Nicodemism was neither an essentially religious reaction, nor novel to one confession in the Reformation. Rather, anti-Nicodemism was a particular iteration of a wider human and societal response to insecurity. Anti-Nicodemism was a reflection of apprehension: as Overell says, 'polemicists condemned [Nicodemism]; practitioners got on with it but almost all of them lived in fear.'[134] Nicodemism is just one name given to the othering of a non-specific ingroup deviant, whose actions are perceived as disloyal to a particular group when

[133] Walsham, *Catholic Reformation*, p. 89.
[134] Overell, *Nicodemites*, p. 238.

it is under threat – in this case the confessional identities of Reformation England. Scholars have long noted the importance of anti-Nicodemism, and this study explains how it was really a symptom of fear; that it was not a charge levelled at specific people; but that it had a demonstrable impact on societal norms, especially related to women. The chapters that follow will explore these broader implications in more detail.

Chapter 1: Nicodemus before Nicodemism

Nicodemus was not a major biblical character, yet his name became synonymous with religious dissimulation in the sixteenth century. When John Calvin published the 1544 tract *Excuse de Jehan Calvin à Messieurs les Nicodémites* (hereafter referred to as *Excuse*), he identified the character of Nicodemus with hidden faith and disloyalty to the Protestant confession.[1] Whilst this was not a traditional view of Nicodemus, and Calvin's perspective did not align with the prevailing interpretation of Nicodemus' character before the beginning of the Reformation, it demonstrated the essential ambiguity at the heart of the character of Nicodemus. It is apposite that Nicodemus' name became associated with conformity to avoid persecution – just as the motivation and faith of Nicodemus is hidden in the narrative of the Bible, condemnation of conformity was based on entirely subjective judgements of the often-unclear disparity between internal faith and external action. In essence, despite Calvin's protestations that Nicodemites could not look to Nicodemus for justification, the terminology of Nicodemism is appropriate because of its very ambiguity.

To understand the theological and historical underpinning of Nicodemus' association with dissimulation and dishonesty, this chapter charts how interpretations changed over the years until that period. The chapter will argue that, through mapping the traditional view of Nicodemus until Calvin's *Excuse,* it is possible to understand the roots of the word 'Nicodemite'. The word was based on a change in emphasis in the understanding of the biblical character of Nicodemus, different from the tradition built on John Chrysostom and Augustine, but not a revolutionary reinterpretation. The distinction between Calvin and Augustine is significant, because whilst Augustine employed the example of Nicodemus to argue against the Donatist insistence on Christian purity, Calvin's focus was on the importance of avoiding the impurity of attending Mass. This is the first scholarly charting of Nicodemus' reputation, and understanding the origins of anti-Nicodemite language helps to

[1] John Calvin, 'Apology of John Calvin, to Messrs the Nicodemites upon the complaint that they make of his too great rigour (1544)', trans. Eric Kayayan, *Calvin Theological Journal*, 29/2 (1994), p. 348.

identify the core of the anti-Nicodemite argument that there was always potential ambiguity between belief and external action.

In the Gospel of John, Nicodemus' ambiguity played an important role in the narrative, and it gave space to the message that faith was essential to understanding the gospel. It is not consistent with the text in the Gospel of John to suggest that Nicodemus hid his faith in Jesus; rather, Nicodemus was used by John as an example of the outsider seeking to understand the message of Jesus. The ambiguity at the heart of Nicodemus' character was intentional and essential for John's narrative; it was designed to put emphasis on the message of Jesus, and to provide a challenge to reader's religious and social identity.

Late Roman and medieval traditions held that Nicodemus was a disciple and saint, and that the Gospel of John charted the development of his faith in Jesus from misunderstanding, through tentative recognition, to faithful service and sainthood. Much of this interpretation was dependent on Chrysostom, who portrayed Nicodemus as a witness to the historical Jesus and as having a misunderstanding that gave space in the narrative of Gospel of John for Jesus' explanation of being 'born again'. Augustine held the same perspective as Chrysostom and referenced Nicodemus in his dispute with the Donatists to argue that the revelation of faith was dependent on Christ and not the Church – thereby contributing to his contention that it was the faith given by Christ, rather than human perfection, that gave the Catholic Church authority. This interpretation of the character of Nicodemus had utility to Chrysostom and Augustine, and it was not challenged by medieval commentators, including Aquinas.[2]

The Gospel of Nicodemus (hereafter referred to as *GN*) is important to the late medieval and early Reformation perception of Nicodemus. This work had significant influence over the medieval perception of Nicodemus, but as an apocryphal, meditative work, the *GN's* reputation did not survive the scriptural focus of Reformation thinking. The *GN* presented a positive impression of Nicodemus as an advocate for Christ; but, as its credibility was undermined, the ambiguity of the biblical Nicodemus' character once again came to define

[2] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John: chapters 6-12*, trans. Fabian Larcher, James Weisheipl, Daniel Keating, and Matthew Levering (Washington, DC, 2010), p. 97.

his reputation. Therefore, the undermining of the *GN* had a direct role in the increasing association of Nicodemus and religious dissimulation and inconsistency.

Nevertheless, at the outset of the Reformation, Nicodemus was portrayed neither particularly positively nor negatively. Desiderius Erasmus, Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and many others wrote about Nicodemus in a way entirely consistent with the work of Chrysostom and Augustine. For these authors, Nicodemus misunderstood the gospel, but came to understand it later. It is important that the traditional narrative of Nicodemus' process of coming to faith fed into one of the central messages of the Reformation: as Richard Taverner wrote, 'we be all but Nicodemes', in that we cannot fully understand the gospel until it is revealed through faith.[3] Throughout the early sixteenth century, Nicodemus was often noted as an exemplar for the faithful, and whilst Nicodemus tended to elude those who aimed to categorise him, he did not have a negative characterisation in the first half of the sixteenth century until Calvin developed an anti-Nicodemite position.

Nicodemus' fear of human authorities was another notable aspect of his character in John 3, and this was emphasised increasingly at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Through highlighting Nicodemus' fear, the term 'Nicodemite' began to develop, but it was not used consistently until Calvin's *Excuse* outlined a durable definition that associated it with religious dissimulation. As a malleable word, variously used to describe those seeking to understand reformed theology or those who acted dishonestly, 'Nicodemite' before Calvin's *Excuse* should not be interpreted as a challenge to the traditional perspective of Nicodemus. However, by emphasising fear of human authorities, this use of Nicodemus did lay the groundwork for Calvin's derogatory use of the term to refer to those who hid their religion to avoid persecution.

The ambiguous biblical Nicodemus

Nicodemus makes only three appearances in the Bible, all in the Gospel of John.[4] Yet, whilst the name 'Nicodemus' only appears five times, he has elicited a large amount of interest

[3] Richard Taverner, *The Epistles and Gospelles with a brief postil vpon the same from after Easter tyll Aduent, which is the somer parte set forth for the singuler commoditie of all good Christen men and namely of prestes and curates* (London, 1540) sig. A.iir.
[4] In John 3, 7 and 19 (NRSV).

throughout Christian history.[5] Nicodemus set the stage for important statements from Jesus, including the famous declaration that 'for God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.'[6] The dominant themes in Jesus' statements in John 3 are about belief and the contrast between light and darkness, in a message clearly designed to further the narrative purpose of the Gospel of John.[7] In none of Nicodemus' appearances does he quite fit: he is neither the clear-cut disciple of Jesus, nor the enemy of Christ. In John's dualism of light and dark, Nicodemus stands out as one who is close to being in the light, but still a member of an out-group – the 'proximate other'.[8]

In John 3, Nicodemus approached Jesus 'by night' to declare to Jesus that 'no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God'. This statement by Nicodemus is met by a stern reply from Jesus that the kingdom of God is accessible only to those 'born from above (or born anew)'.[9] Nicodemus then questions this statement twice. The ambiguity of Nicodemus' three interventions in John 3 are critical to appreciating how Nicodemus became such a discussed biblical figure, despite his relatively minor role. Bassler summarises that 'Nicodemus makes a series of appearances that seem to be fraught with significance, but the nature of that significance remains elusive'.[10]

First, Nicodemus' arrival at night can be understood to be indicative of the state of Nicodemus' faith. The message of the Gospel of John is noted for the contrast of light and darkness, with Jesus declaring in John 8:12 that 'I am the light of the world', a continuation of the claims from the very beginning of the Gospel that Jesus was 'the true light, which enlightens everyone, [that] was coming into the world.'[11] In John, the coming of faith is

[5] Raimo Hakola, 'The burden of ambiguity: Nicodemus and the social identity of the Johannine Christians', *New Testament Studies*, 55/4 (2009), p. 438.
[6] John 3:16 (NRSV).
[7] It is important to remember that, however Nicodemus' character is interpreted, the central narrative purpose of John 3 is to highlight the nature of Jesus and to provide a setting for an exploration of central Johannine theological precept – Jesus as the only way for the world to come to a knowledge of God. An overemphasis on the enigmatic actions and questions of Nicodemus risks misunderstanding their narrative purpose.
[8] Jouette M. Bassler, 'Mixed signals: Nicodemus in the fourth Gospel', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 108/4 (1989), p. 646.
[9] John 3:2-3 (NRSV).
[10] Bassler, 'Mixed signals', p. 635.
[11] John 8:12, 1:9 (NRSV).

repeatedly likened to a light shining in the darkness; as the light, Jesus is contrasted with the darkness of night, which in turn represents a lack of faith. In this way, Nicodemus' actions in coming to Jesus at night can be interpreted as indicative of the state of Nicodemus' faith, but also as a lack of confidence in faith.[12]

Second, Nicodemus asks the question, 'how can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?'[13] Within the narrative, this statement has been interpreted either as a rhetorical device to increase the irony of the scene, or as the classic behaviour of a dissembler.[14] Jesus' reply is cast as that of a teacher whose wisdom confounds that of the pharisaic teacher, or as the classical rhetorician responding to a dissembler.[15]

Third, after Jesus explains that a second birth was spiritual, Nicodemus interjects, 'How can these things be?'[16] This leads to a clear rebuke from Jesus, who asks 'are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony.'[17] Nicodemus' wonder at the words of Jesus are, in this case, a springboard for an elaboration of Jesus' message that ends with the statement that 'for all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed.'[18] Nicodemus does not reply to this statement in John 3 – the narrative emphasises the importance of approaching the light of the gospel, rather than developing the character of Nicodemus any further.

In John 7, Nicodemus is a lone voice defending Jesus to the former's fellow high priests and Pharisees, who are plotting to have Jesus killed. The Gospel of John is quick to remind the reader that this was the Nicodemus 'who had gone to Jesus before', but notes also that he defends Jesus' right to a proper legal process.[19] Whilst Nicodemus does not defend the

[12] Bassler, 'Mixed signals', p. 638.
[13] John 3:4 (NRSV).
[14] Hakola, 'The burden of ambiguity', p. 440; Michael R. Whitenton, 'The dissembler of John 3: a cognitive and rhetorical approach to the characterization of Nicodemus', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 135/1 (2016), pp. 151–2.
[15] Whitenton, 'The dissembler of John 3', p. 154.
[16] John 3:9 (NRSV).
[17] John 3:10-11 (NRSV).
[18] John 3:20 (NRSV).
[19] John 7:50-51 (NRSV); Marinus de Jonge, *Jesus, stranger from heaven and Son of God: Jesus Christ and the Christians in Johannine perspective* (Missoula, MT, 1977), p. 36.

mission of Jesus here, he is met with a stern rebuke from his fellow Pharisees who declare that he is 'also of Galilee', which could be taken literally or as an accusation that Nicodemus was a follower of Jesus.[20]

Finally, Nicodemus makes a fleeting appearance in John 19, supporting Joseph of Arimathea in burying Jesus' body after the crucifixion.[21] Again, Nicodemus is introduced as the person who had 'first come to Jesus by night', and he carries a preposterous amount – forty-five kilograms – of burial herbs and spices. Bassler argues that Nicodemus' presence is not necessary and adds nothing to the narrative in John 19, and that 'commentators are nearly unanimous in expressing astonishment over the quantity of spices and hopelessly divided over interpreting its significance.'[22] Indeed, Nicodemus in John 19 can be interpreted in very different ways – either as the person who 'first' came to Jesus at night but was now playing an important role motivated by new faith, or as someone whose lack of faith in Jesus' impending resurrection is demonstrated by the amount of burial herbs and spices he brings.[23]

Interpreting Nicodemus is fraught with theological difficulties. To many, he is viewed as a character without a clear identity. Bassler is most associated with this perspective, and she argues that 'when Nicodemus buries Jesus, he does so as a "Jew"; when he defends him, he does so as a Pharisee; when he confesses him, he does so at night'.[24] Meeks, de Jonge and Hylen have all made a similar case, and, as Hakola summarises, 'no single trait determines Nicodemus's portrait, [and], in the end, this portrait remains ambiguous.'[25] The contrast in this ambiguity is between the human reputation of Nicodemus and its incompatibility with true faith.[26]

Building on the argument that Nicodemus is essentially ambiguous, Hakola argues that Nicodemus represented an important group for the Johannine community – those

[20] Early Christians were often associated with where Jesus came from; for example, Paul is described as 'a pestilent fellow, an agitator among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes' in Acts 24:5 (NRSV).
[21] John 19:39-40 (NRSV).
[22] Bassler, 'Mixed signals', pp. 641, 642.
[23] Scholars, including Dennis Sylva and Winsome Munro, agree: Hakola, 'The burden of ambiguity', p. 442.
[24] Bassler, 'Mixed signals', p. 643.
[25] Hakola, 'The burden of ambiguity', p. 438.
[26] Bassler, 'Mixed signals', p. 641.

interested in Christianity but still closely associated with the Jewish authorities. The ambiguity of Nicodemus played an important role in 'an effort to construct a clearly defined social identity [for the Johannine community] rather than as a direct reflection of the real world'.[27] Nicodemus is always on the outside of every group, and he is defined as the black sheep in each of the three scenes in which he appears.[28] The character of Nicodemus was close to, but not really part of, any group, and this brought uncertainty to the narrative of the Gospel of John and provided a counterpoint to the otherwise dualistic theme of light versus darkness: 'as an ambiguous literary character, Nicodemus may have helped John and his audience to accept the ambiguities and uncertainties in their social environment without abandoning the basic thrust of their symbolic world.' [29] Nicodemus played a social function, as an ambiguous 'type' that explained the diversity of the Johannine community to itself, whilst also providing a subtype that allowed the dualistic Johannine community to understand the Jewish Christian who did not fit in with their belief system.[30]

However, Whitenton has argued that intentional ambiguity is not the only way to understand the Johannine character of Nicodemus. He claims that Nicodemus is a classic dissembler, based on Theophrastus' *On Characters* and Aristotle's ideal dissembler in *Ethics*.[31] He adds that the concept and schema of the dissembler were ubiquitous in Mediterranean antiquity, and that there was a traditional typology that closely fits the actions of Nicodemus in John 3.[32] In addition to referencing Aristotle and Theophrastus, Whitenton draws on Ariston of Keos, Horace, and Plutarch to make the case that the initial praise of Nicodemus and then the 'buffoonery' of not understanding the phrase 'born again' align with the classic dissembler stereotype.[33] He argues that Nicodemus' actions suggest rejection, rather than misunderstanding, of Jesus' message.[34]

However, whilst Whitenton's interpretation holds for John 3, it fails to provide a consistent Johannine perspective of Nicodemus based on John 7 and 19. He explains this rather

[27] Hakola, 'The burden of ambiguity', p. 453.
[28] Hakola, 'The burden of ambiguity', p. 451.
[29] Hakola, 'The burden of ambiguity', p. 455.
[30] Hakola, 'The burden of ambiguity', p. 454.
[31] Whitenton, 'The dissembler of John 3', pp. 146–7.
[32] Whitenton, 'The dissembler of John 3', p. 150.
[33] Whitenton, 'The dissembler of John 3', pp. 151–2.
[34] Whitenton, 'The dissembler of John 3', p. 152; John 3:2 (NRSV).

inadequately, stating that 'Nicodemus seems to have stopped his dissembling in his later appearances in 7:50–52 and 19:39–42, and this development further complicates his characterization.'[35] Nicodemus is repeatedly introduced by John as the one who visited Jesus by night, and by not addressing the narrative consistency in the Gospel of John, Whitenton is unable to provide a reliable characterisation of Nicodemus, and in so doing highlights the ambiguity of the character.

Whitenton notes that the brain tends to resolve ambiguity by identifying the closest match, and this holds true for the different ways in which Nicodemus has been interpreted.[36] Each resolution of the questions about Nicodemus' character speaks more to the intention of the interpreter than to the true character of Nicodemus. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Bassler draws, namely that 'Nicodemus' ambiguity must be intentional, as he confronts the reader with a set of difficult questions about identity and faith'.[37] Throughout Christian history, therefore, Nicodemus has been used to understand and describe marginal people and communities as the 'proximate other'.[38]

Traditional late-antique and medieval interpretations of Nicodemus

Despite Nicodemus' ambiguous character, there is a remarkable consistency in late-antique and medieval interpretations of the biblical Nicodemus. This is demonstrated by the influence of Chrysostom's *Homilies on the Gospel of St John* on how Augustine, Aquinas and others interpreted the character of Nicodemus – their influential interpretation of Nicodemus was similar to their wider impact as theologians in defining key concepts in Western Christianity.

To understand Chrysostom's interpretation of Nicodemus, it is important to recognise that it was based on his practical theology, in contrast to the allegorical interpretations of his contemporaries. His homilies have been noted for their themes on rejecting error and on aligning faith in Christ to simplicity in living.[39] Chrysostom's interpretation simplified

[35] Whitenton, 'The dissembler of John 3', p. 156.
[36] Whitenton, 'The dissembler of John 3', p. 144.
[37] Bassler, 'Mixed signals', p. 644.
[38] Bassler, 'Mixed signals', p. 646.
[39] E. A. Livingstone, 'Chrysostom, St John', in E. A. Livingstone, ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford, 2013) < https://www-oxfordreference-com.nottingham.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/acref/9780199659623.001.0001/acref-9780199659623-e-1192>,

Nicodemus and made him relatable. Chrysostom emphasised Nicodemus' misunderstanding in his approach to Jesus: 'and even now he was disposed towards Christ, but not as he ought, nor with proper sentiments respecting Him, for he was as yet entangled in Jewish infirmity.'[40] According to Chrysostom, in John 3 Nicodemus misunderstood Jesus' divine nature, and in doing so failed to comprehend the spiritual depth of Jesus' message and mission. Chrysostom argued that 'Nicodemus heard of the spiritual Birth, yet perceived it not as spiritual, but dragged down the words to the lowness of the flesh, and made a doctrine so great and high depend upon physical consequence'[41] – imagery he drew from Jesus' statement in John 3:6.

A central argument in Chrysostom's homilies was that the 'how' of God's promises can only be understood through faith, rather than through reason. Chrysostom drew analogies between the unbelief of Nicodemus in John 3 and Sarah's lack of faith in God's promises in Genesis 12 that she would have children, despite her advanced age. Nicodemus had appreciated the signs of God's promise, but a lack of faith had led to a misunderstanding about 'how' these promises were to be realised.[42] The theme of Nicodemus' misunderstanding of the 'how' of God's action was important for those following Chrysostom.

Augustine quoted extensively from Chrysostom in his own homilies on the Gospel of John, particularly when drawing the comparison between the lack of faith of Sarah and Nicodemus.[43] Indeed, this contrast between belief and misunderstanding was central to how Augustine interpreted Nicodemus. Augustine delivered his homilies in AD 416, and they must be seen in the context of his battle against the Donatists.[44] Augustine included a

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accessed 23.11.2019; David Hugh Farmer, 'John Chrysostom', in David Hugh Farmer, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford, 2011), <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199596607.001.0001/acref-9780199596607-e-894?rskey=wqSkXA>, accessed 16.3.2019.

[40] St Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of St. John and the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, MI, 1889), p. 168.

[41] Chrysostom, *Homilies*, p. 171.

[42] Chrysostom, *Homilies*, p. 171.

[43] St Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John; Homilies on the First Epistle of John; Soliloquies*, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, MI, 1888), p. 171.

[44] Frend argues that the energy with which Augustine pursued the Donatists is remarkable. From his first discussions with the local Donatist clergy during his presbyterate until his final exchanges with Gaudentius of Thamugadi, not a year passes without some anti-Donatist tract or sermon: W. H. C. Frend, 'St. Augustine and the Donatists', in W. H. C. Frend, ed., *The Donatist Church* (Oxford, 1985), < https://oxford-

specific reference to the 'party of Donatus' in making his point that God had used the unfaithfulness of Sarah and the consequent suffering of her servant Hagar to further his aims. Nicodemus had misunderstood the 'how' of God, just as Sarah had and, rather than rely on faith in God's action, each had anticipated it through their own activity. Jesus had taught Nicodemus that to be born again was a spiritual process and not a physical action, and Augustine argued that there was a clear link to the practice of rebaptism amongst the Donatists: he stated that 'I am already born of Adam, Adam cannot beget me a second time. I am already born of Christ, Christ cannot beget me again. As there is no repeating from the womb, so neither from baptism.'[45]

Augustine did not vilify Nicodemus; rather, he understood him as being in a process of coming to belief. This is important in the context of Nicodemism and the debate in the sixteenth century, as Augustine was defending Nicodemus as part of his argument against the Donatists, who believed that association with those who had hidden their faith during persecution betrayed the true church. Cross and Livingstone state that the Donatists 'went so far as to assert that all those who communicated with traditores were infected, and that, since the Church is one and holy, the Donatists alone formed the Church.'[46] Augustine argued that it was Christ, rather than the Church, which made sacraments holy; and as a result he argued for the conversion of the Donatists back to the Catholic Church.[47]

Within Augustine's argument against Donatism, Nicodemus was a symbol of the development of faith and the sufficiency of Christ, rather than of unbelief and unfaithfulness. Augustine called him a 'catechumen' – a person receiving religious instruction – which he characterised as a stage in the process of the light overcoming darkness through understanding.[48] Nicodemus 'came to the Lord, and came by night; came to the Light, and came in the darkness' and 'although he came to Jesus, yet because he

universitypressscholarship-com.nottingham.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198264088.001.0001/acprof-9780198264088-chapter-16>, accessed 13.1.2019.

[45] Augustine, *Homilies*, p. 122.

[46] Frank Leslie Cross and Elizabeth Livingstone, *Donatism* (Oxford, 2005), p. 503.

[47] Frend, 'St. Augustine and the Donatists', p. 9.

[48] Augustine, *Homilies*, p. 120.

came by night, he still speaks from the darkness of his own flesh. He understands not what he hears from the Lord, understands not what he hears from the Light'.[49]

Aquinas followed the interpretation of Chrysostom and Augustine by stating that night was symbolic of Nicodemus' state of mind:

> For the night is obscure and suited to the state of mind of Nicodemus, who did not come to Jesus free of care and anxiety, but in fear; for he was one of those of whom it is said that they 'believed in him; but they did not admit it because of the Pharisees, so that they would not be expelled from the synagogue'. For their love was not perfect, so it continues, 'For they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God.'[50]

Night was representative of thinking based on fear, and light was symbolic of victory over the world.[51] This, as has been noted, fits within the overall narrative scheme of the gospel. By approaching Jesus in the night, Nicodemus was approaching the truth of Jesus from the perspective of rationality and fear, as opposed to through spiritual understanding. Aquinas references Augustine in stating that Nicodemus could not hear the Spirit, who 'speaks inwardly in man's heart', but also that Nicodemus was in the process of understanding through Jesus' instruction.[52]

Chrysostom, Augustine, and Aquinas all agree that by John 7 and John 19, Nicodemus was a follower of Jesus who believes and understands. Chrysostom's homilies barely touch on Nicodemus in John 19, but he declared that Nicodemus in John 7 'abideth not in error'.[53] Overall, Nicodemus was a symbol of faith overcoming worldly reason – aligned with the literal meaning of the name Nicodemus as 'victor'. As Aquinas wrote, 'as to his name [John] says, named Nicodemus, which means "victor," or "the victory of the people." This signifies those who overcame the world through faith by being converted to Christ from Judaism.'[54]

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[49] Augustine, *Homilies*, pp. 120, 121.
[50] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John: chapters 1-5*, trans. Fabian Larcher, James Weisheipl, Daniel Keating, and Matthew Levering (Washington, DC, 2010), p. 162.
[51] Aquinas, *Commentary on John 1-5*, p. 162.
[52] Aquinas, *Commentary on John 1-5*, pp. 173, 174.
[53] Chrysostom, *Homilies*, p. 369.
[54] Aquinas, *Commentary on John 1-5*, p. 162.

For Aquinas, Nicodemus' actions in John 7 demonstrated belief, but by defending Jesus with human law rather than by reference to Christ's divinity, he showed 'he was afraid, [and] he did not act very candidly.'[55] Yet by John 19, Aquinas claimed that Nicodemus, who 'had been a secret disciple[…] became a public one'.[56] In this interpretation, Aquinas differed from Augustine and Chrysostom, and brought in the concept of tension between his belief and fear leading to hidden faith – not in Nicodemus' coming to Jesus in John 3, but in defending Jesus in John 7. Aquinas also introduces a concept that is not in the writings of Chrysostom and Augustine, that 'Nicodemus did not yet have true faith in the resurrection because he brought myrrh and aloes, thinking that the body of Christ would soon corrupt without them.'[57] To understand this statement, which could be easily misconstrued, it is important to note that John 20:9 states that all of Jesus' disciples, as yet, 'did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.'[58] For Aquinas, Nicodemus remained in the process of coming to the kingdom of God, but this was not different from the experience of all Jesus' disciples. [59]

For Augustine, by the events recorded in John 19, Nicodemus had become a disciple of Jesus and this had been 'certified, nowadays at least, to almost all nations in the revelation of the body of the most blessed Stephen.'[60] Schaff, in his editorial notes to Augustine's sermons, references the 'discovery' of the body of Nicodemus by the Presbyster Lucian, as outlined in *The Revelation of St Stephen of Loukian of Kfar Gamla*, in AD 415 – one year before Augustine delivered his homilies.[61] The *Revelation of St Stephen* is the first reference to Nicodemus as a saint.[62]

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[55] Aquinas, *Commentary on John 6-12*, p. 97.
[56] Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John: chapters 13-21*, trans. Fabian Larcher, James Weisheipl, Daniel Keating, and Matthew Levering (Washington, DC, 2010), p. 250.
[57] Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of John: chapters 13-21*, p. 250.
[58] John 20:9.
[59] The private meditations of Anselm demonstrate how Nicodemus could be an example of belief and faithfulness for all Christians. He referred to the 'blessed Nicodemus' who had 'tenderly and lovingly' bathed and dressed Jesus' body, in his meditation on the 'memory of past benefits from Christ, of the experience of present benefits, and the hope of the future'. St Anselm, *St Anselm's book of meditations and prayers*, trans. M R (London, 1872), pp. 199, 217.
[60] Augustine, *Homilies*, p. 746.
[61] Augustine, *Homilies*, p. 746; 'Cult of Saints - Nicodemus', *The cult of saints in late antiquity*, <http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/results.php?full_text_headings=Nicodemus>, accessed 10.2.2019.
[62] 'Cult of saints - Nicodemus'.

To summarise, the traditional pre-Reformation interpretation of the biblical Nicodemus was sympathetic and emphasised his developing faith. He became an example of someone undergoing the process of coming to belief in, and understanding of, Jesus' divinity. John 3 represented the coming of Nicodemus at night – illustrative of misunderstanding unbelief – and by John 19 he was seen as a true disciple of Jesus. This interpretation creates a tension between rationality and faith, rather than between hiding and revealing. Chrysostom, Augustine and Aquinas resolved Nicodemus' ambiguity by interpreting the passages in John 3, 7 and 19 as stages of the process of Nicodemus coming from darkness to light, and from misunderstanding to understanding the gospel of Christ. For these authors, Nicodemus demonstrated the importance of faith in order to be a true disciple of Jesus, and was not an example of someone hiding their faith.

The Gospel of Nicodemus: defining the medieval Nicodemus

In late medieval and early modern Europe, the apocryphal *GN* dominated publications that included reference to Nicodemus.[63] Any understanding of how Nicodemus was viewed at the beginning of the Reformation cannot ignore the *GN* as a critical text. Izydorczyk makes the point that 'certain details disseminated by the [*GN*] were so commonplace in most vernacular literatures that their discussion would entail listing hundreds of texts'.[64] Hoffman concludes that, 'in German-speaking countries, the [*GN*] was undoubtedly the most popular and widely disseminated of the New Testament apocrypha.'[65] This was similarly the case in England, as William Marx notes a 'striking indication of the continued popularity of the *GN* in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries in its appearance, in whole or in part, in printed form', noting also that 'it appeared as an independent text first in 1507 and was printed eight times by three publishers down to 1537.'[66]

[63] As Izydorczyk outlines, the *GN* can be taken to refer generically to the apocryphon in European translations, whilst it is known as the *Evangelium Nicodemi* in Latin and *Acta Pilati* in Greek. It will be referred to here as the *GN*. Zbigniew Izydorczyk, 'Introduction', in Zbigniew Izydorczyk, ed., *The medieval Gospel of Nicodemus: texts, intertexts, and contexts in Western Europe* (Tempe, AZ, 1997), p. 2.
[64] Izydorczyk, 'Introduction', p. 17.
[65] Werner Hoffman, 'The Gospel of Nicodemus in High German literature of the Middle Ages', in Zbigniew Izydorczyk, ed., *The medieval Gospel of Nicodemus: texts, intertexts, and contexts in Western Europe* (Tempe, Az., 1997), p. 287.
[66] There are extant printed copies in English from 1507, 1509 (printed for the King's mother, Lady Margaret Beaufort), 1511, 1512, 1518, 1529, 1532, and 1537: *USTC*; William Marx, 'The Gospel of Nicodemus in Old English and Middle English', in Izydorczyk, ed., *The medieval Gospel of Nicodemus,* p. 255.

It was originally in Greek, and there is evidence of its existence from the second century.[67] The Greek version was a compilation of a number of devotional poems into one, and likewise, the fifth-century Latin translation is a compilation, built upon the *Gesta Pilati* and the *Descensus Christi ad inferos.*[68] It gradually evolved from poetic to prose form throughout the medieval period, until printing standardised it into a form recognised as the *GN*.[69] The last devotional printing of the *GN* in English in 1537 is (in almost all details) the same as earlier printed versions.[70]

The primary function of the *GN* was as a meditation on the nature of Jesus, rather than other characters, including Nicodemus. The narrative concentrated on openness to the truth of the gospel – it is about revelation and openness, rather than the act of concealing. It was a devotional text, which broadly followed the gospel narrative of the trial, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus, but it also inserted a great deal more detail and narrative than the biblical text. It was an elaboration of the biblical text intended to make certain theological points to a wider audience, mainly concerning Jesus' virgin birth, miracles, and resurrection. The *GN* was an exegetical narrative never in competition with the canonical gospels; rather, it 'owed its very existence and its vitality to them'.[71] It was not understood to be a historical or authoritative account of Jesus, but a contemplation on the trial, death, and descent into hell.[72] In England, it was used in the development of mystery plays, and provided an opportunity for people to learn about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus in the vernacular.[73]

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[67] 'The earliest mentions of some "Acts" of Pilate occur in the apologetic writings of Justin Martyr, dated shortly after the middle of the second century AD': Zbigniew Izydorczyk and Jean-Daniel Dubois, 'Nicodemus's Gospel before and beyond the medieval west', in Izydorczyk, ed., *The medieval Gospel of Nicodemus,* p. 22.
[68] Izydorczyk, 'Introduction', p. 3.
[69] Marx, 'The Gospel of Nicodemus', p. 255.
[70] A comparison of versions from 1507, 1509, 1529 and 1537 does not identify any significant changes, although the version from 1529 does not include the introduction and is known by the first line, rather than as the *Gospel of Nicodemus*: Anon., *Here begynneth the treatys of Nycodemus gospell* (London, 1507); Anon., *Nychodemus gospell* (London, 1509); Anon., *Cayphas and asked them what was prosylyte* (1529); Anon., *Nychodemus gospell* (London, 1537). From this point, the footnotes will refer to the 1509 version.
[71] Zbigniew Izydorczyk, 'Preaching Nicodemus's Gospel', in Jacqueline Hamesse, Beverly Mayne Kienzle, Debra L. Stoudt, and Anne T. Thayer, eds., *Medieval sermons and society: cloister, city, university*, 9 (Turnhout, 1998), p. 9.
[72] Izydorczyk, 'Introduction', p. 12.
[73] Izydorczyk, 'Preaching Nicodemus's Gospel', p. 23; Izydorczyk, 'Introduction', p. 17.

The *GN* is dramatic in style, based on dialogue, with narrative used to introduce and link sections. The Nicodemus of the *GN* was essentially an expansion of his character in John 7 as an advocate for Jesus and, in John 19, as a devotee. In the *Gesta Pilati*, the first section of the *GN* in which Jesus was tried by Pilate, Nicodemus built a legal argument in Jesus' defence based on the 'many gloryous sygnes and tokens hath he [Jesus] wrought amonge us'.[74] This defence was met by the same response from the Jewish leaders given in John 7, that 'we se well that thou arte a discyple of Jesu an therfore thou spekest for him'.[75] The intransigence of the Jewish leaders was portrayed in contrast to the evidence presented by Nicodemus and others of Jesus' innocence and godliness. The *GN* continues with those who have been healed through Jesus' miracles bringing their evidence before Pilate as part of the presentation of a legal case, only to be rejected repeatedly by the Jewish leaders.[76]

In this way, the *Gesta Pilati* expanded on the references to Nicodemus from John 7, and was a meditation on the nature of Jesus through the defence before Pilate. In the *GN,* Nicodemus was described as the 'prynce [of the Jews] and theyr guyde'; he was the guide because he spoke the truth and was an open advocate for Jesus within the Jewish establishment, rather than because the Jewish leaders followed his guidance.[77]

Later in the *GN*, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea are entrusted with the story of Garius and Levicius who were raised from dead in order to tell the story of the *Harrowing of Hell* by Christ.[78] The *GN* was highly sympathetic to Nicodemus, and this section was essentially an allusion to, and expansion of the role of Nicodemus and Joseph in John 19, where they bury Jesus and, in doing so are witness to the importance of faithful discipleship. In the *GN* they are given a larger role, as 'Nychodemus & Joseph of Barmathye tolde all thys unto Pylate'; and they witness to the fact that 'Jesu whiche that ye crucefyed is very goddes sonne'.[79]

The tradition that attributed authorship to Nicodemus was based on an additional prologue in two Greek manuscripts, which claim that Ananias had discovered the work as written by

[74] Anon., *Nychodemus gospell,* sig. [A.vi]v.
[75] Anon., *Nychodemus gospell,* sig. [A.viii]r.
[76] Anon., *Nychodemus gospell,* sig. B.ir.
[77] Anon., *Nychodemus gospell, s*ig. C.ir.
[78] Anon., *Nychodemus gospell,* sigs. [C.vi]r, [D.v]r.
[79] Anon., *Nychodemus gospell,* sig. [D.v]v.

Nicodemus – this prologue was then used in all Latin versions.[80] The authorship was not universally accepted in medieval Europe, but some, including Wycliff who believed it to be useful, argued that as Nicodemus had been present at the passion it would make sense that he had written something down.[81] Nevertheless, questions of authorship were never really relevant to medieval perception of the *GN* because authority was derived from its meditative and devotional use, and it did not need to meet the authoritative standards of scripture.[82]

Izydorczyk argues that the *GN* was popular because it gave medieval authors much more of an opportunity to be creative; because of its non-canonical status, it became a 'vehicle for teaching about the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus and for stimulating devotion'.[83] It was often incorporated into homilies, for example in those of the Irish fifteenth-century preacher, Leabhar Breac, who combined the *GN* with biblical material.[84] Izydorczyk states that, through regular use in homilies, 'the pseudo-gospel [was] thus able to reach wider audiences, [and] its apocryphal content was thus legitimised, ensuring its didactic and devotional usefulness would overshadow its occasional narrative idiosyncrasies (such as Jesus appearing of his free will before Pilate) and doctrinal blunders (such as the deliverance of the wicked from hell).'[85] Alongside all the other gospels, in John 18 and 19 Jesus was arrested and compelled to appear before Pilate, whilst the deliverance of the wicked from hell is far from being mainstream orthodox Christian doctrine.[86]

The *GN* was also popular because it acted as a witness to the historical Jesus. This role as a witness led to a textual tradition of grouping the *GN* with the pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditationes vitae Christi*.[87] Marx suggests that they were grouped together because they

[80] This is translated as 'Nychodemus which was a worthy prynce [who] dyd wryte this blessyd storye' in the 1537 printing of the *GN*: Anon., *Nychodemus gospell*, sig. A.iir; Izydorczyk and Dubois, 'Nicodemus's Gospel before and beyond the medieval west', p. 28.
[81] Marx, 'The Gospel of Nicodemus', p. 249.
[82] Izydorczyk, 'Introduction', p. 12.
[83] Izydorczyk, 'Preaching Nicodemus's Gospel', p. 11.
[84] Izydorczyk, 'Preaching Nicodemus's Gospel', pp. 21–22.
[85] Izydorczyk, 'Preaching Nicodemus's Gospel', p. 23.
[86] John 18, 19 (NRSV).
[87] The *GN* is found in four extant medieval manuscripts of *The Liber Aureus* and *GN*, combined with the *Meditationes*; the *Meditationes* were popular in England, and there were versions published in 1517, 1525 and 1530: William Marx, 'The Liber Aureus and Gospel of Nicodemus: A Middle English Reading of the Meditationes vitae Christi', in Ian Johnson and Allan F. Westphall, eds., *The Pseudo-Bonaventuran lives of Christ*, 24 (Turnhout, 2013), pp. 283–4; Izydorczyk, 'Introduction', p. 15.

were both part of a theological tradition emphasising the historical nature of Christ's revelation over the contemporary and mystical.[88] The *Meditationes* held a similar view to the *GN* on the character of Nicodemus, with the statement that 'the Virgin exclaims: "you do well in keeping the memory of your Master, because He loved you very much."'[89] In both texts, Nicodemus was a positive role model who acts as a witness to the historical Jesus.

Whilst the *GN* was widely known, the reformers of the sixteenth century had little time for it. Izydorczyk claims that the Reformation 'seriously challenged and eventually destroyed' the credibility of the *GN* because of its non-canonical status.[90] Calvin dismissed the *GN* as 'a fable' in his 1555 *Concordance qu'on appelle harmonie composee de trois evangelistes* – this was a popular concordance, published seventeen times in Europe and translated into English in 1584.[91] The tradition of Nicodemus as a positive witness to the historical Jesus was dispensed with easily by Calvin, for whom the Nicodemus of John 3 could not be reconciled with the saint in the *GN,* in part because of the reliance on extra-scriptural apocryphal material.

In 1553 an anonymous English collection of texts, *An exposition touching al the bokes of holie Scripture, and their excellencie,* argued that the *GN* was unnecessary, stating that 'surelie it nothing perteineth to the perfection of the Canonical bokes.'[92] The editor of this collection linked the unnecessary nature of the *GN* to the statement of St John that 'those thinges whiche he hath written to suffice for the faith that may saue vs'.[93] This collection had only one print run; it was a Protestant text printed just before Mary came to the throne. However, it provides a clear summary of the Reformation perspective on the *GN*. It was evident that Protestant reformers were still aware of the *GN* in the mid-sixteenth century,

[88] Marx, 'The Liber Aureus and Gospel of Nicodemus', pp. 304–5.
[89] Federico Zuliani, 'The other Nicodemus: Nicodemus in Italian religious writings previous and contemporary to Calvin's Excuse à Messieurs les Nicodémites (1544)', in Sabrina Corbellini, Margriet Hoogvliet, and Bart Ramakers, eds., *Discovering the riches of the word: religious reading in late medieval and early modern Europe* (Leiden, 2015), p. 324.
[90] Izydorczyk, 'Introduction', p. 3.
[91] *USTC*; Jean Calvin, *A harmonie vpon the three Euangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke with the commentarie of M. Iohn Caluine: faithfully translated out of Latine into English*, trans. E P (London, 1584).
[92] Anon., *An exposition touching al the bokes of holie Scripture, and their excellencie* (London, 1553), sig. [E.viii]v.
[93] Anon., *An exposition, s*igs. [E.viii]v-F.ir.

to the extent that they continued to feel it necessary to attack its credibility. It had clearly been seen as popular, even authoritative.

This remained the case even in 1564, nearly thirty years after the last publication of the *GN* in English, when a compilation of texts in English was published including the *GN*. The compiler described the *GN* as 'popishe', but Marx makes the point that 'it is paradoxical that such a hostile compiler should bother to copy out the text. The *GN* perhaps retained a deep-rooted fascination which even the Reformation could not destroy.'[94]

By the 1550s, English conservatives were no longer using the *GN* as a devotional text, but it remained in the consciousness. A Marian conservative, Leonard Pollard, writing in defence of the authority of the Catholic Church in 1556, asked 'howe shuld we otherwyse be able to saye that this is saynte Iohns gospell, or that saynte Lukes gospell shulde rather be receaued, then the gospell of Nicodemus or of saynte Thomas and other, but that we be so taught by the Churche.'[95] Pollard sought to make the case that the authority of scripture derived from the authority of the Catholic Church by pointing to the difference between the canonical and apocryphal gospels, such as the *GN*.

The fact that the *GN* lacked a credible authorship meant that for both Catholic and Protestant it lost its devotional use and its authority as an exploration of the nature of Christ. It was barely published in English in the second half of the sixteenth century, whereas there were twenty-one publications of it in the first half of the sixteenth century.[96] Whilst the *GN* was still known and referenced after the 1550s, the perspective of Nicodemus that it presented was undermined by the lack of credibility of the *GN* as an authoritative or even devotional text. The representation of Nicodemus in the *GN* did not align with the ambiguity of the Nicodemus of John's Gospel – as the *GN* lost its authority, the character of Nicodemus was more open for definition and attacked by sixteenth century theologians.

[94] Marx, 'The Gospel of Nicodemus', p. 259.
[95] Leonard Pollard, *Fyve homiles of late, made by a ryght good and vertuous clerke, called master Leonarde Pollarde, prebendary of the Cathedrall Churche of Woster* (London, 1556), sigs. Eiiiv-[Eiiii]r; Mary Bateson, 'Pollard, Leonard', in *ODNB*.
[96] *USTC*.

Reformers on Nicodemus in printed sources

Despite some reformers' undermining of the credibility of the *GN,* with its positive view of Nicodemus, most references to Nicodemus in published material before the 1540s remained sympathetic and broadly in line with pre-Reformation interpretations.[97] Zuliani argues that late medieval and early Reformation perspectives would have been that Nicodemus, as a biblical saint, was an example of faith. He states that 'the significance of Nicodemus and his actions in the Gospels may have given a positive rather than a negative perception to those who took, or were accused of having taken, him as a role model.'[98] Yet, the Reformation emphasis on centrality of faith did mean that the distinctions between accounts of Nicodemus in John 3 and 19 were increasingly highlighted by Luther and others.

Zwingli interpreted Nicodemus as initially misunderstanding the gospel but eventually having a true faith in Christ, in *A briefe rehersal of the death resurrection, and ascension of Christ*. This work by Zwingli was translated and published in English in 1561 by John Day, and it included an imprint which stated that it had been 'perused and allowed according to the order appointed in the Quenes maiesties iniunctions'.[99] Day was one of the most important printers of Protestant literature in the Marian and early Elizabethan periods. As is explored in Chapters 2 and 3, Day was linked to William Cecil and was the probable publisher of illegal Protestant works during Mary's reign; and in Elizabeth's reign, Day secured what Pettgree has described as a 'monopoly' on important literature.[100] Day played a key role in most of the important early Elizabethan Protestant printing projects, including John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments.* Day enjoyed remarkable privileges because of the political support he received, and his publications often represent the official perspective of the Elizabethan state.

In publishing Zwingli's *brief rehearsal*, Day made available in English a work which argued that by John 19 Nicodemus was a faithful follower of Christ and an example to follow of

[97] It is important to note that Nicodemus was not someone who elicited significant interest before the publication of Calvin's Excuse; until 1570 the USTC notes only two published works, apart from the *GN*, with 'Nicodemus' or 'Nicodemi' in their title, including a 1477 publication of the fourteenth-century Guido de Baysio's glossary of the text and Calvin's *Excuse* itself.
[98] Zuliani, 'The other Nicodemus', p. 313.
[99] Ulrich Zwingli, *A briefe rehersal of the death resurrection, and ascension of Christ gathered together oute of ye foure euangelistes and actes of the apostles*, trans. Anon. (London, 1561), sig. [A.i]r.
[100] Andrew Pettegree, 'Day, John', in *ODNB*.

faithfulness. Zwingli stated that 'let vs thinke the same of Nicodemus, & haue a regard not of what power and riches he was, but of how great fayth, and boldenes of minde.'[101] This work emphasised the faith of Nicodemus as overcoming the fear of the Jewish authorities. Whilst Nicodemus was not a central theme in Zwingli's work, it is worth noting that works which praised Nicodemus' faith were being supported by important Elizabethan leaders in the 1560s. This is important, because many of these leaders were open to the charge of Nicodemism, yet their control over publishing gave them the opportunity to emphasise a different narrative. The implications of the relationship between former conformist and exile in the Elizabethan Settlement is explored further in Chapter 4.

In the English Church, there were a number of positive references to Nicodemus in published material. For example, *A necessary doctrine and erudition for any Christen man set furthe by the kynges maiestye of Englande & c*, written in King Henry VIII's name, refers to Nicodemus having worked with Joseph of Arimathea to bury Christ.[102] This section expanded on the article of faith that Jesus had 'suffred vnder Ponce Pilate was crucified, dead, buried, and descended into hell', and contrasts the actions of Joseph and Nicodemus – as 'Christis disciples' – with the 'the blynd, ignorant, and obstinate Iewes, replete with enuy and malice'.[103] The section notes the 'peynes or sorowes' that were 'losed' from hell, potentially a reference to the *Harrowing of Hell* in the *GN*, although as Izydorcyzk notes, these themes were commonplace in vernacular literature and familiar even to those who had never read the *GN*.[104]

In 1547 John Bale stated that in John 7, 'Nicodemus, one of the hyghe counsell, was sore rebuked amonge the senyours of the Iewes, for defending Christes innocencye, whan they went aboute to free hym'.[105] Bale was giving an account of the racking of Anne Askew by Lord Rich, a prominent Henrician councillor, who tortured Askew after her arrest and before her execution. Bale compared her to the biblical example of Nicodemus, who, he argued, had not given up when defending Jesus to the authorities. Bale's description of Askew's

[101] Zwingli, *A briefe rehersal of the death*, p. 146.
[102] Henry VIII, *A necessary doctrine and erudition for any Christen man set furthe by the kynges maiestye of Englande &c.* (London, 1543), sig. Dv.
[103] Henry VIII, *A necessary doctrine,* sigs. Dr-Diiv.
[104] Izydorczyk, 'Introduction', p. 17.
[105] John Bale, *The first examinacion of Anne Askewe latelye martired in Smythfelde, by the Romyshe popes vpholders, wyth the elucydacyon of Iohan Bale* (London, 1547), sig. M.iiiv.

torture and death were read widely, published six times between 1547 and 1560 despite a hiatus during Mary's reign.[106] In linking Nicodemus with the faithfulness of Askew under torture, Bale clearly believed that Nicodemus would have been viewed as an example of steadfastness by his readers, rather than of faithlessness and dissimulation.

Translations of mainland European reformers' texts into English can demonstrate prevailing political and doctrinal emphases in England. For example, in 1543 Bernardino Ochino published a sermon, the *Triumph of Faith*, including nineteen examples of faith, eight of hope and ten of love. Ochino's other sermons were popular and published in a variety of different collections in English, including twice in 1548, in 1549, twice by Day in London in 1551, again by Day in 1570 and 1580.[107] This suggests a wide readership in the sixteenth century corroborated by contemporary accounts.[108] However, *Triumph of Faith*, including its references to Nicodemus, was only published in English in 1580. Ochino was well known and respected in England, and the fact that his sermon praising Nicodemus was not published even during what Anne Overell calls the 1551 'frantic rush to publish European reformation texts in England' is perhaps indicative of the fact that this collection of sermons was not seen as appropriate for the English audience – the published sermons focus much more on predestination, and the primacy of the Bible.[109] In the *Triumph of Faith,* Ochino included Nicodemus as the paragon of faithfulness: 'The vertue of Faith, appeareth in Ioseph and Nicodemus, seing that at such time as he coulde not with-out great daunger and shame, shew himselfe a friend of Iesus, being knowen for one of his louing Disciples, craued of Pilate the body of Iesus, and buried it honourably, trusting to haue life by him who had seene death.'[110]

However, Nicodemus was not always perceived positively, although not in a way that differed from the traditional interpretation. For Luther, the changes in Nicodemus' character only took place after John 3. In 1522, Luther preached on John 3 and stated that, 'the longer Nicodemus associates with Christ, the less he understands Christ, although he is

[106] *USTC*.
[107] *USTC*.
[108] *USTC*; M. Anne Overell, *Italian Reform and English Reformations, c.1535-c.1585* (Aldershot, 2008), p. 56.
[109] Overell, *Italian Reform*, p. 56; *USTC*.
[110] Bernardino Ochino, *Certaine godly and very profitable sermons of faith, hope and charitie*, trans. Anon. (London, 1580), sig. M.iiv.

expected to understand only earthly things and the manner of Christ's death'; and again that 'Nicodemus, who is a pious and well-meaning man, cannot grasp the work and Word of God'.[111] For Luther, Nicodemus in John 3 was marked by his ignorance of the true message of Jesus and by his well-meant attempt to understand the gospel.[112] Luther characterised Nicodemus similarly to the tradition he received from late-antique and medieval theologians; however, his interpretation and emphasis on Nicodemus' ignorance showed that even within the traditional interpretation there was ambiguity.

Urbanus Rhegius' *A declararation* [sic] *of the twelue articles of the christen faythe with annotations of the holy scripture, where they be grounded in*, written in German in 1523 and published in English in 1543, portrays Nicodemus as misunderstanding the gospel of Christ – very much echoing Luther's view. In his twelve articles, which formed a defence of the Apostle's Creed, Rhegius argued that Christ brought forgiveness, but also that Nicodemus in John 3 had failed to comprehend the importance of 'repentaunce and the renewyng of man'.[113] Rhegius was a prominent Lutheran theologian, and the *declararation* reached a large audience; it was printed in eight times in German in most of the major German centres of reform between 1523 and 1526. In English, translations of Rhegius' wider work were popular between 1537 and 1548, with four separate publications in 1548, suggesting that he was thought relevant for the English audience in the early years of Edward VI's reign.[114] Rhegius' echoing of Luther's traditional interpretation of Nicodemus was part of the mainstream in the pre-Marian English Reformation.

Erasmus' perception of Nicodemus was also that he had misunderstood the implications of the message of Jesus. In *In evangelium Johannis paraphrasis,* written in 1524 and translated into English in 1548, Erasmus described Nicodemus as 'weake & wauering in hys loue toward Iesu: whome although heretofore he had in great admiracion, neuertheles he woulde not for hys sake sustayne anye losse of hys own renoume & glory emong men.'[115]

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[111] Martin Luther, *Sermons by Martin Luther: Volume 3 for Pentecost*, trans. John Nicolas Lenker (Minneapolis, MN, 1907), pp. 378–379.
[112] Luther, *Sermons by Martin Luther*, p. 395.
[113] Urbanus Rhegius, *A declararation of the twelue articles of the christen faythe with annotations of the holy scripture, where they be grounded in,* trans. Walter Lynne (London, 1548), sig. [E.vii]v.
[114] *USTC.*
[115] Desiderius Erasmus, *The first tome or volume of the paraphrase of Erasmus vpon the Newe Testamente*, trans. Nicholas Udal (London, 1548), sig. [CCc.viii]v.

Later, Erasmus characterised Nicodemus, in John 7, as someone who respected but did not understand Jesus; he stated that Nicodemus 'toke Iesus for a good man, though he did not fully vnderstande the mistery and spirituall meanynge of his woorde.'[116] Erasmus described Nicodemus in John 19 as a 'being a secrete disciple of Iesus, which had before that tyme come to Iesus in the night, because he myght so beste auoyde the displeasure and grudge of the Phariseis, as was before rehersed.'[117] This *paraphrasis* was part of *The first tome or volume of the Paraphrase of Erasmus vpon the Newe Testamente,* and was published in English in 1548, with seven print runs in that year alone.[118] They were to be placed in every parish church in England. This was a widely read commentary with a large circulation in English by the 1550s, and Erasmus outlined a traditional interpretation of Nicodemus, which, whilst not always positive, would not have given a different impression from that of Chrysostom, Augustine or Aquinas.

In what was essentially a commentary on John 3, Richard Taverner described Nicodemus as having a 'historical faith'.[119] For him this meant that, whilst Nicodemus recognised signs of God's activity, he was not yet in a position where he had been born again. His *The Epistles and Gospelles with a brief postil vpon the same from after Easter tyll Aduent* was published in 1540, and was popular enough to be reprinted three more times in the next ten years.[120] For Taverner, Nicodemus was an example of a stage in the process of belief, which was not yet sufficient to 'se the kyngdome of God'.[121] In making this argument, Taverner sought to identify Nicodemus of John 3 with a universal state of misunderstanding, claiming that, 'we be all but Nicodemes, that is to saye, we maye well beleue that Christ came as a greate mayster from God and that noman coulde do the sygnes and myracles that he dyd.'[122] However, it is important to note that this work was not focused on the character of Nicodemus, and did not address the Nicodemus of John 7 and 19; rather, it was an explanation of Christ's message in John 3. It would not be reasonable to suggest that Taverner had developed a novel interpretation of Nicodemus, nor that characterisation of

[116] Erasmus, *Paraphrase vpon the Newe Testamente*, sig. HHh.v.
[117] Erasmus, *Paraphrase vpon the Newe Testamente*, sig. PPp.vv.
[118] *USTC*.
[119] Taverner, *The Epistles and Gospelles* sig. A.iir.
[120] *USTC.*
[121] Taverner, *The Epistles and Gospelles* sig. A.iir.
[122] Taverner, *The Epistles and Gospelles* sig. A.iir.

Nicodemus from John 3 formed an important part of his work. Instead, Taverner's approach was consistent with the traditional interpretation that Nicodemus had not yet grasped the role of faith in entering the kingdom of heaven.

Studies on the nature of Nicodemus' faith and character did not form a significant part of the theological discussion in the early sixteenth century. Where Nicodemus was discussed or used as an example, it was broadly in line with traditional interpretations, which recognised the ambiguity of Nicodemus' character in John 3, but also that Nicodemus' actions in John 19 should be seen as a response to faith. There was no indication that Nicodemus' example was one which should be avoided; indeed, where Nicodemus was held up as an example, it was usually positive. Following the interpretation of Chrysostom and Augustine, early reformers identified Nicodemus as a catechist who was coming to a faithful understanding of Christ – in John 3 Nicodemus had not yet grasped the message, but he had by John 19. For this early Reformation interpretation, Nicodemus' ambiguity fell away as he came to follow Christ more faithfully.

The history of the 'Nicodemite'

Whilst Nicodemus was often seen as an example of faithfulness, there are times when he became a symbol of those who feared other people more than they feared God – his ambiguity meant he could be both a symbol of faith and faithlessness. The roots of 'Nicodemite' come from the interpretation that Nicodemus feared people more than God, although this terminology was not standardised before Calvin's *Excuse.* In addition, though the use of 'Nicodemite' was new in this period, it was initially based on a recognisable and traditional interpretation of John 3 and 7.

The first extant example of the use of Nicodemus in this way is from 1522, when Frederik Hondebeke, a teacher from Delft, wrote to Caspar Hedio in Strasbourg concerning the fact that Erasmus had not been supportive of Luther's reforms. In this letter Hondebeke stated that Erasmus was not supporting Luther because he 'revered man's glory rather than God's'.[123] Hondebeke argued that this was characteristic of those who acted like

[123] Hondebeke argued that there were those 'qui plus veretur hominum gloriam quam Dei': John Jortin, *The life of Erasmus: Vol. 1 from A. D. 1467 to A. D. 1529* (London, 1808), p. 284.

Nicodemus, stating that 'there are a large number among us of such type as Nicodemus'.[124] He used Nicodemus here as a collective noun to describe those who had not supported the Reformation because of fear of men.

In 1529, in the preface to his version of Seneca, Erasmus stated that he 'cannot agree with those who want to make Seneca a Christian, like Nicodemus'.[125] This was written in reference to the supposed letters from St Paul to Seneca, which Erasmus showed to be fake. In making this comparison, Erasmus used Nicodemus as a 'type' for someone in authority who masked their faith because they were afraid. Using the example of Nicodemus in this way is clearly consistent with Erasmus' interpretation of the role of Nicodemus in John 3. For Erasmus, Nicodemus hid his faith for fear of persecution, whilst Seneca actively promoted anti-Christian learning: 'it is one thing to hide Christ behind a pagan cloak, and quite another to publish books that run counter to the teachings of Christ. To keep silent about Christ is one thing, to use language that dishonours him is another.'[126] Erasmus was comparing Nicodemus favourably against Seneca. Therefore, whilst Erasmus' use of Nicodemus demonstrates the utility and flexibility of this interpretation and exemplification of Nicodemus, it is not evidence of 'Nicodemite' as a familiar and standardised negative trope for religious dissimulation.

Eire states that 'the exact origin of the epithet "Nicodemite" is difficult to ascertain', but in 1529 there is evidence of 'Nicodemite' appearing in published and private correspondence.[127] In a letter in German from Johannes Brenz to Chancellor Vogler, who was in service to Margrave Georg of Ansbach. Brenz used the adjective 'Nicodemisch' to describe those who had refused to sign the Protestation at the Second Diet of Speyer.[128] This is a reference to leaders who would not make the political step of supporting Lutherans

[124] Hondebeke wrote 'caeterum tales Nicodemi apud nos in magno sunt numero': Jortin, *The life of Erasmus*, p. 284; the phrase Hondebeke used has been translated as 'but such Nicodemites are among us in great number'. However, there are no earlier examples of the term 'Nicodemite' and translating it in this way imposes a later term onto Hondebeke. Johnston used this translation initially and it is adopted by Pettegree as well: Andrew Johnston, *The Protestant Reformation in Europe* (London, 1991); Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 89.
[125] Pettegree suggests that Erasmus used the term 'Nicodemite', but Estes' translation of the correspondence of Erasmus does not support this view - he simply translates it as 'like Nicodemus': Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 89; Desiderius Erasmus, *The correspondence of Erasmus. Volume 15*, ed. James Martin Estes (Toronto, 2017), p. 50.
[126] Erasmus, *Correspondence of Erasmus, 15*, p. 50.
[127] Eire, 'Calvin and Nicodemism', p. 46.
[128] Eire, 'Calvin and Nicodemism', p. 46.

and related more to frustration over prevarication and indecisiveness than to religious dissimulation.

Eire further points to a letter from Protestants in Payerne in Switzerland to the church in Geneva in 1532 to show the development of the term 'Nicodemite'. The letter described those who were openly declaring and manifesting their faith across the country when conditions were favourable, and 'par laquelle plusieurs nycodemysans se declairent [by this many Nicodemites declare themselves]'.[129] This represents an evolution of the terminology used by Hondebeke, Erasmus and Brenz, but does not suggest that following the example of Nicodemus was an active choice or a proposed justification for actions. Rather, it seems consistent with the interpretation of those like Taverner, who saw the recognition of the signs of Christ as a stage in the development of faith – and Nicodemus was an example of someone who saw Jesus' miracles but misunderstood their meaning.

Indeed, even in 1544, Calvin's colleague in Geneva, Antoine Fromment, used 'Nycodemistes' to refer to those with whom he disagreed and felt had acted in a dishonest manner. He used the word firstly to describe clergy who had come to Geneva having signed over benefices to relatives in order to retain their income, and secondly to insult those who 'renversent la sentence du Conseil par plusieurs raysons [reverse the decision of the council for various reasons]'.[130] Fromment was inconsistent in his use of the word, but his letter does demonstrate that it was a word used in Geneva at the time that Calvin was writing *Excuse* and that the concepts of dishonesty and secrecy were already attached to the name of Nicodemus in Geneva in 1544. The ambiguity of Nicodemus' character meant he could be cited as an example to support any number of arguments.

Conclusion

The biblical Nicodemus was an ambiguous character used to represent those seeking to understand the message of Christ, and he was not seen as a controversial figure by most commentators up to and at the beginning of the Reformation. That his name would become synonymous with religious dissimulation was not apparent during the early Reformation,

[129] My translation. The relevant section of the letter can be found in Eire, 'Calvin and Nicodemism', p. 47.
[130] Perhaps Ananias and Sapphira (Act 5) would have been a better biblical example? Antoine Fromment, *Les actes et gestes merveilleux de la cite de Geneve (1544)* (Geneva, 1854), pp. 99, 73; referenced in Eire, 'Calvin and Nicodemism', p. 46.

especially when he was regularly used as an example in the process of understanding Christ and coming to faith. There is no indication that association with Nicodemus would have been stigmatising, nor that there was a theme that linked him to hidden faith. Yet, the ambiguity of his character was a reason for his association with religious dissimulation – he could be used as an example for a range of theological positions.

Yet, the association of Nicodemus with ambiguity of faith fits with the biblical character – as this chapter has shown, Nicodemus is a character that avoids clear classification. Calvin's view did not come from nowhere. In the early stages of the Reformation, the accepted interpretation of Nicodemus was as a person who came to an understanding of faith through the revelation of Jesus – a catechumen. However, by charting the development of the traditional interpretation of Nicodemus until Calvin's *Excuse*, it is possible to understand the roots of the term 'Nicodemite', including the emphasis and exegesis that Calvin was able to use to make his arguments.

Where there was criticism of Nicodemus' actions reported in the Bible, it was linked to Nicodemus misunderstanding the importance of faith, represented by coming to Jesus at night in John 3. The term 'Nicodemite' began to be used to describe those who were perceived to act out of fear of authorities rather than fear of God, but there was no clear definition of the term, and it was used in many ways. The Protestants in Payerne used it in 1532 to describe a pre-Christian state – or, as Augustine had it, the catechumen – which was consistent with the view that that Nicodemus' example was of the progression from misunderstanding to faith. Nicodemus was not synonymous with religious dissimulation – when Taverner stated that 'we be all but Nicodemes', he did it to show that the universal nature of Nicodemus' transformation was representative of typical Christian experience.[131]

[131] Taverner, *The Epistles and Gospelles* sig. A.iir.

Chapter 2: Public Protestant anti-Nicodemism

In 1544, the word 'Nicodemite' entered mainstream debate as a synonym for religious dissimulation through John Calvin's *Excuse*. In it, he addressed those whom he thought 'borrow the name of Nicodemus as a shield' to justify hiding their Protestant belief and attending Mass to avoid persecution.[1] Calvin argued that there was no controversy or debate to be had on the content of the arguments he put forward; rather, he voiced his concern that, whilst the theology was known and accepted, it was not being put into practice.[2] However, this statement hid the way in which Calvin used a novel interpretation of Nicodemus in John 7 to attack those who escaped persecution through conformity to Catholic religious practice.

First, this chapter will argue that anti-Nicodemism was a reaction to Protestant religious insecurity. Calvin's work and the anti-Nicodemite tradition that closely copied him were responses to the strain placed on Protestant leaders by Catholic persecution. They faced the challenge that, under the Catholic authorities, people were either ambivalent or unfaithful to the Reformation; ambivalence was the greatest fear, as it undermined the importance of faithfulness and, in the English context, the sacrifices made by both the martyrs and the Marian exiles. This can be seen in the anti-Nicodemism of the Marian exiles, who followed Calvin in attacking people for attending Mass, used gendered language, and sought pre-emptively to undermine any biblical defence of Nicodemism. It was also demonstrated in the two ends of the spectrum of Marian writing – the pastoral language found in the Michael Wood texts, written for those experiencing persecution, and the aggressive resistance theory of John Ponet, John Knox, and Christopher Goodman, written primarily for an exile audience.

Second, this chapter will argue that anti-Nicodemite language had impacts on those who sought to pull the Elizabethan church towards further reform, and on those writing to defend it from attack. Overall, Protestant anti-Nicodemism was less about the actions of

[1] Calvin, 'Apology of John Calvin', pp. 346, 348.
[2] Calvin, 'Apology of John Calvin', p. 346.

specific individuals than about the insecurities of the Protestant Reformation as a whole, and no more so than during the reign of Mary and the first decade of Elizabeth's rule. As the introduction outlined, and despite Calvin's claims, there were never any self-identified 'Nicodemites', and it was a constructed identification based on presumed intention to avoid persecution. Anti-Nicodemism was propaganda. The identification of Nicodemite could never be applied meaningfully to an individual – its purpose was to strengthen Protestant identity through the othering of an unspecified group.

Calvin and the roots of anti-Nicodemism

Calvin's *Excuse* was written to an unnamed audience in France and appears not to have been widely disseminated – it was translated into Italian in 1551 and Dutch in 1554, but not into English.[3] However, it had a profound role in developing the Protestant narrative against those who conformed when living under Catholic authorities because of the writing it influenced. In it, Calvin built on his tract written in 1537, *Epistola de Christiani hominis officio in sacerdotiis papalis ecclesiae vel administrandis vel abiciendis*, (hereafter referred to as *Epistola de Christiani hominis*) and the *Petit traicté, monstrant que c'est que doit faire un homme fidele congnoissant la verité de l'Evangile*, written in 1543, which had both argued against conformity to Catholic practice.[4] In *Excuse*, Calvin gave conformity to Catholicism a name and an association with Nicodemus, and developed a clear picture of the identities he was attacking and defending; this name stuck, irrespective of whether or not those he was attacking recognised themselves in his picture of their identities.

Compared to the traditional interpretation, Calvin's criticism of the actions of the biblical Nicodemus is noteworthy. Calvin's commentary on the Gospel of John was published in Latin in 1553, nine years after the *Excuse*. It was translated into English in 1584, with a dedication to the Earl of Leicester, which demonstrates that whilst the Latin version would have been accessible to most English Church and state leaders, the commentary had lasting

[3] *USTC.*

[4] John Calvin, *Petit traicté, monstrant que c'est que doit faire un homme fidele congnoissant la verité de l'evangile : quand il est entre les papistes, avec une epistre du mesme argument.* (Geneva, 1543); John Calvin, *Epistola de Christiani hominis officio in sacerdotiis papalis ecclesiae vel administrandis vel abiciendis Joannis Calvini* (Basel, 1537). This work is translated as, John Calvin, 'The sinfulness of outward conformity to the Romish rites', in Henry Beveridge, trans., *Tracts relating to the Reformation, Jean Calvin: Calvin new translations*, 3 (Edinburgh, 1851).

value in the English Church.[5] In his commentary, Calvin gave a theological justification for his characterisation of the Nicodemus of John 3 – Nicodemus was a proud ruler who did not accept the call to discipleship and the sacrifices that it entailed. He stated that Nicodemus was 'hindered by shame, for ambitious men think that their reputation is utterly ruined, if they have once descended from the dignity of teachers to the rank of scholars; and he was unquestionably puffed up with a foolish opinion of his knowledge.'[6] Calvin argued that Nicodemus was constrained by his position as a Pharisee and ruler, and that 'his eyes were dazzled, as it were, by the splendor [*sic*] of his own greatness and reputation[…] as he had a high opinion of himself, he was unwilling to lose any part of his elevation.'[7]

Calvin's characterisation of Nicodemus emphasised aspects of the traditional interpretation, namely that Nicodemus failed to understand the difference between recognition and faith, and that his visit by night was allegorical of his inner state of darkness.[8] Calvin theologically justified the nomenclature of Nicodemite dissimulation by stating that 'there are many in the present day who plead that they resemble Nicodemus, and hope that, by assuming this mask, they will mock God with impunity.'[9] Calvin made this claim without naming any individual or specified group.

Whilst Augustine and those who followed him argued that overcoming this misunderstanding was a part of the process of discipleship and faith, Calvin believed that it represented the pride that placed self over Christ:

> Every thing that [Nicodemus] hears appears monstrous, because he does not understand the manner of it; so that there is no greater obstacle to us than our own pride; that is, we always wish to be wise beyond what is proper, and therefore we reject with diabolical pride every thing that is not explained to our reason; as if it were proper to limit the infinite power of God to our poor capacity.[10]

[5] John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John*, 1, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids, MI, 2005), pp. 4–5; Francis M. Higman, 'Calvin's works in translation', in Andrew Pettegree, ed., *Calvinism in Europe, 1540-1620* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 96.
[6] Calvin, *Commentary on John*, 1, p. 78.
[7] Calvin, *Commentary on John*, 1, p. 78.
[8] Calvin, *Commentary on John*, 1, p. 77.
[9] Calvin, *Commentary on John*, 1, p. 251.
[10] Calvin, *Commentary on John*, 1, p. 86.

Regarding John 7, Calvin differed significantly from the traditional interpretation, and here one is able to see the theological underpinning of Calvin's concept of Nicodemism. Calvin repeated a reference in his commentary on John 7 that Nicodemus visited Jesus 'by night' in order to argue that whilst Nicodemus deserved some credit for defending Jesus, 'in not defending Christ openly, he manifests excessive timidity.'[11] Nicodemus' attitude came from fear and not faith, and Calvin would have understood timidity in the biblical context of references like 2 Timothy, that 'God hath not giuen to vs the Spirit of feare [modern translations use timidity], but of power, and of loue, and of a sounde minde'.[12] As a result, Calvin argued that 'the seed of the gospel, which afterwards bore fruit, was still concealed and choked in [Nicodemus].'[13] Calvin condemned the actions of Nicodemus in John 7, because it was not until after the death of Jesus that 'the faith of Nicodemus acquired new and sudden vigor [sic]', as recorded in John 19.[14]

Calvin understood the importance of the appearance of Nicodemus in John 7; he anticipated any argument that Nicodemus' actions were justified and as a result that a Protestant might dissimulate to avoid persecution but remain true to their inner faith. For Calvin, dissimulation was never acceptable, and Nicodemus in John 7 could not be 'a shield' because it was only in John 19 that the seed of faith had sprouted in Nicodemus.[15]

In making a distinction between the Nicodemus of John 7 and John 19, Calvin could use Nicodemus to attack dissimulating Protestants, whilst simultaneously accepting that Nicodemus as a follower of Christ in John 19. In *Excuse,* Calvin declared that 'Nicodemus, before having received the light, sought darkness. But from the moment the sun of justice shone upon him, did he stay in his hiding place? On the contrary, we see the confession he made, even in a time when everything was desperate.'[16] For Calvin there was no contradiction between the dissimulating Nicodemus of John 7 and the faithful Nicodemus of John 19; and Nicodemus was both the biblical example of religious unfaithfulness and

[11] Modern translations of John 7:50 state that Nicodemus had 'gone to Jesus earlier', whilst sixteenth century translations (Geneva Bible, Bishops' Bible, and Luther's Bible) all include a reference to Nicodemus having come to Jesus 'at night'. Calvin, *Commentary on John*, 1, p. 251.
[12] 2 Timothy 1:7.
[13] Calvin, *Commentary on John*, 1, p. 252.
[14] This interpretation is one that characterises Nicodemus for Whitendon (see Chapter 1). Calvin, *Commentary on John*, 1, p. 252.
[15] Calvin, *Commentary on John*, 1, p. 252.
[16] Calvin, 'Apology of John Calvin', p. 358.

faithfulness. Because they did not emulate the Nicodemus of John 19, Calvin rejected the claim that Nicodemites could justify their actions by appealing to Nicodemus as an example of how to remain inwardly pure whilst simultaneously witnessing to those around them.[17]

Calvin used the French word *dissimulation* as the defining term for Nicodemism in the *Excuse* – and the word remains in the modern English translation. The French verb *dissimuler* can also translate into 'hide', 'keep secret' or 'disguise'. The French does not only imply concealment, but the adoption of another guise: literally a person simulating something to misinform observers of the truth of their identity by suggesting that they actually have another identity.[18] The published language of Protestant anti-Nicodemism did not define it as a general term for those living in a Catholic country; it was specifically defined as deceiving others by attending Mass and engaging with Catholic ceremonies.[19] This classification included those who recanted Protestant belief to avoid persecution, but at the heart of the definition was the question of inconsistency between the external and internal identities.

Dissimulation was a sin because it hid the truth and involved the external refutation of known truth and internal identity. In the anti-Nicodemite lexicon, dissimulation was often linked with hypocrisy, and, as Patricia Stewart notes, the concept of hypocrisy requires a judgement about intention and the contrast with obstinate belief.[20] The argument was that Nicodemites attended Mass because they valued their lives more than they valued faithfulness to God, and this judgement was pure inference on the part of the anti-Nicodemites. Yet, the judgement did reflect the Protestant anti-Nicodemite authors' concern that Protestants were putting their self-preservation above the preservation of their confession. Kenneth Woo argues that Calvin was not always advocating martyrdom, necessarily, but saw exile as the 'preferred course for would-be Nicodemites.'[21]

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[17] Calvin, 'The Sinfulness of outward conformity', p. 410.
[18] WordReference English-French, 'Dissimuler', <Dictionaryhttp://www.wordreference.com/enfr/hide>, accessed 19.09.2018; Larousse, 'Dissimuler, <http://larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais-anglais/dissimuler/25886>, accessed 22.9.2018.
[19] Raymond Blacketer, 'No escape by deception: Calvin's exegesis of lies and liars in the Old Testament', *Reformation & Renaissance Review*, 10/3 (2008), p. 279.
[20] Patricia Stewart, 'Hypocrisy and heresy: language and concepts in early modern England' (Doctoral Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1992), p. 6.
[21] Woo, *Nicodemism*, p. 6.

That Nicodemism was by its very nature silent, shameful, and concealed, allowed for an unchallenged theological position to be established by Calvin and supported by subsequent reformed theologians. Nicodemites were defined by judgement on internal intention based on the external act of attending Mass, rather than their own acknowledged identity. There were no Nicodemites willing to defend a position openly against Calvin or his followers, and there was very little specificity in the attacks on Nicodemism because the central definition was based on judging an intention in terms that no one would have openly admitted. This had the benefit of ensuring that Calvin and the anti-Nicodemites had complete control over the definition of 'Nicodemite'.

Calvin made it clear that Nicodemism was not uniform, and he identified four specific categories of Nicodemism, all of which reflected the concern that Protestants could be betrayed by their fellow confessionalists. The first was the hypocritical preacher who used the Gospel 'for prostitution in order to gain some benefits or fill up their purse in whatever way' and who, whilst they knew the truth, for financial reasons chose to go another way and conform.[22] The second were those who pretended to follow the gospel, but had no intention of allowing it to affect their lives meaningfully – the 'minions of the court, and the ladies who have never known anything else than being treated in a dainty way'.[23] The third were those who converted philosophically to Protestantism but failed to take it to heart – who 'wait without doing anything to see whether any good reformation will occur'.[24] The fourth were the 'traders and common people' who valued an easy life over being faithful to God.[25]

Anti-Nicodemism was essentially criticism of attendance at Mass – to attend was to undermine faith by validating the 'idolatry' of Mass, and cheapen the important distinction between Catholic Mass and Protestant Eucharist. Anti-Nicodemism was established on the firm foundation of the reformed theology on the Lord's Supper and the Protestant criticisms of the Catholic Mass – especially the priestly sacrifice of Christ's body, which, Calvin claimed,

[22] Calvin, 'Apology of John Calvin', p. 349.
[23] Calvin, 'Apology of John Calvin', p. 351.
[24] Calvin, 'Apology of John Calvin', pp. 351–2.
[25] These categories mirror those Jesus used in the Parable of the Sower, as told in Luke 8, where the seed of the gospel fell on the wayside, on stony ground and among the thorns – there is no reference to this Parable in Calvin's *Excuse*, but the similarity is striking. Calvin, 'Apology of John Calvin', p. 353.

'utterly abolishes the cross of Christ, and overturns his sacred Supper'.[26] Peter Martyr Vermigli put it, as translated into English in 1555, that the 'masse shall remaine a filthie and stinkinge abhomination before the lorde and suche a thinge as the lorde dothe deteste and abhorre.'[27] This work was translated by and for English Protestant exiles, so it represents an important record of their theological perspective. According to Calvin, Mass was not and could not be a thing 'indifferent'; it was an 'intolerable insult to God'.[28] The people of Israel worshipped the calf that Aaron made because they sinfully wanted to see God, to feel assured by physical presence, and Calvin equated this classic biblical image of idolatry to Mass.[29]

The arguments against Mass in anti-Nicodemite texts should not be seen as contradicting the complex theological debate about the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. Protestant theologians of the mid-sixteenth century agreed that the Catholic practice of Mass was not a thing indifferent.[30] Salvation by faith was a cornerstone of Protestant theology on which all agreed. Philip Melanchthon made it clear very early in the Reformation, in 1521, that it was not the Lord's Supper but faith that saved, an argument likewise put forward by Théodore de Béza.[31]

By making attendance at Mass the defining characteristic of Nicodemism, Calvin made it synonymous with idolatry. Calvin, and the writers of subsequent anti-Nicodemite texts, claimed that even passive attendance at Mass had a polluting effect. Nicodemites were

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[26] Calvin, 'The sinfulness of outward conformity', p. 383.
[27] Peter Martyr Vermigli and Heinrich Bullinger, *A treatise of the cohabitacyon of the faithfull with the vnfaithfull Whereunto is added. A sermon made of the confessing of Christe and his gospell, and of the denyinge of the same* (Strasbourg, 1555), fol. 18r.
[28] Calvin, 'The sinfulness of outward conformity', pp. 391, 393.
[29] Calvin, 'The sinfulness of outward conformity', p. 391.
[30] It has been argued that Martin Bucer's theology on Mass could have been a basis for a hidden Nicodemite theology, but Bucer's focus was on a limited concept of tolerance rather than recommending deception to avoid persecution. Yet, whilst Bucer approaches the question of Mass less dogmatically, he nevertheless came to the same conclusions as Calvin, namely that Mass was not a thing indifferent and that it was not permitted for a believer to attend it. Carlos Eire, 'Calvin and Nicodemism', p. 61; Hudson, *The Cambridge connection*, p. 58; Hall, 'Martin Bucer in England', p. 146; Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 95; Martin Bucer, 'Eucharist: The 1550 Confession in Aphorisms', in David F Wright, trans., *Common places of Martin Bucer* (Abingdon, 1972), p. 336; Martin Bucer, 'De Regno Christi', in Wilhelm Pauck, ed., *Melanchthon and Bucer* (Louisville, KY, 2006), pp. 272–3; Martin Bucer, *Concerning the true care of souls*, trans. Peter Beale (Edinburgh, 2009), pp. 167–8.
[31] Philipp Melanchthon, 'Loci Communes (1521)', in Wilhelm Pauck, ed., *Melanchthon and Bucer* (Louisville, KY, 2006), p. 146; Théodore de Bèze, *A clear and simple treatise on the Lord's Supper: in which the published slanders of Joachim Westphal are finally refuted (1559)*, trans. David Noe (Grand Rapids, MI, 2009), p. 8.

therefore guilty by association with Mass. Calvin used vivid imagery to demonstrate this point, stating that:

> For just as a latrine cleaner, after having exercised the trade of removing excrement for a long time, does not smell bad odors any more because he has completely lost his sense of smell and pokes fun at those who hold their nose, likewise, these, having hardened themselves to stay in their filth by dint of habit, believe they dwell amongst roses, and poke fun at those who are annoyed by the stench, which they do not smell.[32]

Calvin based criticism of Nicodemites on the 'hypocritical adoration' of those who bent the knee at Mass, which he argued was 'fellowship' with idolaters through 'inward consent, and some kind of outward manifestation indicative of consent'.[33] As Bonnie Pattison writes, 'when a believer's body becomes defiled from either superstitious or idolatrous practices, the cost of that sinful behavior is visited upon this union'.[34] Writing in support of Calvin, Vermigli and Heinrich Bullinger agreed that Mass corrupted anyone who attended, irrespective of inner conviction.[35]

Calvin's anti-Nicodemite tracts were not amongst his most published or translated, yet their impact can be demonstrated by the frequent repetition of his words and arguments by others. The Nicodemites were the 'black sheep' that threatened to undermine the theological distinction that Calvin believed key to Protestantism, particularly because they had not been loyal to the key tenet of Protestantism. *Excuse* defined the language of anti-Nicodemism, intended primarily to reinforce existing stereotypes. We see this in the works condemning Nicodemism that were published either into the English Protestant echo-chambers of Geneva, Zurich, Frankfurt and Strasbourg or into the Protestant community in Marian Catholic England.

The uniformity of anti-Nicodemite language reinforced Protestant norms against the deviant 'black sheep', who were perceived to be a threat. Reformed theologians took their lead

[32] Calvin, 'Apology of John Calvin', p. 348.
[33] Calvin, 'The sinfulness of outward conformity', pp. 393–4.
[34] Bonnie L. Pattison, 'Worship and Calvin's theology of the body in his anti-Nicodemite writings', *Calvin Theological Journal*, 55/2 (2020), p. 269.
[35] Vermigli and Bullinger, *A treatise of the cohabitacyon*, fol. 25r.

from Calvin, who initially set out the main arguments and definitions as early as 1537, in *Epistola de Christiani hominis*. It is remarkable that these arguments barely changed over the decades following the publication of Calvin's tracts, especially of the *Excuse.*[36] This homogenous language, extending to using the same motifs and examples, created a foundation for understanding what could be attacked as a Nicodemism and, just as importantly, what it meant to be faithful in times of persecution. For Calvin and other major Protestant reformers, the assertion that salvation was denied to Nicodemites reaffirmed that faithfulness was essential to salvation. As Woo argues, this was not always about Nicodemites, but about using anti-Nicodemism to strengthen Calvin's position in contemporary debates and develop a positive argument for exile.[37]

Following the language of Calvin, other reformers of the European mainland clearly outlined that Nicodemites had betrayed the faithful Protestant community. These were subsequently translated into English, reinforcing the sense of uniform anti-Nicodemite English Protestant theology. For example, in 1555 Vermigli argued that the 'faithful' were defined by their separation from the 'unfaithful'. He argued that the faithful should 'put awaye your own selues from the euell men that ar emongst you', and claimed that throughout history the Israelites and then Christians had been 'infected throughe that conuersacion which they hadd' with the unfaithful.[38]

Lutherans joined the reformed theologians in defining the Nicodemite as disloyal*;* Johann Wigand argued that Luther would not compromise his beliefs.[39] The work was published in English in 1562, ten years after it was published in Germany.[40] Wigand claimed that it was

[36] Although, as Woo argues, Calvin changed his view of the required response to the threat of Nicodemism – he had initially argued that they should be ready to die, before he recommended exile as the best course. This was theologically justified because the Christian was always an exile until they entered the Kingdom of God. Kenneth J. Woo, 'The house of God in exile', *Church History and Religious Culture*, 95/2–3 (2015), p. 235.
[37] Woo states that Calvin's *Quatre sermons* 'reached past the Nicodemite controversy' and was more focused on strengthening Calvin's position on exiles in Geneva. This aligns with the main argument of this chapter – that anti-Nicodemism was often more related to the challenges and concerns of the anti-Nicodemite than real concern with religious conformists. Woo, *Nicodemism*, pp. 29, 206.
[38] Vermigli and Bullinger, *A treatise of the cohabitacyon*, fols. 10r, 11v.
[39] Johann Wigand, *De neutralibus et mediis, grosly Inglyshed, Jacke of both sydes: A godly and a necessary catholike admonicion, touching those that be neutres, holding vpon no certayne religion nor doctryne, and such as holde with both partes, or rather of no parte, very necessary to staye [et] stablysh Gods elect in the true catholike faith against thys present wicked world* (London, 1562), sig. [C.vii]r.
[40] Karl Gunther, *Reformation unbound: Protestant visions of reform in England, 1525-1590* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 113.

necessary to make a choice for or against the gospel, and 'that we should thynke no Neutralitye or playing the Jacke of both sydes is allowed in [the gospel's] behalf.'[41] Wigand was writing in the context of a Lutheran dispute against sacramentalists and Anabaptists in Wismar, Mecklenburg.[42] It is striking that the language he used was remarkably similar to that of Calvin, concluding that in the end those who conformed were 'Pestilent hypocrites' and that 'we may call them after their Godfather on the steeple top, Weather-cockes'.[43] It is fair to conclude that the concept of the Nicodemite as norm-deviant was a common thread in reformed and Lutheran writing.

Marian anti-Nicodemism from Protestant exiles

Marian Protestant exiles publicly blamed Nicodemite dissembling for the persecution and fall of the Protestant Church in England under Mary. It was clear that exiles felt that they had made significant sacrifices for the integrity of their confessional identity; these sacrifices had not been made by those who conformed. Their anxiety was centred on the fragility of the Protestant confession in England – for many exiles, Nicodemites were those who did not believe strongly enough to sacrifice their self-interest for the sake of their confession. This, in turn, reflected unease about the weakness of the faithfulness of Protestants, and was seen to be the cause of God's righteous judgement against the Protestant English Church. In short, anti-Nicodemism was an expression of the fear that English Protestant leaders had clearly failed to establish a resilient Protestant reformation in Edwardian England, and had decided to go into exile to avoid persecution – the reason for the harsh language was because faithlessness reflected badly on all English Protestants, and it justified their decision to go into exile.

Many publications outline the anti-Nicodemism perspective of Marian exiles – Pettegree estimates that up to two-thirds of all Marian exile writings addressed Nicodemism.[44] These works were generally published in Strasbourg, Wesel or other Free Cities of the Empire, and were developed both to criticise those who were perceived to abandon their Protestant

[41] Wigand, *De neutralibus and mediis,* sig. F.iir.
[42] Karl Gunther, *Reformation unbound: Protestant visions of reform in England, 1525-1590* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 113.
[43] Wigand, *De neutralibus and mediis,* sigs. B.iiiiv-B.vr.
[44] Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 88.

faith – the 'black sheep' – and in response to the insecurity of religious exile; their belief system was under attack and anti-Nicodemism was used aggressively to defend it. As Woo argues, though, the intended audience for these works can be hard to determine.[45] They were ostensibly aimed at those who argued for Nicodemism as a strategy to avoid persecution; yet there is no evidence of people arguing in defence of Nicodemism, and these works were published and circulated amongst Protestant communities in exile rather than in England. Although intention is not always within the historian's abilities to determine, the primary intention was clearly to strengthen the resolve of fellow exiles and justify their flight.

Anti-Nicodemism was pliable, which could be used to support a wide range of arguments; yet its core messages did not differ from that of Calvin.[46] In line with Calvin, most of the English anti-Nicodemite writers quoted Luke 9:26 to support their argument, where Jesus says, 'for whosoeuer shalbe ashamed of me, and of my wordes, of him shal the Sonne of man be ashamed, when he shal come in his glorie, and (in the glorie) of the Father, and of the holie Angels.'[47] In Matthew 10, these words were echoed, but came after Jesus' statement that, 'there is nothing couered, that shal not be disclosed, nor hid, that shall not be knowen.'[48] According to the anti-Nicodemites, God was a jealous God, and the anonymous author of *An apologie or defence agaynst the calumnacion* stated that 'wel these wordes I am a ialous god, require in vs an vpright pure, vndefiled conuersacion, lest by our dissimulacion we prouoke the lord to anger.'[49] Published in 1555, this work was a strong argument against conformity to Catholic practice, and claimed that the Nicodemites were provoking God's anger against all Protestants. Publications by the Marian Protestant exiles all followed the same themes as Calvin's anti-Nicodemism to make this argument.

[45] Woo, *Nicodemism*, p. 16.
[46] Woo argues that the main difference was the emphasis in English anti-Nicodemism on remaining in England, not going into exile – or 'Do as I say, not as I do', as Woo summarises it. This makes some sense in the context where anti-Nicodemism was a response to anxiety over English Protestantism being destroyed in England. However, as this section makes clear, the anti-Nicodemite arguments used by the English Protestant exiles were the same. Woo, *Nicodemism*, p. 84.
[47] Luke 9:26.
[48] Matthew 10:26.
[49] Anon., *An apologie or defence agaynst the calumnacion of certayne men which preferring wylfull wyll and carnal reason before the playn trueth of Gods gospel* (Wesel?, 1555), sig. A.viiiv.

Attendance at Mass

First, anti-Nicodemite insecurity was based on the action of those who conformed – simply by attending Mass they were legitimising and supporting a 'popish' institution. In *The hurt of hearyng masse,* John Bradford gave thirty-three reasons why attending Mass was not permitted to the faithful Christian, ranging from the need to live separately from the unfaithful to the need to avoid participating in idolatrous practice.[50] Bradford stated that 'oure masse gospellers & popyshe protestantes [attempt to…] serue both god & mammon', and echoed Calvin in arguing that those who knew the truth but attended Mass did so because they valued the favour of humans more than God.[51] Bradford wrote this work in 1555, the same year that he was killed, but it was only published in 1561 after the accession of Elizabeth to the throne.[52] Bradford originally wrote to warn Protestants living in a Catholic country, but it was published as a warning to Protestants not to tolerate the remaining vestiges of Catholic religious practice in the Elizabethan Church.

Bradford's reasons against attending Mass are all found in the writing of Calvin, Vermigli, Bucer and others. In effect, *The hurt of hearyng masse* represented Bradford's attempt to summarise all the arguments against attending Mass in one list, and demonstrate the consistency of the anti-Nicodemite arguments. Bradford concluded that those who attended Mass were guilty of 'dissimulation and hypocrysye' and were 'Idolatrers, false worshyppers of gode, blaspemers of christ destroyers of his death, merites sacrifice, preisthod and kyngdome, destroyers of the ministers of his gospell and sacramentes, destroyers of faith, repentaunce and all godlynes. Summa they are Antychristes'.[53]

In 1556, John Olde used the same argument that it was not possible to attend Mass without committing sin in *A confession of the most auncient and true christe[n] catholike olde belefe*. Olde was an old friend of Hugh Latimer, writing from exile in Emden, as well as editing works from Protestants in England. Bradshaw suggests that 'the speed with which [Olde's] works were published after their composition suggests that Old[e] was still in contact with

[50] John Bradford, *The hurte of hering masse. Set forth by the faithfull seruaunt of god and constant marter of Christ* (London, 1561), sig. [C.vii]r-[D.iiii]v.
[51] Bradford, *The hurt of hering masse,* sig. C.iir.
[52] Andrew Penny, 'Bradford, John', in *ODNB*.
[53] Bradford, *The hurt of hering masse,* sigs. [D.iiii]v-[D.vi]v.

protestants in England who must have smuggled the manuscripts out to him'.[54] In *A confession,* Olde wrote that 'the body go not to Masse with out the company and consent of the soule.'[55] He argued that the Bible taught of the physical resurrection of the body as well as of the soul and that, therefore, it was essential to protect the body from 'defiling it self with the abominable Masse and other popery'.[56] In the end, Olde described Nicodemites as 'shrinking traytours and cowheardly rennagates'.[57]

Thomas Becon, a close friend of Olde and fellow exile (although in Becon's case, in Strasbourg), replied to the question of whether inward faith without external observance was sufficient for salvation. Becon, an English cleric and Protestant reformer born in Norfolk in 1512, and a former chaplain to Thomas Cranmer, died in 1567, having returned to England and become a canon of Canterbury Cathedral. Becon claimed that Vermigli had already answered the question, although he nevertheless set out to repeat the main points as he saw them.[58] Becon wrote that the choice of conformity threatened the integrity of the Protestant confession that people had died for. In 1557, Becon called Nicodemism an 'olde heresie' that he attacked using references to Augustine, stating that not confessing openly 'disgraceth and dishonoureth all the martyres and wipeth awaie all persecucion and martirdome.'[59] Becon argued that, by their support for the Roman Church, the Nicodemites were separating themselves not only from the true Church but also from their Christian ancestors and from God himself.[60] Becon summed this up with reference to the ultimate Biblical betrayal, where St Peter denied Christ three times before Christ's trial and

[54] C. Bradshaw, 'Olde, John', in *ODNB*.
[55] John Olde, *A confession of the most auncient and true christen catholike olde belefe: accordyng to the ordre of the .xij. articles of our common crede* (Sothewarke [i.e. Emden], 1556), sig. E.3v.
[56] Olde, *A confession of the most auncient and true,* sig. E.4r.
[57] Olde, *A confession of the most auncient and true,* sig. [E.6]r.
[58] Thomas Becon, *An answer to a certain godly mannes lettres: desiring his frendes iudgement, whether it be laufull for a christian man to be present at the popishe masse, and other supersticious churche seruice* (Strasbourg, 1557), sig. A.iir.
[59] Becon, *An answer to a certain godly mannes lettres,* sig. A.iiiv.
[60] An interesting reflection of the use of St Augustine in anti-Nicodemism is that one of his primary arguments was against the Donatists – who claimed that association with religious conformity had tainted the Roman Catholic Church, and argued for an emphasis on purity. There could be parallels drawn between Donatists and anti-Nicodemites, but Calvin and his followers did not emphasise St Augustine's anti-Donatist arguments in their anti-Nicodemism, but in their attack on Anabaptism – the emphasis was on the doctrine of purity, not the reaction to religious persecution. Pamela Biel, 'Bullinger against the Donatists: St Augustine to the defence of the Zurich reformed Church', *Journal of Religious History*, 16/3 (1991), p. 245.

crucifixion – Becon used this example as a call for people to avoid denying Christ in their actions and lives.[61]

In his sermon *Of the Confessing of Christ and His Gospel*, Bullinger developed the idea of faithfulness and identity into a detailed theological argument against Nicodemism. This sermon was published in English in 1555, promoted by English anti-Nicodemites, and alongside Vermigli's *treatise of the cohabitacyon of the faithfull with the vnfaithfull*; they were both strongly anti-Nicodemite texts and were published together in English with the intention of influencing the English Protestants, both in exile and in England. Bullinger argued that a confession of faith in Jesus was not sufficient, as one needed to confess the message as well: 'but the Apostles did not only confes Christe himself but also all Christes doctrine all Christes wordes the whole gospell (I saye) of saluacion: of which Christe is the only Marcke'.[62]

For Bullinger, and his English Marian exile translator, the Nicodemite became a powerless supporter of the Roman Church through silence: 'then by silence also is Christe and Christes worde denyed namely when vppon occasion offered we do not deffende the glorie of the name of Godd and of the truythe known againste the ennemis of Godd and sclaunderers of the worde of Godd'.[63] Bullinger referred to the Nicodemite as a 'neuter', who lost their identity as a Christian when the truth was denied by their dissembling.[64] This was a clear repetition of Calvin's critical point about dissimulation – it was a threat to any who dissembled that they risked their salvation, for 'the Lord calls his followers to confession, and those who decline it must seek another master, since he cannot tolerate dissimulation.'[65]

Gendered language

Another of Calvin's tactics used by Marian exiles to attack Nicodemites was the use of gendered language to equate dissimulation with infidelity. Nicodemism, in this argument, was the upending of what was perceived to be natural, and a threat to the divinely-ordained

[61] Becon, *An answer to a certain godly mannes lettres,* sigs. A.iiiir-v.
[62] Vermigli and Bullinger, *A treatise of the cohabitacyon*, fol. 70v.
[63] Vermigli and Bullinger, *A treatise of the cohabitacyon*, fol. 71r.
[64] Vermigli and Bullinger, *A treatise of the cohabitacyon*, fol. 71r.
[65] Calvin, 'The sinfulness of outward conformity', p. 366.

order. Calvin claimed that Paul's injunction in 1 Corinthians 6 against fornication – 'your bodies are members of Christ' – was relevant to Nicodemism, as though attending Mass were analogous with infidelity.[66] Olde developed the imagery of 1 Corinthians 6 to argue that, since the body was the temple of God, 'who so euer defyleth the temple of God, the Lorde shall destroye him'.[67] Vermigli – in English translation – used unpleasant language to make the same point, stating that Nicodemites 'name it to be euen like an harlot which hathe opened her legges vnder euerye tree that hade any bowghes to Idolls and vngodlye Idolatries.'[68]

Both the anonymous author of *An apologie or defence agaynst the calumnacion* and Bradford used the same language to make this link with infidelity. This is demonstrated by the following remarkably similar passages, from *An apologie* and Bradford, respectively, building a gendered and consistent language of anti-Nicodemism:

> It is like as yf a maried woman should submit her body to the vse of another man: & when her husbande layeth the offence to her charge, she aunswereth: husband be not angrie for my so doyng, for although I abandoned my body to that mans vse yet I reserued my hart wholy to you. My frend I thinke there is no man, beynge of any godly knowledge, could digest that aunswere of his wyfe, or take it in good parte: but condemning her as an aduoutresse would repudiat and forsake her.[69]

And:

> yf ther wiues were taken in bodelye acte withe others, wolde they take this excuse yf the wyfe shulde saye: forsouth husbande this is no matter for I promise you no bodye, but you alone hath myne harte. &c… the gretter loue in harte the wyfe had to her husband, the more pure wyl her bodie be kepte from the fellowship of others.[70]

The analogy of the unfaithful wife built a moral, as well as theological, anti-Nicodemite argument – these were, by definition, unfaithful people who were guilty of infidelity against

[66] Calvin, 'The sinfulness of outward conformity', p. 372.
[67] Olde, *A confession of the most auncient and true,* sig. D.1v.
[68] Vermigli and Bullinger, *A treatise of the cohabitacyon*, fol. 24r.
[69] Anon., *An apologie or defence agaynst the calumnacion,* sig. A.vv.
[70] Bradford, *The hurt of hering masse*, sigs. [G.viii]v-F.ir.

Christ. Anti-Nicodemites responded to the fragility of their confession by creating a culture of shame – silence was equated with the guilt of an unfaithful wife.

Undermining a biblical defence of Nicodemism

A common theme in all anti-Nicodemite writing was to anticipate and attack any attempted biblical defence of conformity.[71] Anti-Nicodemism included the concern of losing control of Protestant biblical interpretation – they set out to show that Nicodemism was not a biblically justified response to persecution and therefore had no justification. One articulation of this theme came from the English translation of Wolfgangus Musculus' play, *The Temporysour,* in which anti-Nicodemite arguments based on the refutation of supposed Nicodemite justifications are clearly outlined. Musculus was a German reformer, who studied under Bucer, and was Professor of Theology in Bern from 1549 until his death in 1563. The work was first published in Latin in Basel in 1549 – entitled the *Proscaerus* – before being translated into French and published in London as *Le temporiseur* in 1550; it was translated from French into English, and published in Wesel in 1555.[72] That *The Temporysour* was published in French in London, but not translated into English until Mary's reign by an anonymous Protestant exile, demonstrates how the English version was intended to be read in the context of the Marian exile. Perez Zagorin notes that 'most Protestant authors who dealt with the question of dissimulation in the 1540s and 1550s handled the subject with the same biblical examples, the same arguments and defences, and the same refutations.'[73] Zagorin makes a statement about Vermigli's use of biblical examples that they were 'essentially identical with those of Calvin'; the same can be said of Musculus' *The Temporysour*.[74]

The play is based on a conversation between a Nicodemite, called Temporysour – one would not commit and who avoided decision making, or as the title states 'the observer of

[71] It is interesting to note that none of the contemporary Protestant English translations of the Bible included any reference in their notes to Nicodemism, or any arguments against dissimulation in commentaries on the relevant passages. The Bishops Bible did not have a commentary note about Nicodemus, whilst the 1561 Geneva Bible stated that 'if Nicodemus had known Christ aright, he would not only have said that God was with him, but in him'. Notes on John 3: *The Holie Bible conteynyning the Olde Testament and the Newe [The 1568 Bishops Bible]* (London, 1569).
[72] *USTC*.
[73] Perez Zagorin, *Ways of lying: dissimulation, persecution, and conformity in early modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 1990), p. 103.
[74] Zagorin, *Ways of Lying*, p. 109.

tyme, or he that changeth with the tyme' – and the fourth-century Christian historian Eusebius – whose name means 'pious' and 'reverent'.[75] The anonymous introduction to the English translation of *The Temporysour* is notably more aggressive than the text itself. Whilst Musculus' play was a reasonably reserved anti-Nicodemite text, the introduction to the English translation asked how Nicodemites had:

> become louers of them selues? Couetous, boasters, proude, cursed speakers, disobedient, vnthankful, vngodly, vnkynde, trucebreakers, false accusers, traytours, highmynded, despysers of them which are good, gready vpon voluptuousnesse more then the louers of God, hauing a similitude of godlines, but haue denyed the power thereof: whose madnes is now made apparant vnto al menne.[76]

The contrast was made between those who are faithful and the unfaithful.

It is important to state that there is no evidence of Nicodemites using biblical examples to justify their actions. Yet, all of the supposed Nicodemite arguments, and their refutations, were repeated across the canon of anti-Nicodemite literature. In *The Temporysour* they were outlined in four acts. The focus of the play is a question that answers itself, namely 'whether it be lawfull for a man that hath knowledge, to communicate and be present at the supersticious Ceremonies, or rather Papisticall blasphemes of the vngodlye, or no?'[77] In the first dialogue, Temporysour is supported by a character called Mondayn – meaning 'worldly' – who argues that the Christian man must follow the magistrate in all things. Eusebius counters that 'yf thou be a christian man, thou canst not be compelled to do an vnlawfull thing', since fear of God is more important than fear of man, and following one's conscience is critical – a point repeatedly made by Calvin in *Excuse*.[78]

The second dialogue deals with the question of whether Mass could be considered 'mongest those thinges that are free, indifferent, and lawefull', with the inevitable conclusion that it is not – again echoing Calvin.[79] In the third, Eusebius counters the argument that dissimulation

[75] Patrick Hanks, Kate Hardcastle, and Flavia Hodges, 'Eusebio', in *A dictionary of first names,* <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198610601.001.0001/acref-9780198610601-e-5779.>, accessed 16.3.2019.
[76] R D, 'Introduction', in Musculus, *The Temporysour,* sig. [A.vii]v.
[77] Wolfgangus Musculus, *The Temporysour,* sig. B.iir.
[78] Musculus, *The Temporysour* sig. [B.viii]v; Calvin, 'Apology of John Calvin', p. 363; Larousse, 'Mondaine'.
[79] Musculus, *The Temporysour,* sig. [C.viii]v.

could be a means of winning followers to the gospel. Calvin had argued that 'it is not permitted to do bad in order to see good come out of it' and that dissimulation 'ensnares the brethren, and affords cause for error'.[80] Vermigli also made the point that dissimulation could not be part of God's plan, stating that 'we must obeye hym in seruyng hym and his churche with the confession of truthe.'[81] In *The Temporysour*, Eusebius concludes that dissimulation itself is a sin, as 'thou doest by dissimulation contrary to thy fayth and knowledge in communicating at vnlawful seruice.'[82]

In the fourth and final dialogue, Temporysour questions whether Nicodemus, Naaman and Joseph of Arimathea might be considered biblical examples and justifications for the actions of Nicodemites. The English translator of *The Temporysour* concluded in the introduction that 'we haue perused and consydered what it is of the example of Nicodemus & Ioseph, wherby dyuers thinke to couer the dissimulacion of theyr religion, whom we wyl call Nicodemistes, because it shall not nede often to vse anye circumlocucion.'[83] In other words, 'Nicodemite' was a label used for a wider group of people who conformed to a different confession, whatever the reason.

The argument that Nicodemus could not be a biblical justification for religious dissimulation is based on Calvin's distinction between the Nicodemus of John 3 and 7 and that of John 19 – his behaviour in John 19 justifies the biblical Nicodemus, and this makes him different from those who conformed to escape persecution. In his commentary on the Gospel of John, Musculus wrote in reference to Nicodemus that 'it is fitting that the names of the godly, who contributed something to make known the glory of God, be made known to the church of the elect and that their names be remembered forever.'[84] For Musculus, Nicodemus was a good example of the slow progress from ignorance, pride and self-love, to faith in Christ, and he referred to him as 'slow-to-understand Nicodemus'.[85]

[80] Calvin, 'Apology of John Calvin', pp. 354, 356; Calvin, 'The sinfulness of outward conformity', p. 376.
[81] Vermigli and Bullinger, *A treatise of the cohabitacyon*, fol. 37r.
[82] Musculus, *The Temporysour,* sig. E.ir.
[83] Musculus, *The Temporysour,* sig. F.[vi]r.
[84] Craig S Farmer, ed., *Reformation commentary on Scripture: New Testament IV John 1-12* (Downers Grove, IL, 2011), p. 87.
[85] Farmer, ed., *Reformation commentary on Scripture: New Testament IV John 1-12*, p. 96.

Calvin first used the example of Naaman the Syrian in 1537, in the first tract of *Epistola de Christiani hominis* as an example that Nicodemites might have sought to use to justify their actions. This is subsequently repeated in Calvin's 1543 *Petit traicté* but is not used in the *Excuse*.[86] As is recorded in 2 Kings, Naaman had been granted permission by the prophet Elisha to enter a pagan temple with his master the King of Syria.[87] Calvin argued that Naaman made his allegiance to God clear and did not partake of idolatry, simply supporting an old man to attend the temple of his ancestors.[88] Naaman was a well-used example in Marian anti-Nicodemite writing, showing the influence of Calvin's wider anti-Nicodemite texts, in addition to the *Excuse*. In *The hurt of hearyng masse*, Bradford describes Naaman as 'but an yonglyng in Gods religion', and states that he should not be seen as a licence to conforming when there were plenty of strong biblical injunctions and many examples where people did not gain permission to attend pagan temples.[89]

Biblical examples of faithfulness were similarly important to anti-Nicodemite authors, and the Old Testament Book of Daniel provided the ideal example of faithfulness to God in a time of persecution. Calvin used the examples of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in *Epistola de Christiani hominis* to demonstrate how the faithful ought to behave in the face of persecution, and subsequent anti-Nicodemite authors followed his lead.[90] Anti-Nicodemites did not fail to see the parallels in the message of Daniel, namely the story of Israelite exiles refusing to worship the Babylonian gods, whilst at the same time providing a witness to the omnipotence of the Israelite God through serving the king.

In his *Letter to the Trew Professors of Christes Gospell* in London, Thomas Sampson used Daniel chapters 3 and 6 to argue that 'we rede not that any chylde of God vsed euer iustlye anye suche dissimulacion.'[91] Sampson was an exile, who became Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, in 1560. He wrote this work at the beginning of the exile, in 1554, from Strasbourg,

[86] This tract was written in 1543, a year before the *Excuse*, and its defence was the reason given by Calvin for writing the *Excuse*. It was reprinted three times after its original publication, each time in French, in 1544, 1545 and 1551. John Calvin, *Petit traicté, monstrant que c'est que doit faire un homme fidele congnoissant la verité de l'Evangile : quand il est entre les papistes, avec une epistre du mesme argument* (Geneva, 1543), p. 48.
[87] 2 Kings 5:18-19.
[88] Calvin, 'The sinfulness of outward conformity', pp. 401–3.
[89] Bradford, *The hurt of hering masse,* sig. [F.vi]r.
[90] Calvin, 'The sinfulness of outward conformity', p. 370.
[91] Thomas Sampson, *A letter to the trew professors of Christes Gospell, inhabitinge in the parishe off Allhallowis, in Bredstrete in London* (Strasburgh in Elsas [i.e. Wesel?], 1554), sig. B.vr.

and it intended both to justify the exile and to give guidance to the English Protestant response to Mary's Catholic Church. For Sampson, the examples in Daniel clearly showed that attending Mass made 'dissembling a double stomble blocke' when the truth of the Protestant message had been revealed and 'when bothe a papist and a weke brother seeth you as mingrels myngling your selfs with the Papistes in their Idolatrie'.[92] The example of Daniel demonstrated that a critical reason to remain faithful and avoid conversation with Papists was to be a witness to the truth to neighbours and to those in authority.[93]

Whilst Daniel was the most common example, it was one of many positive illustrations from the Old Testament used to demonstrate the right way to face persecution. Vermigli echoed Calvin by pointing to 2 Maccabees 7, where the Israelites refused to eat unclean food. As with Calvin, Vermigli pointed out that this was not because the food was actually unclean, but because the faithful should choose God over safety and comfort on this earth. Vermigli stated that the believer should 'feare not hym that killethe the bodie &c. and that he speakith of killing the bodie is likewise to be vnderstonded of taking awaye of goodes and ritches: But he is to be feared which after that he hath taken awaye bothe lyfe and goodes can throwe the soule into euerlastinge fire feare hym.'[94]

Anti-Nicodemites used these biblical examples to urge people simply to rely on the word of God, which Calvin described as sufficient and the source of hope. He stated that 'though all men should threaten, their menaces cannot outweigh those which the Lord denounces against the deserters of his camp'.[95] In the *Excuse*, Calvin claimed that those who thought he was being harsh completely misunderstood him; he believed that this was unfair as he was not passing judgement; rather, he was simply explaining the word of God and how they ought to be reliant on it.[96] For the Marian anti-Nicodemites, the conforming Protestants were unfaithful to the word of God, and unfaithfulness could never be supported with biblical examples.

[92] Sampson, *A letter to the trew professors,* sig. B.vv.
[93] Sampson, *A letter to the trew professors,* sig. B.vr.
[94] Vermigli and Bullinger, *A treatise of the cohabitacyon*, fol. 16v.
[95] Calvin, 'The sinfulness of outward conformity', p. 364.
[96] Calvin, 'Apology of John Calvin', p. 354.

Anti-Nicodemite themes in resistance theory

There is a strong link between anti-Nicodemite writing and the development of resistance theory by Ponet, Goodman and Knox. The remarkable level of consistency between Calvin's condemnation of Nicodemism and the language of resistance allowed the levelling of the charge to Nicodemites that they were not only tacitly supporting Catholic doctrine through dissimulation, but also supporting ungodly leaders who upheld and imposed false doctrine. Calvin had advocated passive resistance to the Catholic Church, through non-attendance at Mass and the external maintenance of the Protestant Church, but resistance theory built the anti-Nicodemite language into a justification for active resistance.[97] In essence, anti-Nicodemism and resistance theory were both reactions to the same challenge – how to be faithful when it could lead to persecution – and were reflections of the same insecurity that faith without resistance – passive or otherwise – would undermine the Protestant confession.

In *A shorte treatise of politike power*, Ponet argued that the only reason for law was to preserve and maintain an environment where man could 'serue and glorifie God.'[98] Published in Strasbourg in 1556, after Ponet had gone into exile following Wyatt's failed rebellion, *A shorte treatise* was one of the defining works of resistance theory in English.[99] Ponet relied on Aristotelian political thinking to define monarchical power as conditional and able to be revoked, and he claimed that if political power hindered worship of God and was 'vngodly', then it was tyrannical.[100] In making these arguments, Ponet used the same examples from Daniel that one finds in the anti-Nicodemite texts to argue that faithfulness to God's law had primacy over all temporal authority.[101] Cynthia Grant Shoenberger argues that this view was derived from Bucer, who developed a coherent theory for inferior

[97] John McDiarmid makes a contrast between the theology of John Cheke and John Ponet - for Cheke, Nicodemism was unacceptable, but obedience was necessary even if the magistrate is unjust. John F. McDiarmid, '"To content god quietlie": The troubles of Sir John Cheke under Queen Mary', in Vivienne Westbrook and Elizabeth Evenden, eds., *Catholic renewal and Protestant resistance in Marian England* (Farnham, 2015), p. 223.
[98] John Ponet, *A shorte treatise of politike power, and of the true obedience which subjects owe to Kings and other civill goverours* (Strasbourg, 1556), sig. A.iiv.
[99] Robert M. Kingdon, 'Calvinism and resistance theory: 1550-1580', in James Henderson Burns and Mark Goldie, eds., *The Cambridge history of political thought: 1450 - 1700* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 194.
[100] Ponet, *A short treatise of politike power*, sig. G.iv. Kingdon, 'Calvinism and Resistance Theory: 1550-1580', p. 196.
[101] Ponet, *A short treatise of politike power*, sigs. E.iiiir-v.

magistrates, based on Romans 13, which inferred the importance of diversity in power.[102] This philosophy led to the classic resistance theory tenet 'that overthrowing tyrants was not merely justifiable, but a duty'.[103]

In language that mirrored that of anti-Nicodemism, Ponet claimed that the individual had only two responses to tyranny:

> if he that is persecuted, fele in his conscience, that he maie doo God greater seruice and glorie by suffring than by fleing, he ought rather to suffre a thousaunt deathes, than to flee one foote. But if his conscience witnesse with him that he maie doo God greater glorie by flieng than by tarieng, he ought not to tempt God with tarieng, but is bounden by commaundement to departe.[104]

For Ponet, the available and faithful options were active resistance to the tyrant – even to kill them – or flight. It is not possible to make a distinction between the political and theological arguments in Ponet's writing: theology had clear political implications, and faithfulness to God did not simply mean avoiding attendance at Mass, but active resistance to the government and society that tolerated the Mass.

Knox developed a similar perspective in his answer to his trial in absentia by the Scottish church, known as *The appellation of Iohn Knoxe*. As Scott Dolff summarises, Knox was 'at pains to establish the prerogative of the temporal authorities to discipline religious leaders.'[105] Published in 1558, and then reprinted in 1559, Knox attacked Catholic bishops who had recently convicted him of heresy and he used scripture to lay the 'groundwork for his idiosyncratic doctrine of covenant.'[106] In *The appellation*, Knox argued that magistrates were not appointed to be tyrants, but for the good of their subjects, and that if, as he asserted, the teaching of the Catholic Church was a danger to their subjects, then it was the responsibility of the magisterial authorities to resist. Failing to do so, argued Knox, would

[102] Cynthia Grant Shoenberger, 'The development of the Lutheran theory of resistance: 1523-1530', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 8/1 (1977), p. 68.
[103] John F. McDiarmid, 'Common consent, Latinitas, and the "Monarchical Republic" in mid-Tudor humanism', in John F. McDiarmid and Patrick Collinson, eds., *The monarchical republic of early modern England: essays in response to Patrick Collinson* (Aldershot, 2007), p. 59.
[104] Ponet, *A short treatise of politike power*, sig. E.vir.
[105] Scott Dolff, 'The two John Knoxes and the justification of non-revolution: a response to Dawson's argument from covenant', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 55/1 (2004), p. 64.
[106] Dolff, 'The two John Knoxes', p. 64.

make them 'obstinat refusers of God.'[107] Just as Ponet had done, Knox used the same examples from Daniel that are ubiquitous in anti-Nicodemite writings to argue that it was the individual responsibility to oppose 'vngodly commaundementes and blind rage'.[108] He stated that none was exempt from the responsibility to fulfil the obligation of resistance, and used examples from Deuteronomy 13:1-5 to support his case that 'none prouoking the people to idolatrie ought to be exempted from the punishment of death.'[109]

In 1558, Knox published *The first blast of the trumpet,* reaffirming the Christian responsibility to speak out against tyrannical and ungodly rulers: 'we in this our miserable age are bound to admonish the world, and the tyrants thereof, of their sudden destruction', which he described as 'the dutie of euerie true messager of God, to whome the truth is reueled in that behalfe'.[110] He effectively developed a compendium of classical misogynist writing – notably by St Paul, Augustine and Chrysostom – to argue that 'nature I say, doth paynt [women] furthe to be weake, fraile, impacient, feble and foolishe: and experience hath declared them to be vnconstant, variable, cruell and lacking the spirit of counsel and regiment.'[111] He did this to outline the need to resist the female monarchs in England and Scotland, claiming that 'a woman promoted to sit in the seate of God, that is, to teache, to iudge or to reigne aboue man, is a monstre in nature, contumelie to God, and a thing most repugnant to his will and ordinance.'[112]

Knox built on the misogynist facet of anti-Nicodemite language; he claimed that having a woman as the head of an empire was akin to idolatry because it represented the authority of an antichrist, the Pope, rather than the authority of Christ. To accept a woman as ruler was to rebel against God, as had happened in England 'where a woman reigneth and papistes beare authoritie, that there must nedes Satan be president of the counsel.'[113] Knox equated obedience to Mary with idolatry, in the same way that attending Mass was idolatry in anti-Nicodemite writing. He outlined the concern that 'by the defection and idolatrie of a

[107] John Knox, *The appellation of Iohn Knoxe: from the cruell and most iniust sentence pronounced against him by the false bishoppes and clergie of Scotland* (Geneva, 1558), fol. 16v.
[108] Knox, *The appellation*, fol. 26v.
[109] Knox, *The appellation*, fol. 29v.
[110] John Knox, *The first blast of the trumpet against the monstruous regiment of women* (Geneva, 1558), fol. 5r.
[111] Knox, *The first blast of the trumpet*, fol. 10r.
[112] Knox, *The first blast of the trumpet*, fol. 17r.
[113] Knox, *The first blast of the trumpet*, fol. 32r.

few[,] goddes wrath is kyndled against the hole', and as a result the idolatry of the sovereign was a challenge to the whole of society, particularly through the sceptre of an impending plague.[114] Therefore, he argued, godly men 'must refuse to be her officers, because she is a traitoresse and rebell against God. And finallie they must studie to represse her inordinate pride and tyrannie to the vttermost of their power.[115] This language became a significant problem for Knox when the Protestant Elizabeth acceded to the throne. As a result, the planned second and third 'blasts' of Knox's trumpet were never heard.

In *How superior powers ought to be obeyd*, Christopher Goodman made good use of the anti-Nicodemite lexicon to argue for the need to resist ungodly authority. He was a close associate of Knox, and *How superior powers* was published alongside Knox's *The first blast* in 1558.[116] As Dawson argues, Goodman presented a 'crude argument' that other than martyrdom, 'resistance to the rule of Mary Tudor was another option' to avoid Nicodemism.[117] He again used the same examples from Daniel as had Calvin and the other anti-Nicodemites; he focused on the need to speak out against practice of idolatry, and he concluded that there was

> nothinge more hatefull to God, nether more hurtefull to man, then so to be bewitched with Satans false illusions, that they are not able to put difference betwyxte obedience & disobedience[...] for when vile man, replenished with pride, vayne glorie, and grosse ignorance, will measure obedience with the crowked lyne of his owne corrupte iudgement, and not with the infallible trueth of Goddes holie worde, he must nedes preferre his owne decrees, phantasies, and ordinances, to the comfortable Lawes and liuelie preceptes of God his creator.[118]

Goodman called for 'vnfayned repentance' from those who had been disobedient to God, and argued that 'in disobeying [Queen Mary], ye shall please God'.[119] Goodman claimed that all who followed an idolatrous regime 'shall be condemned as rebells and disobedient

[114] Knox, *The appellation*, fol. 33r.
[115] Knox, *The first blast of the trumpet*, fol. 52v.
[116] Jane E. A. Dawson, 'Goodman, Christopher', in *ODNB*.
[117] Jane E. A. Dawson, *John Knox* (New Haven, CT, 2015), p. 140.
[118] Christopher Goodman, *How superior powers ought to be obeyd of their subiects and wherin they may lawfully by Gods Worde be disobeyed and resisted* (Geneva, 1558), pp. 9–10.
[119] Goodman, *How superior powers ought to be obeyd*, pp. 83, 103.

persones'.[120] In this analysis, resistance theory was essentially an extreme form of anti-Nicodemism.

The challenges made by resistance theory to royal authority were addressed by the Elizabethan Settlement itself. In the Act of Supremacy, the Oath counters resistance theory by asserting the authority of the crown to govern the church.[121] The Act of Supremacy emphasises the need for obedience to the government of Elizabeth, rather than for loyalty; this is also a theme in the Act of Uniformity, which demands external, rather than internal, religious conformity.[122] This was important, because the anti-Nicodemite language of resistance theory was used to argue that obedience even to a Protestant monarch was contingent on the individual judgement of whether it aligned with God's laws.[123] The arguments of resistance theory were essentially about whether the permissible methods for defending the Protestant confession extended to active resistance. For Ponet, Knox and Goodman, conscience was the driver of external action, and active resistance was allowed because they believed the Protestant confession depended on the freedom to *act* rather than simply to believe. The failure to act was a signal to resistance theorists of the weakness of the Protestant confession, and the strident and anti-Nicodemite tones of resistance theory reflected the same religious insecurity as did works by other anti-Nicodemites.

Pastoral intent: the practical language of anti-Nicodemism

During Mary's reign, pastoral publications also used anti-Nicodemite language and themes. Such texts were written to encourage Protestants living in Marian England, and they were much less polemic in tone than those of the Marian exiles' anti-Nicodemite writings. Nevertheless, they were as much an expression of religious fragility, and their reaction to the threats of Nicodemism was to encourage rather than criticise. Their audience and

[120] Goodman, *How superior powers ought to be obeyd*, p. 210.
[121] 'Elizabeth's Supremacy Act, Restoring Ancient Jurisdiction (1559)', in Henry Gee and William John Hardy, eds., *Documents Illustrative of English Church History* (London, 1896), p. 449.
[122] 'Elizabeth's Act of Uniformity (1559)', in Gee and Hardy, eds., *Documents Illustrative*, pp. 462–3.
[123] The anonymous author of the tract *To my faythfull brethren*, written in 1566 attacking the use of vestments, made the argument that 'concernyng ye Quenes Maiestes commandement, herein we acknowledge our sealues bownde to obey in all thynges lawfullye commaundyd, so can not we be persuadyd to vse that in the minysteri, which our consciences teacheth vs to be replenished with Idolatrous Ipocrisye'. Anon., *To the reader. To my faythfull brethren, we geue thankes to God for your constancie and upryght delynge in this gret controuersie now raysyd by packynge of enemys about the wearinge of popish apparell* (Emden, 1566), sigs. C.iir-v.

circulation were amongst underground Protestant communities; they aimed at positively strengthening Protestants living with persecution, rather than attacking those perceived as having betrayed the faithful.

Some of the most interesting examples of this form of anti-Nicodemite writing came from the 'Michael Wood' press. Lesley Fairfield refers to the 'Michael Wood mystery'– the case of the printing press run for eight months between 1553 and 1554, and an important example of Protestant anti-Catholic propaganda during Mary's reign.[124] Elizabeth Evenden agrees with Fairfield's conclusion, from the typographical evidence, that the Michael Wood texts were printed by John Day, but presents new evidence that puts Day as renting a property from Cecil in Stamford from 1553 to 1556 – the period of the Michael Wood pamphlets.[125]

Evenden's evidence that Cecil had a role in the Michael Wood pamphlets gives important corroborating evidence to the assertion in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* that the printing press was located in Stamford and leads to the important conclusion that 'unless one of the great statesmen of the sixteenth century was being uncharacteristically naive, William Cecil rented the land in the full knowledge that Day would print illicit works there'.[126] The evidence is not sufficient to conclude that there was an organised underground network of resistance, but it does hint at a much more complex image of Cecil than the compliant and conformist statesman who was consistently loyal to the throne.[127] When reading these tracts, it is important to understand that they were probably printed under the protection of a prominent Protestant statesman who conformed and was close to Cardinal Pole.[128]

Though many did include anti-Nicodemite invective against dissimulation, the provenance of the Michael Wood tracts explains why their overall focus was on attacking conservative 'popish' practice and encouraging perseverance rather than on stigmatising Nicodemites. One tract is a rudimentary play script, written as a 'familiar talke' between two characters,

[124] Leslie P. Fairfield, 'The Mysterious Press of "Michael Wood" (1553–1554)', *The Library*, 27/3 (1972), pp. 220–232; Stephen Alford, *Burghley: William Cecil at the Court of Elizabeth I* (New Haven, 2008), p. 67.
[125] Fairfield, 'The Mysterious Press', p. 221; Elizabeth Evenden, 'The Michael Wood mystery: William Cecil and the Lincolnshire printing of John Day', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 35/2 (2004), pp. 387, 392.
[126] Evenden, 'The Michael Wood mystery', p. 388.
[127] This will be explored more in Chapter 3. Evenden, 'The Michael Wood mystery', p. 394.
[128] Alford, *Burghley*, p. 80.

Oliver and Nicholas, about attending Mass or remaining faithful. Contrasted with the serious and theoretical *The Temporysour,* the 'familiar talke' is a witty and practical discussion designed to undermine Catholic practice and to make it seem ridiculous and illogical. For example, Nicholas, the Nicodemite character, languidly describes those who change confession with that of the ruler as 'worldly wyse', which Oliver counters as 'great foly before God'.[129] The play concludes with Oliver declaring that 'it is pitie to se the plain and simple people, thus deluded and brought to suche a miserable case, that they embrace lyes, in stede of truth, and errour and superstition, in place of true godlynes, and Christian religion.'[130] This was not written primarily to target Nicodemites, but to encourage faithfulness by attacking Marian belief and practice.

Another anonymous Michael Wood text, *A letter sent from a banished minister of Iesus Christ*, starts with the parable of the people who build on the rock and on the sand, as based on Matthew 7. The author uses the parable to argue that it is important to build the English Church on firm foundations of 'the puritie of his gospel, through perfect faith and godly life, to remain euermore' and not 'vpon the sand of the vanitie of this world, in the decres, constitutions and pleasures of men, through hypocrisie, forth with to be ouerthrowen.'[131] This was an allusion to Christ's parable, where the wise man builds a house on the rocky ground and not on the sand – in other words, where wise men build their lives on what will remain for eternity and not what will disappear over time.[132] This parable was relevant because the author of *A letter* was trying to encourage faithfulness to what cost more – non-conformity – than what seemed initially attractive, but would eventually end in destruction – conformity.

John Bale, who, with the contribution of John Hooper, has been attributed with the authorship of two Michael Wood tracts – *A soueraigne cordial for a Christian conscience* and *An excellent and a right learned meditacion* – had a very similar message. The tracts are

[129] Anon., *A dialogue or familiar talke betwene two neighbours concernyng the chyefest ceremonyes, that were, by the mighti power of Gods most holie pure worde, suppressed in Englande, and nowe for vnworthines, set vp agayne by the bishoppes, the impes of Antichrist* (Roane [i.e. London?], 1554), sig. A.iiiv.
[130] Anon., *A dialogue or familiar talke*, sig. F.iiiv.
[131] Anon., *A letter sent from a banished minister of Iesus Christ vnto the faithfull Christian flocke in England, most necessary and comfortable to al such, as be burthened with persecucion or heauinesse of mynde for the Gospel and testimonye of Iesu* (Roane [i.e. London?], 1554), sigs. A.iiir-v.
[132] Matthew 7:24-29.

deeply pastoral in tone and called for perseverance through suffering because of the eternal reward of salvation. There are a huge number of biblical illustrations throughout the texts, designed to provide practical and clear guidance to those who, the authors believed, needed it when their ministers were either in exile, hiding or prison.[133] Both tracts, however, contain warnings against dissimulation, teaching that it is imperative to 'dissemble not with his word [for] god wil not be mocked' and that unfaithfulness would lead to 'deserued plages'.[134] Essentially, these texts present the same perspective on the sinfulness of conformity, but do so from a pastoral, rather than a strictly critical, perspective.

It is relatively simple to identify where Nicodemites were targeted in a way that is consistent with the language of Calvin, but it is important to note that the tone overall is not the same as that in Calvin's *Excuse* or works by resistant theorists. The main themes of the tracts are prayer for the protection of those preaching the gospel, and for those in power to be wise and godly.[135] John Bale's tracts are good examples of how the Michael Wood texts retained a pastoral tone without openly disagreeing with any of the contemporary anti-Nicodemite writing.

The most anti-Nicodemite of the Michael Wood tracts is Hooper's *VVhether Christian faith maye be kepte secret in the heart*. Hooper had remained in England and was burnt at the stake in 1555 in Gloucester, having refused to recant his Protestant faith.[136] He wrote extensively to encourage the underground Protestant Church, and the book was written as a call to perseverance. He argues that dissimulation 'be dangerus & perilous to all persons' for three reasons: first, because of the condemnation against prostration before idols; second, because it affirmed the idolaters' belief; and third, because it misled the weak.[137] Hooper even noted that Calvin and Bullinger had answered all those who 'teach a manne with

[133] John Bale, *A soueraigne cordial for a Christian conscience: Content thi selfe with pacience, with Christ to bear the cros of paine which can wil the recmpence, a thousand fold with ioyes againe let nothig cause thi hart to quail launch out thi bote, hoise vp the sail put from the shore* (From Roane [i.e. London?], 1554), sig. A.iir.
[134] Bale, *Soveraigne cordial for a Christian conscience*, sig. B.iiv; John Bale, *An excellent and a right learned meditacion, compiled in two prayers most frutefull and necessary to be vsed and said of al ttue English men, in these daungerous daies of affliction, for the comfort and better stay of the christen conscience, bewailing the deserued plages of England* (Roane [i.e. London?] 1554), sig. [A.i]r.
[135] Bale, *An excellent and a right learned meditacion*, sig. A.iir.
[136] D. G. Newcombe, 'Hooper, John', in *ODNB*.
[137] John Hooper, *VVhether Christian faith maye be kepte secret in the heart, without confession thereof openly to the worlde as occasion shal serue Also what hurt commeth by them that hath receiued the Gospell, to be present at Masse vnto the simple and vnleatned* (1553), sig. a.iiiiv.

safegard of his conscience to be at Masse'.[138] However, there is still a pastoral tone to Hooper's tract, and he accepts that it is hard to 'confesse Christ in the daies of trouble' because, he says, of the 'loue of wife, children, brother sister, kinred, frinds, lands, & the loue vnto our selues', and that the call for perseverance is not an easy message to hear for those suffering.[139]

The Michael Wood tracts show that there was another, more pastoral side to anti-Nicodemite writing, but one that nevertheless demonstrated religious insecurity. There is no evidence that Cecil, or any other Nicodemite, had any influence over the texts, but there is clearly a less strident tone in these tracts than in the majority of other anti-Nicodemite writing. Nevertheless, they all argued that the Nicodemite had deviated from their implicit confessional norms, and the call to faithfulness could not avoid outlining the consequences of unfaithfulness. As a result, the Michael Wood tracts neither undermined Calvin's language nor focus overly on insulting the Nicodemites; they simply expressed concern about those who did not make loyalty to the Protestant confession their overarching priority.

Anti-Nicodemism themes in early Elizabethan published work

Calvin, Musculus, Bradford and other anti-Nicodemite writers focused on the theological principles; but rather than a target of opprobrium, religious conformity was a lived experience for many in England, including Queen Elizabeth. As a result, the published and public discussion of Nicodemism changed: the issue was no longer as relevant to the contemporary experience of English Protestant writers, and Nicodemite behaviour was no longer a threat to the English Protestant Church. Rather, the threat was perceived to come from religious conservatives and Catholics, and a prominent Protestant concern was whether the compromises that the Elizabethan Church made with conservative practices exacerbated the perceived Catholic threat.

Although the focus of Protestant religious insecurity changed, the language used did not. Karl Gunther argues that 'anti-Nicodemite anxieties and attitudes would powerfully shape the thought of the hotter sorts of Protestants throughout Elizabeth's reign', and were to be

[138] Hooper, *VVhether Christian faith maye be kepte secret*, sig. a.viir.
[139] Hooper, *VVhether Christian faith maye be kepte secret*, sig. a.iiir.

found woven into the religious and political discourse in the early Elizabethan period.[140] He notes that whilst there were 'strong legal, political and propagandist reasons for the Elizabethan regime to reject calls for retribution and to project an image of mercy and forgiveness', the 'hotter sorts' saw Elizabeth as disobedient to God in not revenging the Marian persecution, and that the time for mercy was over, as God had demanded vengeance.[141]

Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* included the wide range of Marian experiences, primarily to develop a martyrology based on the persecution of Protestants by Mary's regime. The *Acts and Monuments* was published by Day, veteran of the Michael Wood tracts and protégé of Cecil; it was essentially an officially sanctioned account designed to present the new Elizabethan era as a break from the darker Marian reign.[142] In this context, there was no space for specific criticism of Queen Elizabeth or her Nicodemite councillors. Indeed, Elizabeth is portrayed as wise and consistent in her belief and behaviour, and, in a large section on her suffering in the aftermath of the Wyatt rebellion, she is quoted as saying that whilst 'much suspected by mee, nothing proued can be'.[143] Given the context and purpose of Foxe's work, it is not surprising that Elizabeth is treated as a member of a wise and godly resistance, as opposed to a dissimulating traitor to God's kingdom, but her example is simply the clearest case of how Foxe's work does not directly deal with the Nicodemism of many of Elizabeth's leading councillors, especially given the support for the *Acts and Monuments* given by Cecil and other councillors.

It is important to note that there are anti-Nicodemite themes in *Act and Monuments,* although they were always dealt with in general terms. In part this is because the work includes a significant compendium of letters and materials from Protestant martyrs in Mary's reign – given the subject matter and the raw material for his work, Foxe would have found it almost impossible not to include anti-Nicodemite themes and language.

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[140] Gunther, *Reformation unbound*, p. 11.
[141] Karl Gunther, 'The Marian persecution and early Elizabethan Protestants: persecutors, apostates, and the wages of sin', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 107/1 (2016), pp. 149, 150, 155.
[142] Thomas Penn notes that, in relation to the succession of Henry VIII, presenting the new monarch as a 'metaphorical spring' needed the contrast of the winter of the 'disturbing years that had just passed', and it was the same case for Elizabeth. Thomas Penn, *Winter King: the dawn of Tudor England* (London, 2012), p. xx; Thomas Freeman, 'Foxe, John', in *ODNB*. Evenden, 'The Michael Wood mystery', p. 384.
[143] *TAMO* (1563), p. 1799.

Nevertheless, most of the relevant material emphasised the positive need for perseverance and faithfulness, rather than the negative consequences of Nicodemism. Foxe does include a letter from John Hullier – who was burnt at the stake in 1556 – in which he condemned 'this fainednes & dissimulation Christ & his gospel will in no wise allow' and stated, 'cursed be the dissemblers', but these were still not attacks on specific people, which is notable in a work that focused on individual experience of martyrdom because of fidelity to the Protestant confession.[144]

Whilst Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* carefully attempted to downplay Nicodemism, Miles Coverdale's *Certain most godly, fruitful and comfortable letters* was more open in its condemnation of those who conformed during Mary's reign. Coverdale was a returning exile of the hotter sort and *Comfortable letters* was a hagiographical martyrology. He had previously worked on the translation of the Geneva Bible, was a godfather to Knox's son, and had been an elder of the English Church in Geneva. Through his connections to Edmund Grindal, he secured a living in London, where he became known for his opposition to vestments and his work with Henry Bull on the *Comfortable letters.*[145]

Most of the *Comfortable letters* focus on the fruits of faithfulness, rather than challenging unfaithfulness, and it would be wrong to suggest that attacks on Nicodemism form a major theme in the work. Yet, in emphasising the faithfulness of the martyrs under persecution, Coverdale and Bull published letters that vilified those who conformed to avoid suffering.[146] There is a current of anti-Nicodemism that contrasts with *Acts and Monuments*. For example, they published a letter from Hooper 'to a Christian congregation' claiming that those who knew the truth needed to remain faithful to provide an example to the ignorant. If they failed to do so, Hooper stated, using Christ's words in Matthew 18, 'it were better a milstone were hanged about such an offenders necke, & cast into the sea.'[147] They also

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[144] *TAMO* (1563), p. 1583.

[145] The relationship between Coverdale and Bull, the *Comfortable Letters*, and the letters they contain are discussed in the Chapter 3. David Daniell, 'Coverdale, Miles (1488–1569), Bible translator and bishop of Exeter', in *ODNB*. Susan Wabuda, 'Bull, Henry', in *ODNB*.

[146] Shepardson argues that martyrs and Nicodemites were extremes of the same spectrum: 'Martyrdom was an ideal: the act of the martyr was not for everyone, but all could attempt to embrace or incorporate the qualities described by the martyrological accounts and not be a Nicodemite. Herein lies the linkage.': Nikki Shepardson, *Burning zeal: the rhetoric of martyrdom and the Protestant community in Reformation France, 1520-1570* (Bethlehem, PA, 2007), p. 40.

[147] Coverdale, p. 161.

published a series of strongly worded letters from John Hullier that used standard anti-Nicodemite arguments and tropes throughout, especially that Christ would be ashamed of those who denied him.[148]

These letters were published in a very different context from the one in which they were originally written. In publishing them, the intention was not to condemn Nicodemism *per se*, but to provide a conscience to the early Elizabethans and a strong warning against compromise in reform. They reflected the concern that religious compromises would lead to God's judgement, as they saw had happened during Mary's reign. This is also demonstrated by the English publication in 1550 and then in 1570 of Matteo Gribaldi's *A notable and marveilous epistle*, which told the story of Francis Spera, a Nicodemite who ended up killing himself. This was an important work, whose story Calvin saw as a warning against Nicodemism.[149] The English translation included Calvin's foreword, and an acrostic spelling out Spera's name (in the original Latin version) that stated: 'Let Spera be example to vs all in these our daies the like hath not been s[een] of one that had from God, so greate a fal, not able once hymself for grace to call bicause the wretch did set this worldly dross, in place about Christs gospel, truth, & cross'.[150] Gribaldi used the warning of the existential despair of the Nicodemite as a call to faithfulness, and stated that 'in these articles of our fayth we must daily exercise our selues'.[151]

During the first decade of the Elizabethan era, anti-Nicodemism started to be a means to criticise the pace of reform. To those who used the language of anti-Nicodemism, the 'black sheep' was the person who undermined Protestantism by tolerating 'popish' practice to remain in the Elizabethan Church. The language of anti-Nicodemism surfaces in other religious disagreements, such as the vestiarian controversy.[152] For example, in 1566, the

[148] Coverdale, p. 520.
[149] Andrew Hadfield, *Lying in early modern English culture: from the Oath of Supremacy to the Oath of Allegiance* (Oxford, 2017), p. 144.
[150] Matteo Gribaldi, *A notable and marueilous epistle of the famous doctour, Matthewe Gribalde, Professor of the lawe, in the Vniuersitie of Padua: concernyng the terrible iudgemente of God, vpon hym that for feare of men, denieth Christ and the knowne veritie: with a preface of Doctor Caluine* (London, 1570), sig. A.iiiiv.
[151] Gribaldi, *A notable and marueilous epistle*, sig. D.iir.
[152] This thesis does not aim to cover the issues of the vestiarian controversy – it is referenced as an example worthy of future exploration. The vestiarian controversy was caused by Archbishop Matthew Parker's insistence on full conformity to the provisions of the 1559 Book of Common Prayer, particularly those related to the wearing of vestments, and the vociferous and outspoken disagreement to this from the hotter members of clergy. Brett Usher has argued in 2001 that the vestiarian controversy had not had the level of scholarly

anonymous author of the tract *To my faithful brethren* explicitly used anti-Nicodemite language, including association with Mass, to decry the use of vestments as 'monuments of supersticion and Idolatry'.[153] Vestments were viewed in *To my faithful brethren* as a vestige of Mass that still needed purging, and could not be seen as a thing indifferent.[154] The author clearly used the same language as the anti-Nicodemites a decade before to condemn those who said that consistency between the internal and external was unimportant, stating that 'yf we so do with a pure hart and mynde, he hath promysed, He that honorith me, I will glorify him, and he that contemnith me, I wyll contemne him.'[155]

James Pilkington's 1560 commentary of *Aggeus the Prophete*, a commentary on the Old Testament book of Haggai, was similarly written to be a mirror to contemporary England.[156] It was reprinted alongside a commentary on Abdias (or Obadiah) in 1562. Pilkington argued that the context of Haggai was comparable with that of England, when 'after longe captiuitie of Gods people in Babylon, God gaue theim gracious king Cyrus, which set them at liberty and sent them home to builde Goddes house'.[157] However, Pilkington argued that this new opportunity needed to be accompanied by an earnest desire to right the wrongs of

debate it deserved – he argued that it was not the 'watershed in the fortunes of the English Protestant tradition' that scholarship from R. W. Dixon, Marshall Knappen, John Henry Primus, Patrick Collinson and William Haugaard had made it out to be in the decades up to the 1970s. Rather, Usher claims that the controversy was a demonstration of the failure of a national campaign for uniformity, and one of the things that provoked the 'Presbyterian campaign of the 1570s and 1580s' that was the real turning point. Since Usher's article, there is renewed scholarly interest in the vestiarian controversy. For example: Torrance Kirby highlights that Vermigli supported the interpretation of vestments as *adiaphora,* a position which brings into question a uniform reformed position; George Moore has argued that it was a result of the spiritualisation of Jewish traditions amongst 'a faction of radical Protestants'; and Silke Muylaert has used the vestiarian controversies to show 'how the stranger churches navigated political and religious circumstances in order to survive.' In this new scholarship, a study on the language of anti-Nicodemism in the protagonists of the vestiarian controversy would be valuable, albeit not something that it is possible to do within the confines of this particular thesis. Brett Usher, 'The Deanery of Bocking and the demise of the vestiarian controversy', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 52/3 (2001), p. 434; Torrance Kirby, ''Relics of the Amorites' or 'Things indifferent'? Peter Martyr Vermigli's authority and the threat of schism in the Elizabethan vestiarian controversy', *Reformation & Renaissance Review*, 6/3 (2004), p. 325; George Moore, 'The "ornament of the law": vestments and the translation of Judaism in the Geneva Bible', *Prose Stud.*, 37/3 (2015), p. 161; Silke Muylaert, 'Coexistence strategies: the strangers in London and the vestment controversies', *Archiv Für Reformationsgeschichte*, 112/1 (2021), p. 275.

[153] Anon., *To my faythfull brethren*, sig. A.iiiv.

[154] Anon., *To my faythfull brethren*, sig. A.iiiiv.

[155] Anon., *To my faythfull brethren*, sig. C.iir.

[156] Karl Gunther, 'Rebuilding the temple: James Pilkington, Aggeus and Early Elizabethan Puritanism', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 60/4 (2009), p. 691.

[157] James Pilkington, *Aggeus and Abdias prophetes the one corrected, the other newly added, and both at large declared* (London, 1562), sig. A.iiv.

the Babylonian captivity of Mary's reign, and to repent, especially for having set up and tolerated idols during Mary's reign. Pilkington stated that 'if thou wylt not glorify God in repenting, he wil glorify hym selfe in destroyinge thee.'[158]

Haggai told of the remnant of the people of Israel who had recently returned to rebuild Jerusalem and the Jewish religion. The audience of Haggai was the people of Israel, whether they had remained or been taken into exile in Babylon. Pilkington used Haggai to argue that the English Church had to cast off the 'popish' practices, and that association with them – Nicodemism – had been a sin that now required atonement. Haggai called for repentance and atonement, and without this, Pilkington argued, even though the building of the temple had begun, God would use plagues as 'a warninge too the rest' of sin which had not been accounted for.[159] Pilkington was essentially saying that Nicodemism could be blamed for the trials and plagues of the early Elizabethan era. In making this case, Pilkington's intention was less a call to repentance, and more a criticism of the current pace of reform.[160]

John Jewel and the moderation of anti-Nicodemite language

The official language of the Elizabethan regime is best illustrated by the work of John Jewel, especially the *Apologie or answere in defence of the Churche of England* and *The letter of a certain Englishman,* which was originally published anonymously but is clearly attributed to Jewel.[161] Jewel published the *Apologie* in 1562, at the request of Cecil. Jewel's was the first comprehensive and officially sanctioned theological articulation of the religious position of the Elizabethan Church, and defence of the Elizabethan Settlement – a process that began with the series of Parliamentary Acts of 1559 comprising the legal framework for the English Church and defining its practice, structure and religious doctrine. The *Apologie* was designed to be received by the complex and varied political and religious contexts in England and mainland Europe – Jewel reportedly met with Cecil numerous times in the drafting of his

[158] Pilkington, *Aggeus and Abdias*, sig. K.iiv.
[159] Pilkington, *Aggeus and Abdias*, sig. O.iiv.
[160] Gunther, 'Rebuilding the Temple', p. 692.
[161] John E. Booty, *John Jewel as apologist of the Church of England* (London, 1963), p. 210.

work – and, first published in Latin, it formed the official government response to the Papal invitation to send an ambassador to attend the Council of Trent.[162]

The *Apologie* should be seen as representative of the view of the Elizabethan state, and Jewel aimed to present the English Church as both faithful to the true Church throughout history and united in its beliefs. He consistently emphasised the unity in belief between the English Church and the Reformation in mainland Europe, mirroring St Paul's message in 1 Corinthians 1 in suggesting that there was really no Lutheran or Zwinglian, but only the true follower of Christ.[163] There was some use of anti-Nicodemite language, including the need not to be ashamed of the gospel, but as with Foxe's *Acts and Monuments,* these were not controversial, strong or dominant themes.[164] It is not a surprise that an official defence of the English Church, sponsored by Cecil and translated from Latin into English by Cecil's sister-in-law Anne Bacon, would not openly condemn Nicodemism, but it demonstrates how a careful line was being tread: anti-Nicodemite language was used sparingly, non-specifically and unthreateningly by those wishing to support the Elizabethan State and Settlement.

This moderate approach to using anti-Nicodemite language and themes can also be seen in the version of *The letter of a certain Englishman* published in 1561. Here, Jewel used a novel approach to address the question of Nicodemism: when he discussed the deliverance of God from 'the turbulent and vicious times of previous years', Jewel referred to those who 'remained obscurely at home as in the cave of Abdias'.[165] This is a reference to 1 Kings 18, which records Obadiah, King Ahab's palace administrator, hiding over a hundred prophets from Queen Jezebel to rescue them and ensure they would be ready to return when the time was right. Jezebel's name was a common term used by Protestants to denote Mary, and there is no ambiguity in the illustration Jewel made in this passage. In 1 Kings 18:18,

[162] W. Kirby, 'Signs and things signified: sacramental hermeneutics in John Jewel's "Challenge Sermon" and the "culture of persuasion" at Paul's Cross', *Reformation & Renaissance Review,* 11/1 (2009), p. 70.
[163] John Jewel, *An apologie, or aunswer in defence of the Church of England concerninge the state of religion vsed in the same*, trans. Lady Anne Cooke Bacon (London, 1562), fols. 20r-v.
[164] Even the 1559 Book of Common Prayer talks about how it is important to neither 'dissemble nor cloke' sins before the Lord; this is the same language as in the 1552 version. *The Book of Common Prayer* (London, 1559), p. 4; Jewel, *Apologie*, fol. 69v.
[165] John Jewel, 'The letter of a certain Englishman, in which is asserted the consensus of true religion, doctrine, and ceremonies in England, against the empty scoffing of some, by which they try to impugn this truth in their sermons to the simple people', in John E. Booty, trans., *John Jewel as apologist of the Church of England* (London, 1963), p. 217.

Elijah addressed Ahab, stating that he had 'forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baal', but also that the time had come to rise up against those who 'eat at Jezebel's table'[166]. This also refers to the later story, as recorded in Romans, that 'there [was] a remnant according to the election of grace' in Israel – after Elijah questioned whether he alone had remained faithful to God'[167]. By referring to Nicodemites in this way, Jewel was able to avoid the trap of pardoning the behaviour of those who conformed under Mary and yet see a key role for Nicodemites in God's plan for the English Church.

Furthermore, Jewel wrote positively of the partnership between those who 'remained obscurely at home' and those who 'returned from outside areas'; they had, according to Jewel, all 'agreed on the same headings of religion, and have subscribed to the articles which we now use'.[168] He went on to argue that 'if all of us individually were put into separate cells[...] I do not doubt but that individuals from every part of our communion would answer if not with the same words or syllables, at least with the same opinions', and in doing so he downplayed differences between Nicodemite and exile (and among Lutherans, Zwinglians, Calvinists and others) in the formation of the Elizabethan Church.[169]

Jewel's language of compromise and unity in *The letter of a certain Englishman* was written in Latin and intended for international scholarly debate across Europe, rather than for public propaganda in England. Jewel sought to counter the Roman Catholic argument that the Protestant Churches were schismatic and full of disagreement. In doing so, Jewel claimed that everyone agreed that the Vestiarian debate was a minor disagreement; that from the very beginning of the Church there had been variations and differences between Christians in the practice of worship, and that there was no harm in this whatsoever; and that 'those who so tragically ridicule us, O immortal God, how beautifully do they agree among themselves?'[170] Jewel concluded that 'it is not the part of a prudent man, believe me, to condemn an entire doctrine because of some small and amicable disagreement'.[171] Jewel was a staunch defender of the Elizabethan Settlement, and this text demonstrates how anti-

[166] 1 Kings 18:18-19.
[167] Romans 11:5.
[168] Jewel, 'The letter of a certain Englishman', p. 217.
[169] Jewel, 'The letter of a certain Englishman', pp. 217–9.
[170] Jewel, 'The letter of a certain Englishman', pp. 219, 221, 223.
[171] Jewel, 'The letter of a certain Englishman', p. 223.

Nicodemite themes and language were not helpful for those who sought to present the established Church as united.

Conclusion

The public language of anti-Nicodemism was an expression of religious insecurity; it was not an articulation of the lived experience of relationships among Marian Protestants who conformed to avoid religious persecution and those who did not. In truth, no one would have self-identified as a Nicodemite in the terms outlined by Calvin, Becon, and Musculus. Instead, the Nicodemite was useful as a foil and contrast to the outwardly faithful Protestant who either faced martyrdom or went into exile. The consistency of anti-Nicodemite literature, using the same language and motifs originally developed by Calvin, reinforced the importance of loyalty and perseverance. Anti-Nicodemism provided a language that extended beyond its original intent: it justified exile, and beyond that was used variously in the development of resistance theory and even when discussing the Elizabethan Settlement, albeit in a careful and understated way.

Calvin created a distinction between the Nicodemus of John 7 and John 19, and in doing so utilised the ambiguity of the biblical Nicodemus to create a nomenclature that described the fears of the persecuted Protestant Church wherever it may be found. The extensive use of this language by the Marian exiles demonstrated how effective it was as an articulation of English Protestant religious fragility. Anti-Nicodemite language was more about the insecurities of the Protestant Reformation in general than criticism of the actions of specific individuals, and no more so than in England during the reign of Mary and the first decade of Elizabeth's rule. The language of anti-Nicodemism permeated debates well beyond those about religious dissimulation because anti-Nicodemism was never truly about dissimulation.[172]

The published language of anti-Nicodemism was distant; it was written and printed in Emden, Strasbourg, Geneva, and other mainland European Protestant havens; it was written for those in exile already; and it was general and never specific about individuals. Anti-Nicodemism played an important role in justifying the decisions of its readers to go into

[172] Woo, *Nicodemism*, p. 18.

exile. The public attacks on Nicodemism were against the principle and theory of Nicodemism, and not specific to individuals – it did not confront the more difficult situations among those who had the choice of death or conformity; it did not address the complexity of living in a hostile environment, and nor did it tackle the day-to-day challenges of Protestants who wished to remain safe and as faithful as they could in Marian England. This chapter has shown the insecurity expressed in published anti-Nicodemite works – the next will address how anti-Nicodemite themes were never dominant in the personal relationships during Mary's reign.

Chapter 3: The invisibility of Marian Nicodemism

There was an inconsistency between public perceptions of Nicodemism on the one hand and private perceptions of individual Nicodemites on the other. The public language of anti-Nicodemism was strident, but not personal; published works by Protestants attacked and condemned their confessional brethren who conformed to the Catholic practice of attending Mass, yet the private correspondence was much more nuanced. Its messages and tone focused on the pastoral challenges faced by those suffering persecution. This chapter argues that Nicodemism and anti-Nicodemism only truly existed in the public and impersonal discourse. There was a significant distinction during Mary's reign between the way Nicodemism was discussed in private and in public. A focus on private correspondence shows that the personal response to those facing persecution was very different from public declarations regarding Nicodemite sinfulness.

As demonstrated in Chapter 2, pastoral anti-Nicodemism reflected religious concern, as did the Protestant personal correspondence in Mary's reign. However, there is a difference between the general anxiety of anti-Nicodemite published work and the personal concern shown to named co-religionists, friends, and family members. Many of the sources show a complex set of personal identities and loyalties – to family, friends, the sovereign, and the individual conscience – that make the stark simplicity of identities portrayed in published anti-Nicodemism unrealistic in practice. Further, 'Nicodemite' was not used in personal correspondence – the emphasis was always on faithfulness and loyalty. In personal letters, concern for the safety of individuals in a difficult situation was more apparent than general insecurity about the threat of Nicodemism to the Protestant confession. This chapter shows that there was a lot of religious concern, but anger and recriminations were not part of the written discourse between individuals – the nature of anti-Nicodemism was that it was publicly aggressive, but not present in private correspondence. This was even the case for those who had written published anti-Nicodemite invective.

Andrew Pettegree states that most people in the evangelical movement were Nicodemites, and that Nicodemism was widespread and 'was an unheroic experience, but one vital for

the future re-emergence of English Protestantism'.[1] However, Nicodemism was never an owned identity; it was only ever an identification imposed on a non-specific constituency because of the public perception of their actions. Due to its very nature, sources are limited in number and lack clarity of expression: there are no surviving English written accounts, private or published, justifying Nicodemism, and upon which any can base a theory of Nicodemism itself. The evidence for this chapter comes instead from condemnations of religious dissimulation and from calls for faithfulness, especially by those writing from an anti-Nicodemite perspective.

These challenges are not insurmountable. During Mary's reign, letters from Protestant leaders who were later executed (referred to simply as 'the martyrs' hereafter), letters from Protestant exiles, and records from the running of William Cecil's household provide the basis for some conclusions to be drawn. First, it is possible to understand the martyrs' concern for their supporters living in a Catholic state; second, it is possible to show how exiles spoke to one another about specific cases of recantation and dissimulation; and third, Cecil's correspondence and household records build a picture of how he, and those around him, lived under Mary's reign. As Ahnert and Ahnert have demonstrated, there was a resilient Protestant community with networks of spiritual and practical support, effective communication, and a clear sense of Protestant confessional loyalty.[2] In addition, through Cecil and others, it is possible to draw tentative links from the supportive Protestant community to Princess Elizabeth's household.

The evidence suggests that the approach taken publicly by Protestant anti-Nicodemites was not consistent with that taken in private. Instead of condemning, the personal letters from the more strident and the martyrs focused on encouraging their flock to remain faithful when faced of persecution. The importance of these personal relationships is apparent in the tone of the correspondence, and any conformity was met not with invective, but with sadness and concern – as Robert Smyth wrote, 'it breaketh my hart'.[3]

There was still a question about how Protestants could best avoid conformity to Catholic services, and flight into exile was not always the uncontentious option that Foxe and other

[1] Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, pp. 6, 154.
[2] Ahnert and Ahnert, 'A community under attack', p. 275.
[3] Coverdale, p. 552.

Elizabethan writers sought to portray; indeed, there was clearly still a debate in Protestant circles about the legitimacy of exile, and the advice that was often given was to face persecution as a test of faith.[4] Nevertheless, a large number of Protestant leaders did leave England and seek refuge in the Protestant city-states of the European mainland, and their correspondence shows a reluctance to criticise individuals for Nicodemism. The exiles may have been disinclined to condemn individual behaviour because of their own experiences of persecution and recantation, and the practical, financial, and political support they still required from friends who remained in England. Instead, the focus in the correspondence between and from exiles was on the theological and pastoral lessons that needed to be learned from the demise of the Edwardian Protestant Church.

In line with Susan Brigden, J. W. Martin and Carlos Eire, this chapter argues that Nicodemism was never a consistent identity or ideology – beyond this, the chapter contends that even those in those in prison for their refusal to renounce their Protestantism did not condemn individuals.[5] This chapter contributes to the historiography by arguing that anti-Nicodemite insecurity was expressed in a general, not specific, and individual, sense. Some letters do include references to backsliding and conformity, but these are not specific to individuals. The main concerns in correspondence about specific individuals were pastoral – these letters were written out of concern for friends, family, and fellow Protestants: there was a sense of sorrow that someone would fail to recognise publicly their Protestant faith and identity when challenged, with the stated consequences of Nicodemism used as a warning to encourage faithfulness.[6]

For those who remained in England and conformed to avoid persecution, there was not always a clear distinction between Nicodemism and faithfulness. As shown in this chapter through the example of Cecil, it was possible to conform outwardly and yet privately maintain a belief in the righteousness of one's actions. This chapter examines a letter Cecil wrote during the dying days of Jane's government, in which he showed that he understood how he might publicly be perceived to be a 'bondsman' – an indentured servant – but was in

[4] Jonathan Wright, 'Marian Exiles and the Legitimacy of Flight from Persecution', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 52/2 (2001), p. 266.
[5] Brigden, *London and the Reformation*; Martin, 'The Protestant underground congregations'; Eire, 'Calvin and Nicodemism', p. 69.
[6] Coverdale, pp. 340–341.

fact a 'foreman' in God's service. Cecil understood that there was a distinction between how the public might perceive his actions and his conscience. The chapter shows that there is evidence that, whilst publicly supporting Mary's reign, Cecil also worked to provide support for the underground Protestant Church.

The personal letters broadly fall into three categories: those among the martyrs, for example between Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley; those between prisoners and people who sustained them (known as 'sustainers', following the terminology used by John Foxe); and those from and to exiles.[7] This chapter argues that anti-Nicodemite public condemnation did not reflect the lived and personal experience of those struggling with real questions of religious practice and conformity; anti-Nicodemism was a reflection of the different natures of public insecurity and private religious concern.

Letters from the martyrs on the importance of remaining faithful

Letters from martyrs did not generally focus on criticising abstract concepts, but rather to encourage people to act in a way consistent with what they had been taught to believe. Where there were concerns about conformity, the tone was not condemnatory but largely focused on encouragement and advice against continued conformity. They were letters to real people whose lives were complex and did not conform to the anti-Nicodemite stereotypes outlined in published sources.

It is also important to make a clear distinction between open letters that addressed a general audience, and letters to individuals. Overall, there is very little difference between the content and intent of published tracts and sermons and that of the open letters: tracts and sermons were often written in an explicitly epistolic fashion. The open letters do not provide any meaningful evidence of how Nicodemism affected relationships between Protestants in Mary's reign; they fulfil a much more rhetorical purpose for the audience at the time. For example, John Careless used the psalmic word 'Selah' at the end of paragraphs in one open letter, clearly demonstrating his expectation that his audience would understand the mirroring of pseudo-prophetic language.[8] Careless was a Protestant in

[7] Thomas Freeman, '"The Good Ministrye of Godlye and Vertuouse Women": the Elizabethan martyrologists and the female supporters of the Marian martyrs', *Journal of British Studies*, 39/1 (2000), p. 9.
[8] Coverdale, p. 569.

prison, whom Foxe recorded as being a weaver from Coventry 'by the secret iudgement of the almightie God preuented by death, so that he came not to the full martyrdom of his body' – in other words, he died in prison before he was killed. [9] Careless wrote numerous letters, and his writing to women will be explored in more depth in Chapter 5. In both the personal and open letters, it is important to recognise the general mirroring of biblical styles in the martyrs' letters, particularly in terms of the tone, message, and language of the Pauline epistles.

Whether open and general or private and confidential, there is a consensus in all this correspondence about the importance of remaining faithful. Where anti-Nicodemite language was present in personal correspondence, it was generic and aimed at promoting faithfulness, not condemning specific action. Richard Hopkins was a minor nobleman based in Coventry, referred to as 'Shriefe', and a member of an underground Church for which he spent time in prison. Whilst in prison in 1555, John Bradford wrote to Hopkins and his wife to warn against attending Mass: 'My dearely beloued, therfore marke the worde harken to the worde: it alloweth no Massyng, no suche sacrificyng nor worshyppyng of Christe wyth tapers, candels, copes, canapies, &c. It allowed no Latyne seruice no images in the Temples, no prayeng to Sainctes dead, no prayinge for the deade. It alloweth no suche disssmulation as a greate many vse nowe outwardelye.'[10] In his letter, Bradford used the terms 'masse gospellers' and 'dissemblers', rather than Nicodemites, but he did use a familiar anti-Nicodemite trope to convey the message that the gospel 'alloweth no luke warme gentlemen: but yf God be God, then followe hym, yf Baal and a peece of breade be GOD, then followe it' – referring to the Mass as describing God as a piece of bread.[11] Bradford used biblical imagery taken from Revelation 3:16, where it stated that Jesus would 'spew… out of my mouth' anyone who was lukewarm in their faith, and then echoed Elijah's challenge to the people of Israel in 1 Kings 18, that, 'how long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him, but if Baal be he, then go after him'.[12] The 1 Kings reference was particularly apt, as Elijah's challenge was during the reign of Jezebel: as was noted in Chapter 2, Queen Mary was often described by English Protestants as Jezebel, the

[9] *TAMO* (1563), p. 1598.
[10] Coverdale, p. 349.
[11] Coverdale, pp. 345–6, 348.
[12] Revelation 3:16; 1 Kings 18:21.

Old Testament queen who led Israel astray. Bradford stated that the avoidance of persecution was 'selfe love' and was the opposite of martyrdom: 'For all the clokes they make, they cannot avoyde this, but that their going to church and to Masse, is of selfe love: that is, they go thether because they would avoyde the crosse.'[13]

Bradford was not specific about any individuals; rather, he bemoaned general Nicodemism in the abstract:

> But weale awaye, the tenthe person perseuereth not: the more parte doe parte stakes wythe the papistes and protestantes, so that they are become maungye Mongrelles, to the infectynge of all that company wyth them, and to theyr no smale peryll. For they pretend outwardly popery, goyng to Masse with the papistes & tarying with them personallye at theyr Antichristian and idolatrous seruyce: but with their harts (say they) and wyth theyr spirites they serue the lorde.[14]

Bradford argued that if God would not forgive the consciences of the 'masse gospellers' then nothing would, and that their 'goodes, landes and possessions, the which they by theyr dissemblyng' would not save them, because 'god is no merchaunte, as our Masse priestes be.'[15]

Bradford made no accusation against Hopkins, his family, or his community. Instead, he urged Hopkins to stay away from Nicodemites, stating that he should 'flee from such persones as from men most perilous and pernicious bothe before God and man: for they are false to bothe, and true to neyther.'[16] Bradford addressed the concern that what he was asking of Hopkins was perilous, and that, by following the advice he was giving, Hopkins could 'lose your libertie, your landes, your goodes, your frends, your name, your life &c. and so shall your children be left in miserable state &c.'.[17] Bradford answered this rhetorical apprehension by stating that faithfulness to God was worth more than all earthly things: 'You sware & promised to leave al & folow Christ, & wil you now leave him for your father, your mother, your children, your lands, your life? &c. He that hateth not these saith Christ,

[13] Coverdale, p. 346.
[14] Coverdale, pp. 345–6.
[15] Coverdale, p. 347.
[16] Coverdale, pp. 345–6.
[17] Coverdale, p. 351.

is not worthy of me.'[18] In asking this question, Bradford was repeating the challenge from Jesus in the Gospel of Luke.[19]

There are numerous other examples in the correspondence of calls to remain faithful and to do everything to avoid conformity – all of which reflected the threat posed by the Marian regime and the sense from Protestant martyrs that their encouragement was needed for people to stay faithful. In 1555, John Philpot, the former Archdeacon of Winchester, prisoner and future martyr, wrote to John Careless a letter of encouragement to 'be not perverted with them that be perverted and intractable'.[20] Nicholas Ridley wrote to his former chaplain, Edmund West, in 1554 that 'I say vnto you in the worde of the lorde (and that I say to you I say to all my frendes and louers in god) that yf you doe not confesse and maintayne to your power and knowledge, that which is grounded upon gods word, but will either for feare or gayne of the world shrinke and play the Apostata, in dede you shall dye the deathe: you know what I meane.'[21] However, in a later letter to Edmund Grindal, Ridley recounts that West had recanted to the Catholic authorities, and 'he escaped not withoute some beckyng and bowyng (alas) of hys knee vnto Baal'.[22] Indeed, Ridley's letters recount several examples of former friends and colleagues who had recanted to avoid persecution: another chaplain, Nicholas Grimbold, was accused of 'playe[ing] me such a Iudas part', and Ridley's cousin Lancelot Ridley was sent a warning letter about the dangers of conformity.[23] Unlike the invective in published material, private correspondence about recantation and conformity focused more on blaming the Marian regime, expressing disappointment and using it to claim, as Robert Horne and Richard Chambers wrote to Heinrich Bullinger in 1556 about John Cheke's recantation, that 'it is vain to place our confidence in man' – echoing the words of Psalm 118.[24]

Robert Smyth, who according to Foxe was martyred in 1555, wrote a letter to an unnamed female 'frende of hys' in 1555 about conformity, in which he urged her to avoid going to

[18] Coverdale, p. 351.
[19] Luke 14:26.
[20] John Philpot to John Careless, n.d. 1555, ECL, MS 260 fol. 82r.
[21] Bull and Coverdale included a note that 'Apostata was he which fled from hys captaine to the enemy. He was also so called that departed from ye chrystyans to the Iewes & Gentiles'. Coverdale, pp. 41, 43.
[22] Coverdale, pp. 53–4.
[23] Coverdale, pp. 57, 79–80.
[24] Richard Horne and Richard Chambers to Henry Bullinger, 19 September 1556, *ZL*, 3, p. 133; Psalm 118:8.

Mass: 'I haue heard say that my frend is geven ouer to vanity. It breaketh my hart, not only to heare that she so dothe, but also teacheth other, that it is unhurtfull to go to all abhominations, whyche now stande in the Idoles temples.'[25] The tone of these letters was firm, but not uncaring; the emphasis was on wanting a good outcome for the recipient of the letter. This sense of caring for those who conformed in the face of persecution could also be seen in a private prayer, ostensibly 'for the use of the persecuted under Queen Mary', and written by Thomas Spurge, a fuller from Essex, killed along with Robert Drakes, William Tyms, his brother Richard Spurge, John Cavel, and George Ambrose at Smithfield in 1556. Written in 1555, the prayer asked:

> also, good Lord, I beseech thee to be merciful to our weak brethren and sistern, the which as yet dare not openly confess thy holy name, for fear of this sharp storm of persecution. Good Lord, I beseech thee to send them grace and strength […and they] that have a troubled conscience for this plague, and which is now come again among us for our unthankfulness sake, whose hearts, Lord, thou knowst.[26]

The pastoral tone of this prayer was clear: it was about encouraging faithfulness, rather than condemning those who conformed. Spurge wished those who conformed because of fear to be given 'grace and strength' to change their behaviour and act in a way that would give them a clear conscience. Written for those who might have been experiencing the 'sharp storm of persecution', the prayer demonstrates how personal and pastoral correspondence had the objective of supporting people's faithfulness and not condemning abstract concepts like Nicodemism.

A noteworthy theme in the prison correspondence is the self-examination and self-justifications of the martyrs; significant sections were devoted to the theme of personal sin, unfaithfulness, and the justification of Christ. These were written to encourage but they also strengthened the authority of the martyrs and their letters – it was their utility to the propagandist purposes of Foxe and Coverdale that ensured the letters' survival. Despite protestations of sinfulness and unworthiness, the martyrs reacted sensitively to any

[25] *TAMO* (1583), p. 1718; Coverdale, p. 552.
[26] John Strype, *Ecclesiastical memorials: relating chiefly to religion, and its reformation, under the reigns of King Henry VIII. King Edward VI. And Queen Mary the First: with the appendixes containing the original papers, records, etc.,* 7 (Oxford, 1816), pp. 319–20.

indication that they might have recanted or attended Mass. Cranmer stated that 'when untrue reports & lies turne to the hinderance of gods truth, they be in no wise to be suffred. Wherfore these be to signify unto the world, that it was a false, flattering, lying and dissembling monke which caused masse to be set up there without, mine aduise or counsel'.[27] When Bartholomew Green heard that Philpot believed him to have recanted, he reacted angrily, stating that he 'maruel[ed] much that you wil raise such sclanders of me. For what els is a sclaunder, then an vntrue reporte of a man, to the hurte of a man? And thoughe you wyll not seeme to hurt me herein, nor did it therefore: yet being a false reporte of me to the hurte of other men, me thinketh I may count my selfe sclaundred therein.'[28] These show the sensitivity to suggestions of conformity from those in prison – their authority to teach and encourage Protestant non-conformity was dependent on the perception of the martyr's faithfulness.

In 1555, Elizabeth Longshaw, of whom not much is known beyond her letters to Bradford from Eccles in Lancashire, wrote that Bradford was 'her greatest comfort' and outlined the difficult choices she faced: 'either to flee or abide and denye my god, which the Lorde forbyd; or else to be caste in prison & suffor death'. She continued, 'the cause which I must suffor is for not goinge to church, & comyting spiritual fornication with their strange godes, but the Lorde hathe assured my conscience rather to suffer the deathe, than to do as they wolde have me, for I beleve all their goinges to be mere vanitie, & abhominable before god'.[29] Nevertheless, she asked for prayer that she may not 'shrink from the fight… [and] at the dredfull daie of iudgement when the secretes of all hartes shalbe openid, I may be founde acceptable in thy syght'.[30] Longshaw's letter is rich in biblical imagery, which she used to outline the key issue very clearly – whether to go into exile, to conform or to suffer persecution.[31] She concluded that she would remain and 'mustte suffer persecution'.[32] There is no evidence that she did face any persecution, but she clearly believed it to be a real choice that she was facing; she needed an answer to the question of how she could

[27] Coverdale, p. 11.
[28] *TAMO* (1563), p. 1528.
[29] Elizabeth Longshaw to John Bradford, n.d. 1555, ECL, MS 260, fol. 200r-v.
[30] Elizabeth Longshaw to John Bradford, n.d. 1555, ECL, MS 260, fol. 201r.
[31] 1 Timothy 6:12; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Romans 2:16; 1 Corinthians 4:5; and Psalms 19:14 all use the same motifs.
[32] Elizabeth Longshaw to John Bradford, n.d. 1555, ECL, MS 260, fol. 200v.

demonstrate the importance and strength of her faith when facing external pressure to conform.

Letters from exile

Jonathan Wright contends that the legitimacy of going into exile was not unquestioned in the early years of Mary's reign. He argues that persecution could be seen as a 'deserved punishment' as well as 'an opportunity to repent of misdeeds and return to Christ, a chance to be purged from sin, and a means of testing one's faith.'[33] Jane Dawson states that 'given the uncompromising nature of their advice [on avoiding Nicodemism], the early writings of the exiles conveyed an underlying sense of guilt allied with the worry about having themselves chosen a cowardly path'.[34] The emphasis in the theological justifications used by the Marian exiles was on exile as 'an issue of conscience, rather than of political expediency or cowardice'; the contrast with Nicodemism was useful because, if being a Nicodemite was the only alternative, then surely exile was justifiable.[35]

This question of exile or persecution came up regularly in the correspondence, demonstrating how it was a clear concern for many of the Protestant community, whether in prison or not: Cranmer argued that it was fine to go into exile, and Lawrence Saunders urged his wife to 'put not your self in daunger where it nedes not' and thus to go into exile; by contrast Bradford asked his supporters Cuthbert and Anne Warcup to be ready to die for their faith, 'because ye are gods shepe, prepare your selues to the slaughter, alwayes knowyng that in the syghte of the lord, our death shall be precious.'[36] Often there was a disagreement, with Cranmer having urged Joan Wilkinson to go into exile, and Bradford stating that 'I meane to cal you forth as a Martyr and as a witnes against this filth, I hope you will become double thankful.'[37] Meanwhile, Bradford wrote to Joyce Hales with the hope that 'god wold hastely touch your husbands harte' to take them into exile, and avoid

[33] Wright, 'Marian Exiles', p. 266.
[34] Jane E. A. Dawson, '"Satan's bludy clawses": how religious persecution, exile and radicalisation moulded British Protestant identities', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 71/3 (2018), p. 270.
[35] Woo makes this point in his argument about Horne's translation of Calvin's *Quatre sermons*, in which Horne carefully used Calvin's anti-Nicodemism to justify his own choice of exile. As Woo argues, the central theme of *Quatre sermons* was exile as the essential nature of all Christian life. Woo, *Nicodemism and the English Calvin*, p. 136; Wright, 'Marian Exiles', p. 228.
[36] Coverdale, pp. 24, 195, 284.
[37] Coverdale, *letters*, p. 342.

the temptation to conform.[38] This was a debate within the Protestant community, without a clear consensus.

It is estimated that over a thousand people did go into self-imposed exile, often to the Protestant city states of Strasbourg, Frankfurt, and Zurich, but a number also travelled around Europe visiting academic centres.[39] Edwardian Protestant leaders reacted with shock at the speed with which the Marian state was able to dismantle the Edwardian Church: the exiles were largely Church leaders or prominent theologians, although a few noble men and women also went into exile – notably Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk.[40]

Many of the letters from the exiles that survive are collected in the *Zurich Letters*, published between 1845 and 1848 in numerous volumes and based on a study of the archives in Zurich. As should be expected, they include a significant number of letters to Heinrich Bullinger, the leader of the Protestant Church in Zurich during the period and an important correspondent with exiles in several cities. The available sources are not without problems, as they provide only a very partial view of the correspondence and often only include letters from one party to another, without the replies.

The letters from exiles were rarely specific about individuals in their criticism of Nicodemism. Those who went into exile did so because of the pressure to conform to Catholicism in England, and often after they had been arrested and released upon having recanted – as was the case for Lawrence Saunders, John Scory, and John Jewel. It is notable that most people who were accused by the Marian authorities of heresy recanted to avoid death. Eric Bramhall notes that, amongst others, 'Scory, Barlow and Jewel recanted in Oxford in 1554 before escaping to exile… [and] most of the 400 who were accused in London after the 1555 visitation, however, readily conformed. Just three were condemned to the flames.'[41] This is significant because the correspondence that remains comes from

[38] John Bradford to Joyce Hales, n.d. 1555, ECL, MS 260, fol. 34v.
[39] Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, pp. 3–4.
[40] Melissa Franklin Harkrider, *Women, reform and community in early modern England: Katherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk, and Lincolnshire's godly aristocracy, 1519 - 1580* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2008), p. 16.
[41] Eric Bramhall, 'Penitence and the English Reformation' (PhD Dissertation, University of Liverpool, 2013), p. 131.

people who had experience of the threats that led to conformity or were in regular contact with them.

Those who had conformed were not immune to criticism, but it is notable how this criticism ceased when they went into exile. Unfortunately, the challenge of most historical evidence is that it does not describe thought process or motivation behind the lack of criticism, but the extant correspondence was written by people with lived experience of Nicodemism – they would have known and understood the pressures faced by their brethren in England. The challenge of explaining the discrepancy between public and private attitudes to conformity can be found in the way insecurity was manifested through invective at the general sense of religious betrayal, alongside concern for known individuals who were genuinely suffering. Seen through the prism of religious fragility, this discrepancy is no longer the historiographical challenge it first appears.

There is an additional reason for the lack of exile condemnation: the exiles needed the support of friends back in England, many of whom were prominent conformists. In 1555, Mary's government tried to pass a bill in parliament to deprive the exiles of their property. This attempt was successfully stopped by people who remained in England, like Cecil and his brother-in-law Nicholas Bacon. Despite the failure of this measure the exiles were often left living on restricted incomes.[42] As Pettegree notes, 'remaining in England was in some respects quite convenient to [the exiles], particularly to those to whom [Cecil] was connected by ties of friendship and kinship, whose interests he could watch over during their time abroad.'[43] The relationships between exiles and those who remained were often closer than might be expected from a simple reading of the published anti-Nicodemite texts, thus supporting the conclusions of Chapter 2 that anti-Nicodemite language was more about the insecurities of the Reformation as a whole than specific criticism of individuals.

The letters from the Marian exiles generally focus on questions of theology, the organisation of the English exile Church, and personal news. Nevertheless, there were a few trends that will be shown below about how the letters referred to conformity to Mary's Church – the

[42] David Loades, *The Reign of Mary Tudor* (London, 1979), pp. 218–9.
[43] Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 104 supported by Stephen Alford who cites the letters between Cecil and his father-in-law, Anthony Cooke. Alford, *Burghley*, p. 76.

first was the lack of opprobrium as the published work of the same authors, and the second was that conformity was most often only mentioned in a general sense.

In writing to, and about, individuals, blame was almost always general: individuals were not to blame for the ungodliness of England, rather the failure of the Edwardian reforms were a national tragedy. Most of the correspondence focused instead on the fruits of faithfulness and a call for continued perseverance. Indeed, there was no explicit mention of Nicodemism, and relatively few mentions of 'masse-gospellers' or 'dissemblers', such as the example from Bradford cited earlier. Instead, there were regular exhortations to faithfulness that mirrored the published anti-Nicodemite language, and a couple of cases where the letter-writers dealt with specific cases of recantation, or of attendance at Mass, by one of their correspondents – most notably the example of James Hales, as given below. These were generally dealt with in a positive and restorative way that emphasised the eschatological benefits of faithfulness.

In a letter to Calvin from Strasbourg in February 1555, Thomas Sampson recorded the recantations of the former bishop of Bath and Wells and his archdeacon without real anger.[44] This was despite Sampson's numerous published anti-Nicodemite invectives. In January 1558, Anthony Cooke wrote letters to Peter Martyr and to his son-in-law, Cecil, also sent from Strasbourg, in which he blamed the fall of Calais on the unfaithfulness of the English.[45] These letters focused on unspecific and general condemnation, with Cooke writing, 'but alas! for our carelessness, or (shall I say?) our blindness; who, though we have treacherously forsaken the Lord, are yet without fear of the punishment due to our wickedness, and denounced against us by the voice of God.'[46] These letters did not centre on individuals and their actions, but rather were a lament on the fall of the Edwardian Church and the judgement of God.

The pastoral intent of letters to those who conformed

Some letters contain direct criticism, but these are often written to unknown recipients. It is not surprising that the people who received these letters remained anonymous, given the

[44] Thomas Sampson to John Calvin, 23 February 1555, *ZL*, 3, p. 171.
[45] John Cheke to Henry Bullinger, 7 June 1553, *ZL*, 3, p. 140; Anthony Cooke to William Cecil, 24 January 1558, CP, MS 151, fol. 141r.
[46] Cheke to Bullinger, 7 June 1553, *ZL*, 3, p. 140.

highly critical content of the letters. One such case is in a letter from Laurence Saunders in 1555 to an anonymous 'certayne backeslyder' and appears to have been written to a Church minister. Saunders was a Protestant minister based in London, who had benefitted from the patronage of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, and whom Diarmaid MacCulloch describes as a 'second-rank' figure in the leaders of the evangelical cause.[47] In his letter, Saunders stated that 'alas wretched man what hath caused thee thus to caste awaye thy selfe once knowing the truth, and to take in hande to be a minister in Antichristes Church? Arte thou so sone wery of the heauenly Manna and so readye to returne to thy olde vomite agayne?'[48] Saunders was referencing the Biblical proverb that 'as a dog turneth again to his own vomit, so a fool turneth to his foolishness', and contrasting this with the food – Manna – that God miraculously provided to the Israelites in the Exodus, to make the point that Nicodemism was foolish.[49] Saunders was clear in his letter that the person he was writing to knew that his conformity was wrong, and that he was a Nicodemite: he stated 'make not prouision for the flesh with the losse of your soule', referencing the Gospel of St Matthew 16, in which Jesus made the point to his disciples that they should not let the fear of persecution stop them being faithful to the gospel. [50] Although Saunders' writing was a very rare direct critique, it should not necessarily be taken to mean that more such letters were not written – it would be unlikely that many would keep such personally critical letters, so survival rates would be low. The remaining copy of the letter does not include the address leaf; and as the address of the letter is anonymous, it is unfortunately not possible to know how Saunders knew the 'backeslyder', nor therefore to analyse the impact of Saunders' perception of Nicodemism on their relationship.

William Tyms also wrote an undated letter to an unspecified Protestant community, or family, whom he accused of backsliding. Tyms started the letter with 'my deare brethren and sisterne even so many of you as have a sorowfull harte for your bakeslydynge frome chryst for feare of persycucyon and that do ernystly repente this intendynge frome hense forthe', and called on them to 'take up ther cros and folowe hyme [Christ]' – echoing Jesus'

[47] Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: a life* (New Haven, CT, 2016), pp. 530, 572.
[48] Coverdale, p. 209.
[49] Proverbs 26:11, and 2 Peter 2:22.
[50] Coverdale, p. 210; Exodus 16; Numbers 11; Matthew 16:26.

words to his disciples.[51] He then went on to ask 'what hathe bewytchyd you that yow shulde not beleve the truthe'? The aim of this letter, however, was not condemnation; it was to call upon them to repent 'lest God turne frome youe' and they did not gain salvation. He then urged them to clothe themselves in the armour of God to resist the devil, using the same language as St Paul in his letter to the Ephesians.[52] Notably, despite its critical tone, the letter was also written to thank them. He stated that, 'bretherine for your gret kyndenes shewed unto me and my pore Wyffe and chydren I pray god reward you sevene fold into your bosoms and thus fare you well and god deliever from all evell.'[53]

There were a few examples where individuals were attacked for their Nicodemism. One example came from the letters written to, and then about, James Hales, a prominent judge from Kent and committed Protestant. Hales took his own life in 1554, having been in prison for nonconformity, and having been released because he had recanted – he killed himself by lying face down in a shallow stream at Thanington, Canterbury.[54] Bradford wrote a letter to Hales, when he had been committed to the King's Bench, to encourage him that God would not forget him, but after the latter's recantation and suicide Bradford wrote numerous letters to Humphrey and Joyce Hales – Sir James' son and daughter-in-law – to encourage them not to follow Sir James' example, stating that God in his 'wisedome hath thought good to set your father forth as an example to al men'.[55] Bradford wrote that the suicide of Sir James was God's judgement for his inconstancy of faith; it was, 'feareful iudgement of god fallen upon your father iustly for his denying of god for feare of men & love of these things, which he hath left behind him unto you & others.'[56]

Bradford linked the suicide of Hales to the guilt of outward conformity: it was one of the two sinful reactions to persecution, namely either recanting or despairing. He stated that 'in your father, as ye may see ye later, so in many worldlye gospellers you maye (if you will) see the other.'[57] He warned Humphrey Hales to avoid the temptation of conforming, because

[51] William Tyms to anon., n.d., BL, Add. MS 19400*, fol. 98r; Matthew 10:38; Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; Luke 14:27.
[52] William Tyms to anon., n.d., BL, Additional, MS 19400*, fol. 98r; Ephesians 6:11.
[53] William Tyms to anon., n.d., BL, Additional, MS 19400*, fol. 98r.
[54] J. H. Baker, 'Hales, Sir James', *ODNB*.
[55] Coverdale, p. 313.
[56] Coverdale, p. 312.
[57] Coverdale, p. 313.

despairing was down to a lack of faith; instead, 'this life is: a smoke, a shadow, a vapoure &c. what the glorye of thys life is: grasse, haye'.[58] In doing so, Bradford was using well-known Biblical imagery – Psalms 103, Job 14 and 1 Peter 1, to name a few places where this is used. This was a reminder, rather than new teaching, to Humphrey Hales, and it was written in a pastoral tone to encourage an eschatological perspective.

Bradford seemed to have been particularly concerned for Joyce Hales. He wrote a compassionate letter to encourage her to resist the pressure from her family to conform.[59] She had an important role in supporting and sustaining Bradford and others in prison, and Overell notes that there are numerous letters from Bradford to her about sin and perseverance.[60] Bradford also wrote to her elder sister, Mary, who was famous for having over 350 direct descendants at the time of her death, and was a loyal 'female sustainer' of Protestant prisoners, according to Eales.[61] Mary had married Robert Honywood, the son of Sir James Hales' sister, Joyce Hales' cousin-in-law, and there were numerous links through the Hales family.

Joyce Hales had admitted that 'feare of death doth now and then moue [her] a little', but Bradford encouraged her that she 'shall haue the victorie' and that death was comparable to sleep and freedom from bondage.[62] Bradford further stated to her that he did not 'vtterly condempne and iudge your father (for I leaue it to God) but because the facte of it selfe declareth Gods secrets and fearefull iudgemente and iustice towardes hym and all men, and hys greate mercye towardes vs, admonishynge all the worlde howe that he is to bee dred and feared.'[63] He said that she should heed the warning of her father-in-law's suicide and remain faithful to God.

The case of James Hales is referenced in other contemporary letters as an example, like the Italian example of Matteo Gribaldi noted in Chapter 2, of how recanting could lead to

[58] Coverdale, p. 310.
[59] Coverdale, p. 206.
[60] Anne Overell, 'Soul-talk and reformation in mid-sixteenth century England', *Research Gate* (2015), p. 13.
[61] She 'had, as has been said, at her decease, lawfully descended from her 367 children, 16 of her own body, 114 grand-children, 228 in the third generation, and nine in the fourth'; Edward Hasted, *The history and topographical survey of the county of Kent,* 5 (Canterbury, 1798), pp. 424–5; Jacqueline Eales, 'Honywood, Mary', *ODNB*.
[62] Coverdale, pp. 306–7.
[63] Coverdale, p. 323.

despair and suicide. Bradford wrote to Lord Russell – a Protestant friend of William Cecil who had carried letters from Thomas Wyatt to Princess Elizabeth – that he should 'marke the example of Maister Hales, whiche after that he consented to seeme to allowe in outwarde facte, that whiche he knewe once was evill, was fearefullye lefte of GOD to oure admonition', and Sampson wrote to Bullinger in 1556 that James Hales' suicide was a punishment from God: 'judge Hales threw himself into the river, and so was miserably drowned: such is the punishment of his apostasy.'[64] Hales' was a cautionary tale used by those writing to Protestants about the personal dangers of Nicodemism. In his personal correspondence with the family, Bradford had written about the risks of despair, but to others he and Sampson wrote about Hales' despair being a punishment from God for Nicodemism. The threat of consequences of Nicodemism was highlighted in both letters for a pastoral reason, after Hales had died. They were written either to encourage or to warn, for the perceived good of the individual.

The focus in personal correspondence was, unsurprisingly, the salvation and faithfulness of the individual, not the general condition of English Protestantism. Relationships were often stronger than the division of exile and conformist. An example of this comes from a letter written by William Salkyns to Bullinger in 1554. Salkyns was Richard Hilles' servant, and he wrote to Bullinger to request that a letter be written to Hilles to tell him that he needed to stop conforming and go into exile. Hilles, a Protestant gentleman who remained in England during Mary's reign, was a friend of Bullinger and there was regular correspondence between them before Mary came to the throne. However, by 1554, Salkyns sent a letter to Bullinger asking that he

> write to my master, a few words upon fleeing from the abomination of the mass, (by the frequenting of which in England my master is now placing his soul in jeopardy),

[64] Interestingly a court case brought by Hales' wife Margaret about the suicide was used by Shakespeare in Hamlet when the gravediggers discuss whether the felony of suicide was committed before or after death. In Act 5, scene 1, two clowns discuss whether Ophelia can have a Christian burial because she took her own life. Clown 1 references the case of Hales' suicide, stating 'here lies the water – good. Here stands the man – good. If the man go to this water and drown himself, it is, will he nill he, he goes, mark you that. But if the water com to him, and drown him, he drowns not himself. Argal, he that is not guilty of his own death, shortens not his own life.' Clown 2 questions whether this was the law, to which Clown 1 replies, 'Ay, marry is't: crowner's [coroners] quest law.' This reference from Shakespeare shows the long-lasting impact of and interest in the Hales case in the late 1590s and 1600s. Thomas Sampson to Henry Bullinger, 13 September 1556, *ZL*, 3, p. 177; William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Ware, 1993), p. 132.

> the result would be, that either convinced by his argument, or moved by ancient friendship, (which I know has very great weight with him) he will yield to his exhortation above all others, and consider how he can flee away from such abominable idolatry.'[65]

From another letter sent later in the year, it is clear that Bullinger did indeed write to Hilles, although the letter from Bullinger has not survived.[66] Hilles seemed to have ignored the concern and continued to conform until, according to Loades, 'after 1559 his protestant convictions could safely reappear, and he resumed his correspondence with Bullinger as though nothing had happened', as discussed in Chapter 4.[67] It is safe to conclude that Bullinger's letters were more pastoral than condemnatory, and that the Nicodemism of friends and family was met by calls for repentance and concern as opposed to condemnation. Nicodemism was condemnable in general theory, but it was not the focus in close or personal relationships - there is no evidence that any relationships were ended because of the religious conformity of one person.

Community of Protestants in England

For the community of Protestants who remained in England, conformed, and could be seen as potential Nicodemites, the evidence indicates that the situation was not as simple as the anti-Nicodemite published work suggested. There was a level of ambiguity to their actions, especially in the contrast between their public conformity, and private belief and action. William Cecil is an interesting case of how an important Protestant statesperson navigated Mary's reign, in part because he became so important to the foundation of the Elizabethan Settlement and in part because there is a wealth of evidence about his correspondence and activities that does not exist for any other person in his position. This evidence demonstrates that, whilst he conformed, his lived experience of conformity involved a complicated balance.

[65] Interestingly, this is the same concern that Hilles has of one of his own servants, as in a 1541 letter to Bullinger. Richard Hilles to Henry Bullinger, 18 September 1541, *ZL*, 3, p. 218; William Salkyns to Henry Bullinger, 26 November 1554, *ZL*, 3, pp. 345–6.
[66] Salkyns to Bullinger, 26 November 1554, *ZL*, 3, p. 346.
[67] David Loades, 'Hilles, Richard', *ODNB*.

Cecil was a committed Protestant. In a rare surviving letter from Cecil in Mary's reign, he affirmed this in detail. Cecil wrote to his wife Mildred in 1553 when he was holed up in the Tower of London with the rest of Lady Jane Grey's ailing government.[68] He wrote that she should 'report of the world I dye with adversity for in the grave of god my trust is todaye in the faith of the gospell, like a chastened child of almighty god'.[69] He encouraged her to remarry 'such a one as hath a true judgement in relligion', and stated that his 'renouncing of all the worlds fortunes is to save my conscience clean, which hath in publick service suffred many torments; and to be a foreman before the sight of god I am contente to be a bondman to the world'. He ended the letter with the claim that he did 'make choise to avoyd the perill of gods displeasure'.[70]

As Alford summarises, Cecil declared that, 'torn between what God and men expected of him, he would obey God'.[71] Yet this letter actually says a lot more: it shows how Cecil saw a distinction between the public action of supporting Jane's government and subsequently abandoning it – as he did – when it was politically astute, and his private conviction that he was doing God's will. He wrote that, should he die, Mildred should tell 'the world' that he did what he did because of faith in the gospel. By using the word 'world' Cecil made clear his choice to make his private conviction known to the public; yet Cecil wanted what was private only to be made public *if* he were to die, because otherwise he was content that what the world saw – that he was a bondsman, an indentured servant – would continue to be different from how he was seen by God – as a foreman, the worker in charge of his master's projects. Cecil wrote that he was reconciled in his own mind that his actions were justified, and if he were to avoid death then it would be important for his private conviction not to be made public in order that he could avoid persecution. This is rare evidence of the state of Cecil's mind in Mary's reign, and a sign that how he was perceived by his contemporaries – the 'world' – was not always how he acted or believed in private.

Once Cecil was released from prison, he gave the impression of being entirely loyal to Queen Mary, and had no public trouble for his religious views, which he kept private. Alford

[68] Alford, *Burghley*, p. 55.
[69] William Cecil to Mildred Cecil, 13 June 1553, BL, Lansdowne, MS 104, fol. 3r.
[70] William Cecil to Mildred Cecil, 13 June 1553, BL, Lansdowne, MS 104, fol. 3r.
[71] Alford, *Burghley*, p. 55.

states that 'we find two William Cecils in Mary's reign: one is a secret critic of the Queen and her government; the other is a loyal subject who is happy to live with a Catholic monarch.'[72] On the surface, Cecil appeared to be entirely comfortable conforming. He was sent by the Queen's council to meet and escort Cardinal Pole, on his return to England, a fact reported without any comment in a 1554 letter from Erkynwald Rawlins, a Protestant who left London for the European mainland a year later, to Richard Chambers, a Protestant exile.[73] According to a letter sent in 1557 by the Dean and Chapter of Worcester, he contributed generously to the keeping of curates in the parishes of Mortlake and Putney.[74] As Alford argues, this suggests that Cecil 'did not make a heroic stand against the Catholic enemy' and instead 'kept his options open'.[75]

In a letter of 1556, Sir John Cheke warned Cecil that he was putting his soul at risk through his conformity.[76] Cheke was a long-term friend and brother of Cecil's first wife, Mary, and was in exile at the time. The letter was written shortly before Cheke was arrested in Antwerp, brought back to England, put in prison and tortured until he recanted and died.[77] Much has been made of Cheke's letter, specifically the subclause that urged Cecil to 'content god quietlie', and Overell argues that this gave the letter a Nicodemite tone.[78] Yet this statement was followed by the advice 'to satisfie an unhardened consciens', and that Cecil should not deceive himself by doing what he ought not: 'what soever ye know to be evil in deed, so iudg it and taak it always and let nother your own doinge whatsoever nor comun usag nor favour of ani friendship carie you awai to deceiv your self', urging him to avoid the trick of those 'that cal gud bad, and bad gud.'[79] This was not a justification of Nicodemism but a call to avoid religious unfaithfulness, irrespective of what Cheke himself did in the future.

[72] Alford, *Burghley*, p. 65.
[73] Erkynwald Rawlins to Richard Chambers, 24 November 1554. Denbighshire Record Office, Plas Power MSS, DD/PP/839, fol. 40r; Christina Hallowell Garrett, *The Marian Exiles: a study in the origins of Elizabethan Puritanism* (Cambridge, 1938), pp. 268, 111.
[74] The Dean and Chapter of Worcester to William Cecil, 28 August 1557, BL, Lansdowne, MS 3, fol. 155r.
[75] Alford, *Burghley*, p. 65.
[76] John Cheke to William Cecil, 18 February 1556, BL, Lansdowne, MS 3, fols. 130r-131v.
[77] Alan Bryson, 'Cheke, Sir John', *ODNB*.
[78] M. Anne Overell, *Nicodemites: faith and concealment between Italy and Tudor England* (Leiden, 2019), pp. 183–4.
[79] Cheke to Cecil, 18 February 1556, BL, Lansdowne, MS 3, fol. 103r.

Cheke urged Cecil to do what he knew to be right, and the letter is essentially a philosophical essay on the difference between good and bad.[80] In the letter Cheke explored the concept of dissimulation, and urged Cecil to avoid all corruption by being uncompromising in following the truth:

> And therfar Christ said wel of the divers sorte of men, that tollere [a tax collector] and harlotte whoos faulte nether was nor could be unknown to them, shold enter in to the kingdom of heaven befor the Pharisees, whoas hartes weer so blinded, that seeing and hearing thei nether saw nor herd. Ye know in philosophie what differens is between ἀλήθεια [truth] and ἀλαζονεία [false pretension], and what the wys philosophers have disputed of the comparison of thees vices, and what a man in his own lyf mai iudg of them. I had rather for my part have you corrupted in the lower part of your mind, then heer of you that both your partes wer utterlie rotted awai from that soundness, that comun opinion of iust causes hath had of you.[81]

Cheke was referring to the Aristotelian terms, where truth and false pretention are the extremes on either side of dissembling (εἰρωνεία). In Theophrastus' *On Characters*, dissembling is taken to mean that he 'willfully misrepresented himself for the worse by deprecating himself for lacking the qualities that he did in fact possess'; the dissembling person is 'evasive, noncommittal, and invents excuses; he is capriciously misleading and offers up professions of disbelief, such as "I don't believe it", "I can't imagine it", "I am amazed" – when he actually does believe it, can imagine it, or is not at all amazed.'[82] In making these references, Cheke was openly urging Cecil to avoid both false pretension and dissimulation, and to follow what he knew in his heart to be good and true.[83] Before this, Cheke made the contrast between the sinful tax collectors and harlots who, despite their sinfulness, had been humble enough to recognise their need of Christ, whilst the religious leaders – the Pharisees – were unable to see the truth.[84]

[80] Cheke to Cecil, 18 February 1556, BL, Lansdowne, MS 3, fol. 103v.
[81] Cheke to Cecil, 18 February 1556, BL, Lansdowne, MS 3, fol. 130r-v.
[82] Whitenton, 'The Dissembler of John 3', pp. 146–7.
[83] Cheke to Cecil, 18 February 1556, BL, Lansdowne, MS 3, fol. 130v.
[84] For example, in Luke 18.

In essence, Cheke disagreed with the points that Cecil had made in his letter to Mildred about the distinction between private conviction and public perception – for Cheke, there was to be no distinction. Moreover, Cheke urged Cecil to 'see some fruit maad of an evel tyme, if not for the remedie of an outgrown evil, yet for the forwardness of some comun good.'[85] It was not enough to resist evil, and Cheke argued that Cecil should have actively focused on doing good for his fellow Protestants. Cecil's letter to Mildred demonstrated his belief that remaining alive and at liberty gave him the best opportunity to serve God – Cecil's dissimulation aligned with that of Aristotle, in that it was (and remains) impossible to truly comprehend his intention. For Cecil, this was wisdom, but for Cheke it was not permissible – easy as it was for him to say that from exile.

Most of the letters Cecil received (and that have survived) were much more mundane and did not suggest that his conformity damaged his relationships. Sir Philip Hoby, who had gone into exile when Mary came to the throne, wrote letters asking for help with the transfer of land, whilst Cecil's father-in-law Anthony Cooke wrote regularly with news from the European mainland and asking about Cecil's family.[86] In his letters, Cooke seemed entirely comfortable with Cecil's remaining in England, and focused much more on his own rationale for remaining in exile. He stated in March 1557 that, 'ye lovingly desire my comyng home & my beyng here ys to me no think pleasant, but my necessary cause of absense ys to you not unknowne', and that 'neither my coming out nor stayng here hath depended upon other mens oppynyons or reports but upon myn own necessyte'.[87] Again, in July 1557, Cooke wrote to thank Cecil for his work in ensuring that his other son-in-law Nicholas Bacon was able to pass an amendment to frustrate a parliamentary bill designed to strip exiles of their property. In the letter, Cooke said again that 'towchyng the myslikyng my remaynyng here, I trust I shall not be dealt with other wyse than I deserve.'[88]

Alford states that Cecil 'was no hero of the resistance against Mary, and he had no intention of throwing himself into the flames of martyrdom'.[89] Yet the evidence, some of which has

[85] Cheke to Cecil, 18 February 1556, BL, Lansdowne, MS 3, fol. 131r.
[86] Philip Hoby to William Cecil, 10 December 1556, CP, MS 151, fol. 144r; Anthony Cooke to William Cecil, 10 January 1557, CP, MS 151, fol. 521r-v; Anthony Cooke to William Cecil, 17 May 1557, CP, MS 151, fol. 526r-v.
[87] Anthony Cooke to William Cecil, 10 January 1557, CP, MS 151, fol. 521r.
[88] Anthony Cooke to William Cecil, 12 July 1557, CP, MS 151, fol. 236r.
[89] Alford, *Burghley*, p. 72.

been used by Elizabeth Evenden, hints at a more complex picture of Cecil's activities during Mary's reign. Pettegree concludes that 'it would clearly be absurd to argue that the decision to remain and conform involved a total repudiation of former commitments.'[90] As has been discussed in Chapter 2, John Day was renting a property from Cecil in Stamford some time before the end of 1556; when the Protestant, anti-Catholic Michael Wood pamphlets were published.[91]

Evenden builds her argument that Cecil consciously supported Protestant printing during Mary's reign from the statement in Cecil's rent collection from Barholm and Market Deeping that recorded someone called John Haddon renting '2 acres late John Daye's'.[92] Given the connections between Cecil and Day, it seems likely that this was the same person, but the statement is frustratingly unspecific as to when Day left the property in Barholm, when he had first arrived and whether there was a printing press in Barholm, as Evenden suggests. In his diary, Henry Machyn remarked that Day was taken to the Tower of London in October 1554 'for pryntyng of noytye bokes'.[93] Machyn was a merchant in London who kept a diary of notable events from 1550 to 1563. On Day, Machyn does not state where the printing took place, but Foxe does record it as having been in Stamford in 1553, which supports Evenden's conclusion.[94]

There are several additional points that could be used to strengthen the case that Cecil was using his position and property to protect fellow Protestants. The first is that Cecil had employed Day's one-time business partner William Seres as his rent collector: Cecil's papers show a significant amount of money being handled by Seres for managing the estates in Barholm and Market Deeping. In 1556 and 1557, there are records of Seres collecting hundreds of pounds on Cecil's behalf in an area where his business partner appears to have lived for a while.[95]

[90] Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 105.
[91] Evenden, 'The Michael Wood mystery', p. 387.
[92] Rents due to Cecil, Michaelmas 1556, 29 September 1558, TNA, SP 11/9, fol. 71r.
[93] Henry Machyn, *The diary of Henry Machyn, citizen and mechant-taylor of London, from A. D. 1550 to A. D. 1563*, ed. John Gough Nichols (London, 1848), p. 72.
[94] *TAMO* (1563), p. 1762.
[95] Various accounts from the Cecil household, 1556 to 1557, TNA, SP 11/9, fols 17r, 36r, 74r, 75r, 107r, 123r; TNA, SP 11/10, fols 3r, 7r.

The second is that rent collection records include a reference to a 'William Daye' living in Market Deeping and renting two acres of Cecil's land, just like John Day.[96] William Day was tutor to Cecil's son Thomas and, thanks to Cecil, first became Provost of Eton College in 1561 and Bishop of Winchester in 1595.[97] William Day was known to be a committed Protestant, and although he retained his fellowship at Cambridge during Mary's reign, these records demonstrate that he also spent some time renting in Cecil's property in Stamford in 1556. Cecil's household and estates continued to support his co-religionists, but whether this was support for his long-standing friends or as part of an underground Protestant network would be conjecture.

The third piece of evidence is that Cecil was working for Elizabeth in 1556. His records show a payment of the expense line, 'my fee of Lady Elizabeth – £20.'[98] Alford suggests that this contact had been made 'carefully, even covertly', but he highlights a meeting with Elizabeth in early 1558 and claims that it 'helped to shape the course of her reign and his life.'[99] Machyn's diary records the meeting with 'gret compene of lordes and nobull men and nobull women, to here plasse calyd the Somersett plasse', but there is no detail about who was at the meeting or what happened at it beyond the fact that it took place and that Cecil travelled from his home in Wimbledon to Westminster that day.[100] Alford concludes that, although the meeting was confidential, 'there can be little doubt that from this time on Cecil played an important part in Elizabeth's plans for the future', but unfortunately it is only possible to speculate about any details.[101]

The fourth piece of evidence comes from a letter written seven years into Elizabeth's reign, in 1565, from Dominicus Lampsonius. Lampsonius was writing from Liege, but he had been Cardinal Pole's secretary and was Cecil's neighbour in Wimbledon. In his letter, Lampsonius claimed that, whilst in England during Mary's reign, Cecil had tried to convince him to become a Protestant.[102] Lampsonius stated that his conscience would not have allowed him either to remain in England when Elizabeth had acceded to the throne, or to change his

[96] Rents due to Cecil, Michaelmas 1556, 29 September 1558, TNA, SP 11/9, fol. 70r.
[97] Brett Usher, 'Day, William', *ODNB*; Alford, *Burghley*, p. 148.
[98] TNA, SP 11/9, fol. 71r.
[99] Alford, *Burghley*, p. 80.
[100] Machyn, *The Diary of Henry Machyn*, pp. 166–7; Alford, *Burghley*, p. 81.
[101] Alford, *Burghley*, p. 81.
[102] Dominicus Lampsonius to Cecil, 4 July 1565, Translated in *CSP Foreign, Elizabeth*, 7, p. 405.

confession. There appears to have been a close relationship between Cecil and Lampsonius, and the clear reference to religious discussions suggests that, whilst Cecil did conform enough to avoid persecution, he did not fully hide his Protestant beliefs.

The temptation to define Protestants by their conformity must be avoided – this was as evident for Princess Elizabeth as for Cecil. The role of Protestant women sustainers will be discussed in Chapter 5, but there is some evidence to link Elizabeth's household to those who sustained the martyrs. This evidence comes from Elizabeth Browne, a gentlewoman in Elizabeth's service. She was the wife of Edward Fiennes de Clinton, who, though a known Protestant and supporter of Queen Jane, actively put down Wyatt's rebellion and became lieutenant-governor of London under Mary.[103] Elizabeth Browne regularly corresponded with Bradford, amongst other Protestant martyrs. Bradford referred to Browne's 'unfayned loue towardes [him] in god', and urged her to persevere and show patience whilst 'beare[ing] no yoke wyth vnbelevers'.[104] He also described Browne as his 'good Sister' and ended the letter by asking her to 'commende me to my good Mother Mystres Wylkynson, and to my verye deare Syster Mystres Warcuppe'.[105] This is evidence that a woman in Lady Elizabeth's service was communicating closely with Joan Wilkinson and Anne Warcup to support a number of the martyrs in prison.

There is only circumstantial evidence of a connection between those who sustained the martyrs, and Elizabeth, Cecil, and any other future Elizabethan leaders who conformed under Mary. There was plausible deniability for Elizabeth about this connection, and no direct evidence remains of Elizabeth's knowledge of Browne's activities. Yet informed speculation is that it is unlikely Elizabeth would have been ignorant of the actions of women in her service. The lack of evidence was surely intentional – Elizabeth's imprisonment after Wyatt's rebellion was demonstrative of the risks for her in any association with the Protestant cause. If Elizabeth had supported imprisoned Protestant ministers, she would not have left direct written evidence for the authorities (or historians) to find.

[103] Susan Brigden, 'Clinton, Elizabeth Fiennes de [née Lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald], countess of Lincoln [other married name Elizabeth Fiennes Browne, Lady Browne; called Fair Geraldine]', *ODNB*; Anne Duffin, 'Clinton, Edward Fiennes de, first earl of Lincoln', *ODNB*.
[104] Coverdale, pp. 412–3.
[105] Coverdale, p. 413.

That Elizabeth was close to, and trusted, Cecil before 1558 is beyond doubt, but the evidence is not sufficient to draw any firm conclusions about the activities of Elizabethan leaders to support the Protestant cause during Mary's reign. As Cecil articulated in his letter to Mildred – he aimed to act without his intention being clear. There was some consternation at those who remained in England and ostensibly supported Mary, as demonstrated by Cheke's letter to Cecil, but relationships between exiles and apparent Nicodemites did not seem to suffer greatly, as shown by communication among Cecil, Cooke, and Hoby. There are tempting conclusions to be drawn from some of the evidence in Cecil's financial papers, and there are links between the martyrs, sustainers, Cecil, and Elizabeth's household, but these are insubstantial, and the evidence already rather groans under the weight of the conclusions that Evenden and Alford make before any new ones are added. Nevertheless, the lived experience of conformity was not as simple as that presented in the anti-Nicodemite published works; it involved a complicated balance between private belief, public perception, and actions to support fellow Protestants, all done whilst avoiding persecution. If one adds in the reliance of many exiles on practical support from those who remained in England, the lack of public condemnation of the Nicodemism of specific individuals is unsurprising.

Conclusion

Concern for individuals, particularly friends and family members, was of greater consequence than general insecurity about the threat of Nicodemism to the Protestant confession. Personal correspondence was still marked by anxiety, but concern for individuals and the complexities of the lives of conforming Protestants meant that the simple rhetoric of anti-Nicodemism was not often used in personal letters. This chapter furthers the scholarly understanding of the utility and boundaries of anti-Nicodemite language. Pettegree's influential argument is that it is important to understand the role of Protestants who remained in England during Mary's reign – yet this chapter contends that the language of anti-Nicodemism stands in the way of a historical understanding of the Marian persecution of Protestants. Living in a confessionally hostile country involved compromise, dissimulation, and deception. This was as apparent in contemporary accounts as it is to historians now.

Nicodemism is inherently hidden and private, and there is nothing from a self-identified Protestant Nicodemite giving their experience during Mary's reign. Nevertheless, it is possible to understand something of the Protestant perception of conformity in Mary's reign by looking at the letters from the martyrs and the Protestant exiles and understanding the connections between Protestants who were supporting one another. As Ahnert argues, 'these letters demonstrate that texts alone were not enough to sustain co-religionists outside the prison; that, ultimately, some real human contact is necessary to help individuals sustain their faith in the face of persecution'.[106] There were small but strong and supportive communities of Protestants living in England and in exile, linked by friendship, mutual support, and family. Calvin had stated that Nicodemism was a 'monstrous' sign of 'diabolical pride', yet this public published characterisation is not something seen in the correspondence.[107] Instead, there is a clear distinction between the private struggles and challenges with persecution faced by Protestants in England, and the public declarations of Nicodemite sinfulness – they treated people they knew differently from the generalised attacks against conformists.

Letters were not written with the intention of criticising those who conformed; rather, they were pastoral and written as calls to repentance. Conformity was not tolerated, but it did not appear to damage relationships between those who conformed and those who did not. There was an implication in the published material that a great number of people were known to be 'masse gospellers', but these were not identified specifically, and the correspondence rarely moved from raising conformity as a general abstract concern.[108] People did not self-identify as Nicodemites, or 'masse gospellers', and the evidence from Mary's reign does not include any reference to this identity being imposed on an individual.

There is a challenge with the sparse and selective nature of the evidence from Mary's reign, particularly for the study of a set of behaviours and beliefs that were by nature hidden. However, there are themes in the sources which build a consistent picture that does not include evidence of people being ostracised or rejected because of their choice to conform.

[106] Ahnert, *Prison literature*, p. 143.
[107] Calvin, *Commentary on John*, 1, p. 86.
[108] For example, John Bradford used this term in his published works discussed in Chapter 2, as well as in his letters bemoaning the state of the Protestant confession in England during Mary's reign. Bradford, *The hurte of hering masse*, p. 18; Bradford to Richard Hopkins and his wife, Coverdale, pp. 345–5.

Indeed, there is more to suggest that there was a supportive network of Protestants, some of whom chose to conform and some of whom struggled with the question of how to remain religiously faithful and chose to resist conformity, by going into exile or facing death as a martyr. The letters from the martyrs and Cheke's letter to Cecil suggest that this was an ongoing discussion and debate, but they do not suggest that conformity either damaged relationships or that it was viewed as settled. The consistency of anti-Nicodemite arguments in published material and the later development of an official Elizabethan narrative of the Marian period create the perception of a stark choice between conformity, exile, or martyrdom. However, the evidence from Mary's reign suggests that there was a lot more variety in identity and perception; indeed, the overwhelming reaction to the news of recantation and conformity was sorrow and concern, as opposed to anger and rejection.

Chapter 4: The disappearance of anti-Nicodemism in early Elizabethan England

The death of Mary and accession of Queen Elizabeth turned the sorrow and frustration of English Protestants into joy, and there was a sense of unity in the endeavour to build a sustainable English Protestant Church. The Elizabethan Settlement depended on unity between those who had conformed and those who had gone into exile: the Queen, Principal Secretary, and Archbishop of Canterbury had all been Nicodemites, whilst a significant number of those nominated to be bishops were returned exiles. Religious insecurity had been at the heart of Protestant anti-Nicodemism during Mary's reign; now that the conditions for religious insecurity had been removed, there was no incentive to continue an anti-Nicodemite narrative that would have the potential to undermine this partnership at the start of Elizbeth's reign.

Andrew Pettegree asserts that 'the exiles and those who had remained behind during Mary's reign collaborated quite easily in the formation of the Elizabethan settlement.'[1] The initiative for reform came from the 'heart of government' rather than an 'exile pressure group', and many of the exiles knew and trusted the Nicodemites in authority.[2] In the context of the Elizabethan Settlement, Eric Bramhall highlights the work of moral philosopher Oliver O'Donovan, who argued that 'moral incompatibilities' can be 'reconciled historically.'[3] Bramhall states that 'both Nicodemites and their critics were looking for the restoration of a Protestant Church, which was achieved despite the incompatibility of their positions'.[4] In other words, the shared concern with the Elizabethan Settlement meant that any past differences between exiles and Nicodemites were quickly reconciled.[5]

[1] Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 167.
[2] Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 140.
[3] Oliver O'Donovan, quoted in Bramhall, 'Penitence', p. 140.
[4] Bramhall, 'Penitence', p. 140.
[5] The definition of the Elizabethan Settlement includes the key legislation and policies – the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity, the Prayer Book of 1559, the Royal Injunctions of the same year, the Thirty-Nine Articles of 1563, and the Canons of 1571 – but also the sermons and religious culture of the early Elizabethan period. It is therefore broader than the framework of laws and policies that are often taken to define it. This interpretation is in line with Arnold Hunt, *Preaching the Elizabethan Settlement* (Oxford, 2011), p. 1.

It is important to note this unity, because to do so undermines the argument that later divisions in the Elizabethan church had their root in the divisions between Nicodemites and exiles. For example, David Loades states that there were 'unspoken reproaches about [Cecil's] Nicodemism', and that 'there was a good deal of mutual suspicion between the secretary and the returning exiles.'[6] Robert Harkins has claimed that there was an undercurrent of anti-Nicodemism in English religious politics from 1558 through to 1579.[7] He references a letter in 1579 from Richard Prowde, a parson in Burton upon Dunmore (now Bourton-on-Dunsmore in Warwickshire), to William Cecil reminding him that in Mary's reign Cecil 'did openly revolt from your religion, and fell to go to idolatrus sarvys'.[8] However, the focus of this letter, over twenty years into the reign of Elizabeth, is criticism of the course of the reform in the late 1570s. As argued in Chapter 2, anti-Nicodemite language was used to reflect concern about the speed of reform in published materials, but this demonstrates the malleability of anti-Nicodemism rather than undercurrents of continued anger at Marian conformity.

Anti-Nicodemism was not a theme that runs through the manuscript evidence in the first decade of Elizabeth's reign.[9] Prowde's use of anti-Nicodemism was not evidence of an undercurrent throughout this period. The root cause of Prowde's criticism should be seen in the growing dissent from the English Puritans.[10] The same can be seen in William Whittingham's 1570s recollection of the controversy between John Knox and Richard Cox, in Frankfurt in 1555. Richard Cox had been Dean of Westminster but escaped into exile in 1554. He went to Frankfurt in 1555 and was the prominent leader of those defending the Edwardian Prayer Book. He returned from exile in 1559 and was Bishop of Ely until 1580, and his death in 1581. Whittingham recorded a letter from Frankfurt that stated 'some thinke they maye dissemble vntill a churche[…] perceauinge that this our scatteringe

[6] David Loades, *The Cecils: privilege and power behind the throne* (London, 2013), p. 93.
[7] Robert Harkins, 'Elizabethan Puritanism and the politics of memory in post-Marian England', *The Historical Journal*, 57/4 (2014), p. 889.
[8] John Strype, ed., *Annals of the Reformation and establishment of religion and other various occurrences during Queen Elizabeth's Happy Reign: together with an appendix of original papers of state, records, and letters*, 2, part 2 (Oxford, 1824), pp. 662–3; Richard Prowde to Cecil, 13 May 1579, BL, Lansdowne, MS 28, fol. 214r.
[9] The manuscript evidence referred to here is mainly correspondence but includes official documentation and memoranda.
[10] See note in introduction on the word 'Puritan' and its connotations. Christopher Haigh, 'The Character of an Antipuritan', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 35/3 (2004), p. 671.

augmente the griefe of persecution and so throughe our negligence we leese them for whom Christe died.'[11] The *Brief Discourse* in which this letter is found was an argument for faithfulness to the gospel – a work compiled by Thomas Wood, although traditionally attributed to Whittingham – and was more relevant to the way in which Wood and Whittingham sought to use afresh the past Nicodemism of others to fight the new doctrinal battles, and the religious insecurity, of the 1570s.[12]

This chapter addresses the collaboration that Pettegree notes, and argues that understanding anti-Nicodemism as a reaction to religious insecurity explains why this collaboration was possible. When the conditions for religious insecurity were gone, anti-Nicodemism ceased to be a dominant theme. Nicodemism was a hidden phenomenon, and this comprehensive analysis was necessary to understand what role this obscure concept, based on dissimulation, played in the formulation of the Elizabethan Settlement.

The correspondence shows that whilst the past actions of Protestant Elizabethan leaders were not irrelevant, they were of significantly less importance than opinions and concerns for Elizabethan reform. As has been demonstrated in Chapter 3, there are very few occurrences when perspectives were shaped by anti-Nicodemism alone: themes may have been present in the correspondence, but there was a remarkable level of pragmatism in how they were used. Whilst consistency between action and belief was highlighted by some, this was often in the context of future action as opposed to a reflection on the past. The power dynamics between former exiles and Nicodemites, pre-Marian relations, and the emphasis on future reform all meant that there was very little opportunity for anti-Nicodemism to flourish. Anti-Nicodemism joined Nicodemism in the shadows; though anti-Nicodemite sentiments may still have shaped some personal views, there is little evidence that it affected the development of the Settlement in any way other than by its absence.

The chapter begins with an analysis of how John Knox pragmatically moderated his previously intense criticism of Nicodemism to better influence Cecil and Elizabeth. Power dynamics and shared concern for the Elizabethan Settlement meant that it was prudent for returning exiles to avoid direct criticism of the Elizabethan leaders. This is explored through

[11] William Whittingham, *A brieff discours off the troubles begonne at Franckford in Germany anno Domini 1554* (Heidelberg, 1575), p. 13.
[12] David Marcombe, 'Whittingham, William', *ODNB*.

examining letters from Philip Nicholls and Robert Horne in the first years of Elizabeth's reign, and Horne, Nicholas Bullingham, and Christopher Foster in the late 1560s. The focus on the future of the Elizabethan Settlement, rather than seeking redress for the past, is shown through a study of the *Zurich Letters*, where correspondence between returned English exiles and European mainland reformers was focused on how the new regime in England could promote the reforms that they wanted to prioritise. The chapter also looks at how pre-Marian friendships often overcame any differences between exiles and those who remained and conformed, and it ends with an exploration of how religious dissimulation was often used as a pragmatic tactic to further diplomatic aims.

John Knox – from anti-Nicodemism to pragmatism

As noted in Chapter 3, anti-Nicodemite sentiments in personal correspondence were rare. Where they appeared, they were largely tempered by pragmatism and the need to focus on partnership and the future. Correspondence from 1559 between Knox, on the one hand, and Cecil and Elizabeth, on the other, illustrates how power moderated the interaction between the anti-Nicodemism of the returned exiles, as demonstrated in the published work of many exiles (see Chapter 2), and the powerful women and men who influenced and led the Protestant reform of the Church in England.

Knox had a long history with the English Church and had been a royal chaplain during Edward VI's reign. He had gone into exile following Mary's accession, initially spending time in Zurich and Geneva, before becoming the minister of the English exile church in Frankfurt. His time in Frankfurt proved difficult, and his leadership ended with his expulsion and, as Dawson puts it, 'the rifts created in Frankfurt did not heal'.[13] As a result of a sermon in which Knox compared Emperor Charles V to Nero, Frankfurt city council asked him to leave, and he returned to Geneva in 1555. Knox subsequently travelled back to Scotland in order to support reform in Scotland but was again forced to leave – this time to Dieppe – in 1556.[14] After a short time in which he returned to Geneva, Knox was back in Dieppe in 1557, and he wrote *The first blast* there, with its extreme misogynistic perspective of women in leadership and anti-Nicodemite message. *The first blast* was published in Geneva only

[13] Dawson, *Knox*, p. 106.
[14] Dawson, *Knox*, p. 118.

months before Mary died, and Knox once again aimed to influence the church under Elizabeth – or at least to use the Protestant monarchy in England to support the reform cause in Scotland.[15]

From Dieppe in April 1559, and seeking passage through England to Scotland, Knox wrote to Cecil to ask for support. In this letter, Knox patronisingly told Cecil of the latter's need for forgiveness for his Nicodemism, and of the importance not to fall once again into 'common iniquitye'.[16] A few months later, in July 1559, having travelled to Scotland by another route, Knox wrote to Elizabeth to claim that she too needed God's forgiveness, and that once it had been received she should work to put God's kingdom first.[17] These letters were consistent with the anti-Nicodemism in Knox's earlier published work, but the tone changed dramatically within months when it became clear that condemnation and shame were not effective tactics in influencing English public policy.

In Knox's letter to Cecil of April 1559, he wrote that his purpose was to 'discharge, in fewe woordes, my conscienc toward you', and to call for Cecil to use his position for the sake of God's glory, for 'alas! In times past ye have not done.'[18] Using typical anti-Nicodemite language, Knox wrote that Cecil, 'beinge overcome with common iniquitye, ye have followede the worlde in the way of perdicioun: For [to] the suppression of Christ's true Evangell, to the erectinge of Idolatry, and to the sheddinge of the bloode of God's deare children, have you, by silence, consented and subscribed.'[19] This was a clear reference to Cecil's guilt as a Nicodemite. Similarly, in his letter to Queen Elizabeth, Knox made the implicit accusation of Nicodemism: 'forget your birth, and all title which thereupon doth hang; and consider deepelie how, for feare of your life, you did decline from God, and bow in idolatrie. Lett it not appeare a small offence in your eyes, that ye have declined frome Christ Jesus in the day of his battall'.[20] In these letters, Knox clearly stated that he viewed both Elizabeth and Cecil as having conformed to Mary's church, a grave sin in his view.

[15] Jane E. A. Dawson, 'Knox, John', *ODNB*.
[16] John Knox, *The works of John Knox,* 6 (Edinburgh, 1895), p. 16.
[17] Knox, *Works,* 6, p. 50.
[18] Knox, *Works,* 6, pp. 15–16.
[19] Knox, *Works,* 6, p. 16.
[20] Knox, *Works,* 6, p. 50.

Yet in both letters, the references to the past are not simply accusatory or calls for repentance; rather, Knox used them to highlight the need to act in a godly way in the future. These letters were requests for support rather than accusations in themselves, albeit written in an aggressive tone. To Elizabeth, Knox wrote that 'God hath covered your former offences, hath preserved you when yee were most unthankfull, and, in the end, hath exalted and raised you up not onlie frome the dust, but also from the ports of death, to rule above his people for the comfort of his Kirk.'[21] According to Knox, recognition of Elizabeth's former sin did not preclude her from playing a central role in the reform of the Church, but rather it ought to give her an important perspective and sense of humility to act in the right way.

This was similar in Knox's letter to Cecil. God had forgiven Cecil's behaviour: 'this your horrible defection from the trueth knowne and professed, hathe God unto this day mercifully spared; yea, to manes judgment, he hathe utterly forgotten and pardonned the same' and Cecil should have a 'thankfull hart' in response.[22] Knox argued that Cecil had found himself at a crossroads, and that in order to 'escape the rewarde of dissemblers', Cecil must 'purge your hart from that venyme', avoid conspiring with God's enemies and be 'simple, sincere, fervent, and unfayned' in the cause of 'Christes Evangell'.[23]

It is important to note that both letters were written soon after the controversial publication of Knox's *The first blast,* to which Elizabeth had taken understandable exception. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, *The first blast* was published in early 1558, and managed to combine anti-Nicodemism and misogyny to attack Queen Mary of England, Mary of Guise, then Regent of Scotland, and Mary, Queen of Scots. Knox's misfortune was to publish an attack on female monarchs just as Elizabeth took the throne; as Dawson argues, 'the Queen needed no prompting to recognize the subversive nature of the *First Blast*', and she 'saw the book not only as directly threatening her royal dignity but as a personal insult'.[24] In his letter to Elizabeth, Knox claimed to have 'never offended your Grace', and that *The first blast* 'tuichest not your Grace's person in especiall'.[25] Instead, he maintained that *The first blast*

[21] Knox, *Works,* 6, p. 50.
[22] Knox, *Works,* 6, p. 16.
[23] Knox, *Works,* 6, p. 17.
[24] Dawson, *John Knox*, pp. 169, 172.
[25] Knox, *Works,* 6, p. 48.

had been misunderstood: rather than being a specific rebuke, it apparently outlined a common law of God, and that 'if Quene Elizabeth shall confes, so that the extraordinary dispensation of Godes great mercy maketh that lawfull unto her, which both nature and Godes lawe denye [to all women]; then shall non in Englande be more willinge to meintein her lawfull auctority then I shal be.'[26]

Knox wrote to Elizabeth that, even though she was 'a weake instrument', she could be like Deborah to England. Referring to Judges 4, Knox noted that Deborah had been 'that blessed mother in Israel', and Elizabeth could emulate this, but only if she were to follow Deborah's example and build her rule on God's authority, rather than her own.[27] Therefore, it was only if Elizabeth were to put aside – that is, abandon – 'God's wounderous worke' that the judgements outlined in *The first blast* would relate to her.[28]

For Knox, good policy came from a position of contrition – a recognition of one's sinfulness and conviction to respond to God's forgiveness. He stated to Cecil that, 'seinge that you worthy of hell, [God] hathe promoted to honors and dignitye; of you must he require (because he is just) ernest repentance for your former defection, a hart myndfull of his mercifull providence, and a will so readye to advance his glory'.[29] This was not to be read as an exposé of Cecil's Nicodemism, or indeed of the Queen's, but as a statement of the righteous response to the universal condition of sin – albeit a sin that Knox evidently believed to be particularly apparent. In calling Cecil a 'traytor to his Majestie', Knox sought to emphasise God's authority over the Queen, the depth of God's forgiveness, and the need for consequent godly action, rather than to leave the matter as an accusation.[30]

In line with a long tradition, Knox saw his role as providing a mirror for princes, stating that 'I feare that the leprouse have no pleasure to beholde ther faces in the clere glasse.'[31] Knox ended his letter to Cecil with the prayer that 'the mighty Spirit of the Lord Jesus move your hart deeply to consider your dutye unto God, and the state of the Realme in which you

[26] Knox, *Works,* 6, p. 20.
[27] Knox, *Works,* 6, p. 48.
[28] Knox, *Works,* 6, p. 20.
[29] Knox, *Works,* 6, pp. 16-17.
[30] Knox, *Works,* 6, p. 17.
[31] Knox, *Works,* 6, p. 21.

nowe serve by his appointment.'[32] The letter was not a condemnation or refutation of Cecil's prominent role; rather, to Knox, Cecil's Nicodemism and forgiveness were facts, and the question posed to Cecil was how he intended to respond to God's grace.

The letters from Knox are the only surviving examples of open accusations of Nicodemism in the first twelve years of Elizabeth's reign – Knox may have been the only Protestant reformer without the tact to avoid such language, but this is a demonstration of how anti-Nicodemism retreated to the shadows as soon as religious insecurity stopped being a driving motivation. Even in these examples, Knox was clear that former sins only emphasised the goodness of God, and God's forgiveness validated the positive role that Nicodemites could play in furthering Church reform. The letters were written to elicit support for Knox in the Scottish Reformation, as well as to preach in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. They demonstrate that anti-Nicodemism was not inconsistent with support for and belief in the role former, and now powerful, Nicodemites could play in Church leadership and reform.

However, it is important to see these letters in their context. Knox was not writing simply to accuse and argue dispassionately for a course of action on religious reform; he wanted something from Cecil and Elizabeth – he recognised their power and ability to help him, and subsequent letters show how he changed his approach when he realised that these letters had not been a success. Knox quickly recognised that these letters were (perhaps unsurprisingly) counterproductive in gaining Elizabeth's favour and attempted to apologise.[33]

Within days of Knox's letter to Elizabeth, Cecil had written to Knox advising against using harsh language in his correspondence when seeking Elizabeth's support. Cecil began with a quote from St Paul's letter to the Galatians, that 'there is neither Jew nor Grecian, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus'.[34] This was a theologically adroit, unaggressive rebuke of Knox's attempt to differentiate himself from Cecil and Elizabeth; in doing so, Cecil immediately made the argument that there should be no distinctions made among all who were working towards reform. John

[32] Knox, *Works,* 6, p. 21.
[33] Knox, *Works,* 6, p. 98, Dawson, *Knox*, pp. 172-3.
[34] Cecil wrote in Latin, but I have used the quote as rendered in the Geneva Bible: Galatians 3:28; Knox, *Works,* 6, p. 55.

Calvin, in his *Commentary* from 1548, widely published in French and Latin, had written that this verse meant that 'there is no distinction of persons here, and therefore it is of no consequence to what nation or condition any one may belong'; there was no distinction to be found because 'Christ makes them all one. Whatever may have been their former differences, Christ alone is able to unite them all.'[35] Cecil would have used the quotation from Galatians carefully, knowing how reformed theologians like Calvin and Knox would have interpreted it. Cecil's clear intention was to emphasise the importance of unity in the work of Church reform over any former differences. This is something that, yet again, Calvin had emphasised in his *Commentary*, namely that 'the grace of adoption, and the hope of salvation, do not depend on the law, but are contained in Christ alone'.[36] There is no sense that Calvin's interpretation of this verse was novel or contentious; it had been a standard Protestant interpretation since Luther's 1535 commentary.[37]

Cecil's point in quoting the passage in Galatians was clear: there was no gain in emphasising difference over unity, and all were equal in Christ. The shared interest in reform was more important than any differences Knox perceived. Cecil's ability to change the tone of the correspondence with Knox was built on a biblically and theologically literate position. Overall, Cecil recognised that the course of reform was far more important to Knox than were their previous differences.

Cecil also made it clear that he would not enter into a debate by letter, stating 'what is now hitherto the caus of your letter, I know not. I forbear to descend to the bottome of thingis, untill I may conferr with such a one as you ar'.[38] Cecil was careful in balancing his response to Knox, and this approach contrasted with the polemical tones of Knox's letters. Cecil did not end his letter with the statement that he did not want to write about Knox's rebuke; instead he said that he 'neid wishe to you no more prudence then Godd's grace, whairof God send you plentie.'[39] Cecil carefully used the common biblical theme of God's grace, as

[35] John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians: by John Calvin*, trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh, 1854), p. 112; Wulfert de Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin: An introductory guide*, trans. Lyle D. Bierma (London, 2008), p. 235.
[36] Calvin, *Commentary on Galatians and Ephesians*, p. 112.
[37] Martin Luther, *Luther's works. 26: Lectures on Galatians, 1535: chapters 1-4*, eds. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (Saint Louis, MO, 1963), pp. 353-5.
[38] Knox, *Works,* 6, p. 55.
[39] Knox, *Works,* 6, p. 55.

in Ephesians 4:7, to make it clear that Knox needed to be prudent and approach his communication with a more gracious air.[40]

Cecil's measured rebuke emphasised their common cause, and whilst Knox may not have gone as far as Cecil wanted, his subsequent apology demonstrated his recognition that the tone he had previously taken would not work.[41] Knox's later letters to Elizabeth and Cecil had a very different tone. His focus changed to seeking advice and support for the reform in Scotland, and he made no further mentions of either Elizabeth's or Cecil's spiritual welfare. For example, Knox's letter to Cecil in November 1559, just months later, was distinctly humbler and more careful; in requesting support for the cause in Scotland, Knox wrote that 'partlie for remembraunce of my dewtie towardis you, and partlie for the love which I bear to the cause, which I doubt not but ye study to promote, I could not cease in these few wourdes to renew my old petition'.[42] This letter suggested that Knox may have perceived the Nicodemism of Elizabeth and Cecil negatively, but his focus on what was needed for future reform allowed him to relegate these perceptions below his desire for support from powerful potential allies. After all, as he had argued in his letters in early 1559, their Nicodemism was forgiven if they used their new-found power to support godly reform. In other words, Knox's anti-Nicodemism was malleable, and easily put aside for the sake of Church reform.

Pragmatism – power dynamics and perceptions of Nicodemism

Knox's letters to Cecil, and the evolution of messaging and language in them from April to November 1559, shows that interpersonal pragmatism was often dominant over a more abstract, if principled, anti-Nicodemism. It also highlights a consistent challenge with the evidence: much of the archival material from this period consists of letters from or to important and powerful people who had been Nicodemites in Mary's reign. The relationships and perceptions in these letters cannot be separated from the power dynamics between the authors and recipients; power dynamics inherent to many of the

[40] 'But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ': Ephesians 4:7.
[41] It is worth noting that Knox's apology was not accepted by Elizabeth – as Dawson puts it 'Knox never mastered the skill of apologizing'. Dawson, *Knox*, pp. 173.
[42] Knox, *Works,* 6, p. 98.

relationships in these letters mean that negative perceptions of Nicodemism are unlikely to be apparent.

Cecil's advice to Knox – to write letters with prudence and care – was one other people clearly followed, even when they were writing letters that were critical of official policy. It was not good politics to accuse powerful people of Nicodemism, and so letters to these powerful people do not necessarily reflect the real views and raw attitudes of their authors. Nevertheless, the evidence of pragmatism running through the archival evidence shows that the power to push reform was viewed as a more important factor than disapproval of Marian Nicodemism.

A letter from Philip Nicholls (Nycolls in his letter) to Cecil in 1560 provides an example of how returning exiles were careful to avoid criticising Nicodemism in their communications. Originally from Devon, Nicholls was an outspoken reformer who had spent Mary's reign in exile with his wife in Aarau, returning by 1560.[43] His eleven-page missive on the risks of being a loyal Protestant councillor to a prince – about Cecil's service of Elizabeth – addressed many of the faults that he perceived in Cecil's approach to his role; however, the letter did not appear to harm his immediate prospects for preferment – in November 1562 he was appointed to a position in the Diocese of Wells. There is some mystery as to his later years; having resigned, he was succeeded in this living in 1564, and no further details of his life remain.[44] In any case, his personal treatise on the role of a godly councillor was preserved in Cecil's papers, which is an important insight into the initial and frank views of a returning exile on Cecil and the beginning of the Elizabethan Settlement.

Nicholls' letter focused on the importance of loyalty to God rather than to the prince.[45] In language that echoed much of that of the Marian resistance theorists shown in Chapter 2, Nicholls argued that loyalty to God's law was true service to the prince and country, even if putting God first was difficult at times. Nicholls was writing to put Cecil 'in remembraunce' of this argument, in Cecil's role as a powerful councillor.[46] This is a theme consistent with the anti-Nicodemite criticism of those who put their own safety first, and were loyal to the

[43] C. Bradshaw, 'Nicolls [Nichols], Philip', *ODNB*.
[44] Bradshaw, 'Nicholls'.
[45] Philip Nicholls to Cecil, 1560, CP, MS 144, fol. 73r.
[46] Nicholls to Cecil, 1560, CP, MS 144, fol. 73v.

prince's command of attendance at Mass over God's command to avoid it; but it was framed by Nicholls as advice for the future rather than alluding to any past action.

Nicholls' letter is an example of where anti-Nicodemite (and at times resistance theory) motifs were used to emphasise the need for godly action in the future – always leaving out any criticism of past action. Nicholls understood the pragmatic need to support powerful statesmen seeking to reform the church, and he knew that explicit criticism would have risked his advice being ignored – Cecil was the primary statesman of Elizabeth's reign and the architect of much of the Elizabethan Settlement.[47]

Nicholls began his letter carefully, with an affirmation of Cecil's Protestant credentials, noting that because of Cecil's piety, 'there ys none of the cowncell that can say so muche in godly matters as yow can, I thienke few of them so famylyer with the lorde'.[48] Nicholls further stated that it would be a 'shame to go abowte to cowncell, or demonyshe yow, ether in matters off relygyon, or alle off polytyke governanunce, so farre inferior do I acknowledge my self to your wysedome & experience in both these regymentes', and that 'yow are I dowte nott a member off the mystycall body of Chryste'.[49] It would have been extremely clear to Nicholls that Cecil had not avoided Catholic conformity during Mary's reign, and so in making these points about Cecil's wisdom and experience, there was always an allusion in Nicholls' letter that Cecil had not always acted as he should – indeed this made Nicholls' letter reminding Cecil of these things all the more salient.

Nevertheless, Nicholls' emphasis in his letter was never to address the past, but like Knox to encourage Cecil to play a constructive role in the reform of the Church, from his newly elevated position. Nicholls believed Cecil had not acted according to his conscience, but he no longer had any excuse but to do so. Nicholls stated that 'agayne yt ys thought that few or none may be able to perswade the quenes as yow. The which thenges considered, and the so abhomynatyones yet remaynenyge, specially, I say, in the cowrte: what excuse cowld yow make, but that yow have falled into the daunger afore sayde?'[50]

[47] Alford, *Burghley*, p. xii.
[48] Nicholls to Cecil, 1560, CP, MS 144, fol. 74v.
[49] Nicholls to Cecil, 1560, CP, MS 144, fol. 73v.
[50] Nicholls to Cecil, 1560, CP, MS 144, fol. 74v.

Nicholls' main criticism was the maintenance of Catholic rituals in the English Church, and especially the crucifix in Elizabeth's chapel. He wrote that Elizabeth's councillors were acting 'asthough they were affrayde off men, or ashamed of her lorde'.[51] He called on Cecil to ask himself whether he had 'done the worcke of the lorde dylygently, nay rather yt ys to be feared, lest the bloude off those that have perished thorow ignoraunce, shalbe required at your hande, so farre as yt was in yow to have helped them to knowledge.'[52] He stated that he was content to 'leave the dysputatyon to your owne constyence [conscience], ffor surely this ys a heavy sentence: cursed be he that dothe the worcke of the lorde negylygently'.[53]

In urging reform, Nicholls argued for three things, each based on a biblical principle. First, he called on Cecil to put the kingdom of God first in all his work. He quoted the Matthew as 'ffyrst seake ye the kyngdome of heaven and the ryghteousnesse therefore, and these thenges shalbe mynystred unto yow.'[54] This was certainly not a uniquely anti-Nicodemite theme, but as shown in Chapter 2, it was often referenced to criticise those who conformed as putting themselves and an easy life ahead of their Christian commitments.[55]

The importance of putting God first led neatly to the second point that Nicholls raised – that Cecil should ensure he used the opportunities presented to him as the Queen's primary councellor to further the cause of reform. Nicholls referenced the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah in urging Cecil to 'avoyde the curse of the negligent servaunt, that yow mought rather with your dylygence pleasynge god, displease men, then pleasing men, yow should fall into the displeasure of god'.[56] In Jeremiah 48, it states that 'cursed (be he) that doeth the worke of the Lord negligently', and Nicholls went on to give the example, from Genesis, of Joseph becoming the Pharaoh's chief adviser, and using his powers, following the 'worde off the lorde', and acting for the good of his family.[57] These passages also link to Jesus' Parable of the Tenants recorded in the Matthew, which expanded on this theme: Jesus gave the example of servants who had been given money by their master to invest – some had

[51] Nicholls to Cecil, 1560, CP, MS 144, fol. 76r.
[52] Nicholls to Cecil, 1560, CP, MS 144, fol. 74v.
[53] Nicholls to Cecil, 1560, CP, MS 144, fol. 75v.
[54] Nicholls to Cecil, 1560, CP, MS 144, fol. 74r.
[55] For example, by Calvin. Calvin, 'Apology of John Calvin', p. 353.
[56] Nicholls to Cecil, 1560, CP, MS 144, fol. 77v.
[57] Jeremiah 48:10; Nicholls to Cecil, 1560, CP, MS 144, fol. 74v.

invested wisely, while the negligent servants simply buried the money to keep it safe.[58] The parable was not about financial investment, but about how the wise and godly man should use the resources that God had given them.

To strengthen his point, Nicholls used cautionary tales of those who had trusted in their own wisdom rather than God's, particularly 'lorde crumwell who was a notable wyseman, and semed and was in deed a zelous man to the lawe of god, but he dyd not submytt his reason to the worde, but thought by his wysedome to comprehend the hole matter, byt god toke hem he was but a man.'[59] In this letter, Nicholls urged Cecil to use what God had given him – his position – to further the Protestant cause, with the clear implication that if he did not, as recorded in Matthew 25, he would be cast 'into vtter darkness'.[60]

Third, Nicholls urged that the wise and godly councellor should avoid 'covetousness of mony that ys the rote of all evell' (rather presciently, given Cecil's investment in property).[61] He referenced and drew from St Paul's first letter to Timothy, which stated that 'the desire of money is the roote of all euil, whiche while some lusted after, they erred from the faith, and perced them selves through with many sorows'.[62] Nicholls would have been highly aware that Cecil had not suffered the privations of those who had gone into exile; as Stephen Alford notes, Cecil 'lived comfortably with his family close to the royal court' during Mary's reign.[63]

The emphasis on choice of God over self-interest is central to all three of the main points that Nicholls wished to make; these were also critical themes in anti-Nicodemite writing. Yet the key point, in his letter, was that Nicholls stuck resolutely to these themes as advice for future action and not as criticism of the past. That criticism may have been implicit, but Nicholls' pragmatic approach meant avoiding associating these anti-Nicodemite themes with Cecil's former Nicodemism, and ensured that he was more likely to be heard – precisely as Cecil himself had advised Knox.

[58] Jeremiah 48:10; Matthew 25.
[59] Nicholls to Cecil, 1560, CP, MS 144, fol. 76r.
[60] Matthew 25:30.
[61] Nicholls to Cecil, 1560, CP, MS 144, fol. 74r.
[62] 1 Timothy 6:10.
[63] Alford, *Burghley*, p. 65.

The influence of power dynamics in the communication of criticism can further be seen in a revealing letter sent by Archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker, to Cecil in 1565. In it, Parker outlined how relative power influenced the way Cecil was perceived, and how this power over many aspects of the monarch's policy meant that people were reluctant to criticise Cecil. The letter was written in the context of the vestiarian controversy, as dealt with in Chapter 2. Parker was a staunch defender of the official vestiarian policy, and in a letter to Cecil, he complained that he was always blamed and seen as the enemy of those who argued against the use of vestments: 'in my expostulation with many of them I signify their disobedience, wherein, because they see the danger, they cease to impute it to her Majesty, for they say, but for my calling on, she is indifferent. Again, most of them dare not name your honour in this tragedy, for many must have your help in their suits, &c. My lord of London is their own, say they, and is but brought in against his will.'[64]

Parker's complaint was that Cecil was too powerful to make an enemy, whereas Grindal, the Bishop of London, was not blamed for enforcing the law on vestments because he was 'their own' – that is, he was perceived to be one of those who would disagree with the use of vestments, and more generally was in favour of stricter reform. Like Parker, Grindal, a former tutor to Elizabeth, was a close ally of Cecil, but he was nonetheless seen in a different light.[65] This sense that Grindal was one of 'their own' was perhaps in part demonstrated by the fact that he had gone into exile during Mary's reign, whilst Parker had not. Cecil was also a former Nicodemite, but this distinction was overlooked because of his power and influence.

Even those who had written strident anti-Nicodemite criticism appeared to have no concern writing positively about Cecil's faith – especially if it would help them with their requests. In February 1560, in a letter about the state of the Church in the north of England, Robert Horne, Dean of Durham, wrote that he was certain of Cecil's faith. Horne had been a prominent exile and published anti-Nicodemite, and he had been given a commission to tackle religious disorder in Durham upon his return from exile.[66] In his letter, Horne made

[64] Parker to Cecil, 7 April 1565, Matthew Parker, *Correspondence of Matthew Parker, D.D. Archbishop of Canterbury*, eds. John Bruce and Thomas Thomason Perowne (Cambridge, 1853), p. 237.
[65] Alford, *Burghley*, pp. 87, 126.
[66] For example, in his introduction to an English Edition of Calvin's *Quatre Sermons*, Horne wrote he was, 'settled in the truthe therof my conscience did more plainly laye to my charge that j could not revoke saye

no mention or reference to Cecil's Nicodemism when stating that 'the painfull care ye have to further christes true religion, & your accustomed goodnes towards the ministers of the same, dothe bolden me to trouble your weightie affairs'. These 'weightie affairs' were to do with the behaviour of certain 'libertines' who 'shall falle to barbarous atheisme voyde of all religion ether one or other, & become a newe babylon in confusion of licencious life' without severe discipline.[67] Babylon was a common biblical contrast to God's kingdom, and Horne was effectively saying that he believed Cecil had always acted in the interest of God's kingdom. At the time, Horne was in the process of negotiating a potential position as Bishop of Winchester, and, as Brett Usher argues, these negotiations often hinged on financial issues – Horne was clearly pandering to Cecil, but there generally appears not to have been any question of theological difference in Horne's letter.[68]

In 1567 and 1568, Horne and Nicholas Bullingham both wrote to Cecil to raise support for Protestant refugees from the Low Countries and France, and neither made mention of the English Marian exile. The case of Bullingham is a good example of the complex relationships between Nicodemites and exiles – when writing in 1568, he was Bishop of Lincoln, but he had been in exile in Emden and at the same time counted Parker as his long-standing patron.[69] Horne wrote in 1567 on behalf of the Dutch refugees in Southampton, urging Cecil's compassion on his fellow Protestants, whilst Bullingham wrote in 1568 to discuss raising money for religious exiles.[70] That they made no reference to the Marian exile is perhaps not surprising, but it does demonstrate how the subject was avoided even when there were clear parallels to draw between the support that many leading English Churchmen had previously received from the Protestant city states on the European mainland.

In 1567, Horne wrote a letter making the same point as Cecil had made to Knox – that all are 'subiecte' to 'Christe in his kingdome'.[71] This is very different from an anti-Nicodemite

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against nor dissemble it without blasphemous contempt of god & most horrible denial of his sonne Iesus'. John Calvin, *Certaine homilies of m. Ioan Calvine conteining profitable and necessarie, admonition for this time, with an apologie of Robert Horn* (Wesel, 1553), sig. A.iiir; Ralph Houlbrooke, 'Horne, Robert', *ODNB*.

[67] Robert Horne to Cecil, 18 February 1560, TNA, SP 12/11, fol. 41r.

[68] Brett Usher, *William Cecil and Episcopacy: 1559-1577* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 3–4.

[69] Julian Lock, 'Bullingham, Nicholas', *ODNB*.

[70] Robert Horne to Cecil, 30 June 1567, TNA, SP 12/43, fol. 41r; Nicholas Bullingham to Cecil, 28 February 1568, TNA, SP 12/46, fol. 81r.

[71] Horne to Cecil, 30 June 1567, TNA, SP 12/43, fol. 41r.

argument, in that it urged compassion rather than division. Horne urged Cecil to intercede on behalf of the Dutch refugees to secure them a church, which he assured Cecil was not a problem in his diocese.[72] Horne was asking that Cecil afford the same opportunity and support to co-religionists as Horne, himself, had had in exile in Strasbourg, Zurich and Frankfurt. It is noteworthy that Horne, as with Bullingham, did not mention his own experiences and those of many other Elizabethan churchmen, in his request for support to the Dutch refugees. He clearly did not believe it would help his argument, as it highlighted a previous division that would not have helped – again something which alludes to Cecil's urging of Knox to emphasise unity not division.

Criticism, when it came, was not an end in itself; the purpose of critical letters was to promote action towards quicker reform of the Church. This was still the case in 1568, when Christopher Foster, alias Colman, a Puritan, wrote to Cecil demanding that Church practice be changed more quickly. There is very little detail about the life of Foster, other than evidence suggesting that he went into exile, that he was in Marshalsea Prison in 1568 along with four other preachers, and that by 1569 he was a tutor in Cecil's old college – St John's College, Cambridge. About this time he taught George Walker, a later Puritan leader.[73] However, from the content of his letters we know that Foster was of the 'hotter sort' and strongly advocated for further reform beyond the Elizabethan Settlement.

Along with his four fellow prisoners, Foster wrote a letter 'to their brethren' which echoed anti-Nicodemite language with an attack on vestments, referring to 'this mingle mangle ministry & popish orders & popish apparell which is to the great griefe of the Godly & can take no comfortt of such doctrine, whereas ye say paule was offended with peter for dissembling & so did sharply rebuke him in so doinge he did very well'.[74] In his reference to dissembling and the contention between Peter and Paul, documented by Paul in Galatians 2:11-14, Foster was talking about the contention in the early church about whether Gentile Christians had to follow Jewish practices such as circumcision.[75] The biblical conclusion was implicit to Foster's argument: that Christians should not be compelled to follow the Jewish

[72] Horne to Cecil, 30 June 1567, TNA, SP 12/43, fol. 41r.
[73] Christopher Colman, and 4 other preachers; exhortation to their brethren, May 1568, BL, Cotton, Caligula MS BVIII, fol. 169r; David R. Como, 'Walker, George', *ODNB*.
[74] Christopher Colman, and 4 other preachers, BL, Cotton, Caligula MS BVIII, fol. 169r.
[75] Galatians 2:11-14.

tradition, nor should they hide whether or not they felt this way – Paul's criticism of Peter being that he had hidden the fact that he did not follow Jewish traditions, in part because of fear of the powerful 'circumcision group'.[76] Foster's criticism was not whether people agreed with him, but whether they hid their belief because of fear of those who held power – a clear anti-Nicodemite trope. Despite the partisan nature of Foster's letter and the use of anti-Nicodemite themes, there was no mention of Marian Nicodemism or criticism of the actions of many of the Elizabethan Church leaders.

In 1569, when Foster was out of prison and tutoring at St John's, he wrote a generally pastoral letter to Cecil to urge faster reform. The letter, which echoed many of the criticisms from his previous correspondence from prison, did not refer to Cecil's Nicodemism and instead disapproved of those he termed 'papists'.[77] He carefully avoided explicit criticism of Cecil, Elizabeth or the Elizabethan Settlement, but emphasised the need to capitalise on the progress to date. Foster declared that 'God hath given great Occasion, that in his rich Mercy, and for the Love he beareth always to his Church, and hath overthrown all the Devises, Conspiracies of the wicked Papists, unnatural Papists and Monsters, that had lost the Knowledge both of God, their Prince and Country: The Lord give them better Grace.'[78]

As in his previous correspondence with his supporters, Foster made use of anti-Nicodemite themes without explicitly criticising the previous Nicodemism of Cecil, Elizabeth, Parker or any of the other leading states-people or churchmen. In part this was a pragmatic step to influencing Cecil but also, as shown by Foster's letter from prison, Nicodemism was not mentioned even in correspondence addressed to like-minded people rather than powerful leaders. The challenge with the remaining sources is that, by and large, they are addressed to, or about, powerful people. Pragmatism about the need for future reform meant that although the language of anti-Nicodemism was often used by those who criticised contemporary policy to promote faster reform, there is no evidence that Marian Nicodemism remained a contentious issue in the first decade of Elizabeth's reign in these letters.

[76] Acts 11.
[77] Christopher Foster (Colman) to Cecil, January 1569, BL, Lansdowne, MS 12, fol. 100v.
[78] Foster (Colman) to Cecil, January 1569, BL, Lansdowne, MS 12, fol. 100v.

Resilient relationships

Winthrop Hudson has demonstrated the importance of pre-Marian relationships in the formation of the early Elizabethan administration, rooted in the 'Athenian tribe' of Cambridge in the late 1530s and 1540s.[79] Hudson's work has shown that it is a mistake to view these relationships as any less important than the Marian exile. He states that 'by obscuring connections which had no relationship to the exile, preoccupation with the Marian exile as a line of demarcation has made it difficult to perceive the community of interests and intimacy of friendship which did unite those who were brought into Elizabeth's service at the beginning of her reign'.[80] This is important in considering how friendship moderated potentially harsh perceptions of Nicodemism, and how it was an important factor in both the working of government and in how exiles and Nicodemites viewed one another.[81]

One example of the importance of pre-existing friendships is the relationship between Richard Hilles and Heinrich Bullinger. As discussed in Chapter 3, Hilles was an English Protestant who conformed during Mary's reign, and whose servant, Salkyns, had written to Bullinger asking for his help in convincing Hilles of the error of his ways. Bullinger and Hilles had communicated frequently during Edward VI's reign, but this had ceased when Hilles conformed to the Marian Church. After Elizabeth came to the throne, it did not take long for Hilles to write to Bullinger and recommence their correspondence. In the first letter, in February 1559, Hilles referred to the letters that Salkyns had sent to Bullinger and the warnings about the dangers of conformity in subsequent correspondence from Bullinger. The letter was slightly defensive in tone, but there is also a sense that the relationship that had existed between Hilles and Bullinger before Mary's reign could be restarted without suffering any long-term damage from the intervening period. Hilles claimed that he had 'received [these letters], my honoured sir, with a willing mind' and that he had been wrongfully accused of disdaining them, for 'I never disdain to read the letters of any one, and especially yours.'[82] Hilles downplayed the gap in correspondence to Bullinger during

[79] Hudson, *The Cambridge connection*, p. 77.
[80] Hudson, *The Cambridge connection*, p. 6.
[81] Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism*, p. 137.
[82] Hilles to Bullinger, 28 February 1559, *ZL*, 1, p. 19.

Mary's reign as unimportant, and it appears that this hiatus had no lasting impact on their relationship once it was safe to associate with the Protestant confession in England again.

Although the letters from Bullinger during Mary's reign do not survive, Hilles' letters make it apparent that they had included criticism of his Nicodemism. Hilles described how he had acted through fear and, whilst he admitted he had been wrong, he claimed to have been misled. He described his fear, saying that 'as long as our cruel and superstitious queen Mary reigned in this country, I was so afraid for my property, and of getting into danger, yea, even for my life itself, that I scarcely dared to write to persons of your character.'[83] Hilles then asked for forgiveness and promised to be faithful in the future, saying that he trusted in the Lord, 'who does not cast out, but receives with kindness, those who return to him', and that he did 'confess therefore my past offence unto the Lord, I give glory to the Lord, and from the Lord I implore mercy, as you recommend me to do, nor have I any doubt but that I shall obtain it.'[84]

Hilles recognised that his Nicodemism was not viewed positively, but that did not stop him from seeking to regain the trust and friendship of Bullinger in the months after Mary's death. There were several letters from Hilles to Bullinger recorded in the *Zurich Letters* after 1559, which show that the correspondence quickly resumed, and that the relationship was rapidly restored. Extant letters from 1562 and 1566 show a friendship unharmed – once Hilles' Nicodemism had quickly been confessed, Bullinger had no concern with continuing to correspond regularly and amicably with him.[85]

Another example of friendship overcoming any barriers that perceptions of Nicodemism may have caused comes from a letter from Lord John Grey of Pirgo to Cecil in April 1560. Grey was not associated with his niece, Lady Jane's, short-lived reign; however, he had had been involved in Wyatt's rebellion against Mary in 1554, and only avoided execution following the lobbying of his wife, Mary, who was the sister of the prominent Marian courtier Viscount Montagu. Cecil and Grey had known one another for many years, and

[83] Hilles to Bullinger, 28 February 1559, *ZL,* 1, p. 19.
[84] Hilles to Bullinger, 28 February 1559*, ZL*, 1, p. 20.
[85] Hilles to Bullinger, 31 July 1562; Hilles to Bullinger, 20 December 1566, *ZL*, 1, pp. 146–7, 266.

their longstanding friendship can be shown by Cecil naming Grey as 'one of the four noblemen to supervise the alteration of the *Book of Common Prayer*' in 1558.[86]

In his letter of 1560, Grey was writing to thank Cecil for his faithfulness and support in a case against John Mason, William Paget, and others, in what he termed the 'Lesetershyer cawse' – most likely the release from the Act of Attainder related to Grey's involvement in the Wyatt rebellion.[87] According to Grey, Cecil had overthrown the 'seyd devilyshe practises' of Mason and others, 'for in feyth if theyr hammers maye worke, they will forge blowes, calamitie, & destruction'. [88] Grey had remained in England but suffered under Mary's reign because of his Protestantism; yet, he was incredibly fulsome in his praise of Cecil's faith and reported that all agreed with him. The statement that 'ye know I am not want to flatter yow' belies the flattery of the letter: 'in your stowte and wyse standyng, for the mayntenauns of gods cause, the defence of your countre, and suretye of your soverayen, I am fully persuaded ye have not soyght the prayes of men, but the discharge of your consyense and dewty'.[89] To Grey, Cecil's Nicodemism was of no consequence compared to the support he could give him as a friend in his dispute with Mason, Paget, and others.[90]

Looking to the future and not the past

As English Protestant religious insecurity reduced, the focus in surviving correspondence moved to future opportunities, rather than the anti-Nicodemism of the past. To understand how former exiles viewed their former Marian conformist co-reformers, it is possible to look at the letters they sent to European mainland reformers. At the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, the sense one gets from these letters is of positivity and of a perceived need to advance rapidly with the religious changes. There was very little reflection on the Marian years, nor on how people spent them. When the Marian years are mentioned, they are most often portrayed as barren and wasted time and are otherwise ignored.[91]

[86] Stanford Lehmberg, 'Grey, Lord John', in *ODNB*.
[87] Lord John Grey of Pirgo to Cecil, 1 April 1560, TNA, SP 12/12, fol. 1r; Lehmberg, 'Grey'.
[88] Grey to Cecil, 1 April 1560, TNA, SP 12/12, fol. 1r.
[89] Grey to Cecil, 1 April 1560, TNA, SP 12/12, fol. 1v.
[90] This letter was sent shortly before Lord John's niece, Katherine Grey, married the Earl of Hertford, a cause that threatened Elizabeth's control of the royal succession and one which Lord John unsuccessfully championed. Lehmberg, 'Grey'.
[91] For example, when Jewel wrote to Peter Martyr declaring that 'As to religion, it has been arranged, I hope, under good auspices, that it shall be restored to the same state as it was during your latest residence among

When Elizabeth came to the throne, she effectively removed the source of insecurity that had led to the development of English Protestant anti-Nicodemism. As a result, most of the remaining letters are not about religious conformity, dissembling or any other anti-Nicodemite themes; they are broadly interested in the question of future reform and reflecting on recent events, rather than in questions of distrust over behaviour during Mary's reign.

Anthony Cooke, Cecil's father-in-law, had been an exile in Strasbourg, as noted in Chapter 3; and in a letter to Bullinger in December 1558, Cooke responded to correspondence he had received congratulating him on the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth. This included a message of vigilance against those who would seek to harm the coming reform. Cooke stated that Bullinger had written to 'not only congratulate us English men, and rejoice on our behalf, that the most merciful God has visited our affliction, and wrought out the redemption of his people[...] but also, like a nurse who cherishes her children, you are anxious that no evil beast should hurt'.[92] This is just one of many examples of letters which did not dwell on the past, but on the new beginning afforded by the accession of Elizabeth to the throne.

There was no stated conviction from returned exiles that reform of the English Church had to be led by them; rather, the priority was that it had to begin as soon as possible. Cooke also wrote to Cecil in December 1558 to express his joy that Cecil and his wife had recovered from a recent illness and that he was looking forward to returning to England when his own health permitted. He declared that 'God hath sent [Cecil] helth, declaryng therby his good pleasur then you shall do hym, and the Queens majesty then now ys faythffull service in this tyme of need.'[93] Rather than showing concern about the future of the reform being in the hands of those who had conformed during Mary's reign, Cooke wrote that, because of Elizabeth's 'proclimacion with such grace joy & gladness, all truw Englysh men have much cause to rejoise & give must ernest thanks to allmygty god, & we not the least, that have long & sorrowfully lacked our country & now... have comfort & good

us, under Edward' - implying that they could just start where they left off five years previously: J. Jewel to P. Martyr, n.d., *ZL*, *1*, p. 33.

[92] Cooke to Bullinger, 8 December 1558, *ZL*, 1, p. 1

[93] Cooke to Cecil, 12 December 1558, TNA, SP 70/1, fol. 58r.

hope to enjoy the sight of her grace & it.'[94] As Cecil's father-in-law, Cooke could be expected to take a positive view of Cecil's leading role in the nascent Elizabethan regime, but more than that, a sense of joy and relief permeates these letters. As Cooke wrote, returning exiles were glad of the opportunity to move back to England and restart the Edwardian reform; they did not express concern that it was former Nicodemites who had given them the opportunity to end their exile.

The promise of reform was a strong incentive for former exiles and Nicodemites to work constructively together. As Usher argues, in the choice of bishops and other ecclesiastical posts, there appears to have been no distinction made either between former exiles and Nicodemites, or between those who favoured faster or slower reform – the main contention in the decisions on bishoprics were financial not theological.[95] Usher quotes Jewel to summarise the overall perspective of returning exiles, that 'the doctrine is every where most pure but as to ceremonies and maskings, there is a little too much foolery'.[96] One example of this is of John Parkhurst, an exile to Zurich in Mary's reign, recommending Walter Haddon, someone who had conformed under Mary, to Bullinger as a 'learned and pious man' who wished to be 'kindly remembered to you, and to master Martyr and your others'.[97] This was after Parkhurst and Haddon had had dinner together, and it appears as simple as a friend writing positively about a shared acquaintance, with no reference at all to what had happened in Mary's reign only three years previously. There was clearly no utility in dwelling on the past.

Critics of Nicodemism from other countries quickly wrote to Elizabeth and her councillors to influence the form of the Reformation – and none of these mentioned Elizabeth's Nicodemism. In 1559, Calvin wrote a letter to Cecil attempting to explain his own perspective and lack of culpability in the publication of Knox's *The first blast*. Calvin clearly understood that the publication of Knox's misogynistic attack on female monarchy had, by association, damaged any influence Calvin might have over Elizabeth and the course of the English Reformation. He wrote to Cecil to ask for him to intercede on his behalf with

[94] Cooke to Cecil, 12 December 1558, TNA, SP 70/1, fol. 58r.
[95] Usher, *William Cecil and Episcopacy*, p. 33.
[96] Usher, *William Cecil and Episcopacy*, pp. 3–4.
[97] Parkhurst to Bullinger, 31 May 1562, *ZL*, 1, p. 141.

Elizabeth, and to explain that he had had nothing to do with the publication of Knox's work.[98] The tone of Calvin's letter is distinctly supplicatory, with the fiercest public anti-Nicodemite referring to Cecil as a 'most accomplished and esteemed sir' and stretching credibility with his assertion that he was not aware of Knox's major publication happening in Geneva.[99] The difficult relationship between Calvin and the English regime over the next few years can probably be explained by the suspicion that neither Cecil nor Elizabeth believed Calvin's protestations of innocence.[100]

On the reformed side, Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk, wrote to her friend Cecil urging him to counsel Elizabeth against the Augsburg Confession. Jan Łaski, the 'Polish Calvin' who had joined Peter Marty Vermigli and Martin Bucer in England during Edward VI's reign, had left England on the accession of Mary and had supported English exiles.[101] He wrote to encourage Elizabeth to avoid, what he termed, 'Parliamentare Theologia' – that is, governing religion through the function of parliament and defining of a religious settlement through political processes.[102] This, Łaski argued, had been a fault of Edward VI's reform.[103] There was also intense lobbying from the Lutheran side, with Phillip Melanchthon writing to encourage Elizabeth to decide doctrine 'without ambiguity', and a group of German Protestant princes encouraging her to reform the Church in accordance with the Augsburg Confession.[104] It is clear that many wanted to influence the course of the English Reformation, and it is not surprising that none of these correspondents made any attempt to address Nicodemism, let alone criticise England's new Protestant leaders.

In all these letters, there is no sense of suspicion about the nature of the Elizabethan Settlement at its outset. Instead, there was a clear expression of hope and a new beginning for the Protestant Church in England. Later, in the first decade of Elizabeth's reign, when criticism was aired, the concern was about the future of the Settlement and not that there was anything at heart wrong with the process that had been begun by Nicodemites. In a

[98] Calvin to Cecil, after 29 January 1559, *ZL*, 1, pp. 76–7.
[99] Calvin to Cecil, after 29 January 1559, *ZL*, *1*, p. 78.
[100] Dawson, *John Knox*, p. 170.
[101] Alec Ryrie, *Protestants*, p. 71; MacCulloch, *Reformation*, p. 258.
[102] Jan Łaski to the Queen, 1 September 1559, TNA, SP 70/7, fol. 15r.
[103] Translation from *CSP*. Jan Łaski to the Queen, 1 September 1559, *CSP Foreign, Elizabeth, 1, 1558-1559*, pp. 534–5.
[104] Translation from *CSP*. Melanchthon to the Queen, 1 March 1559; the German Protestant Princes to the Queen, 15 August 1559, *CSP Foreign, Elizabeth*, *1, 1558-1559*, pp. 154, 478.

letter from Bullinger and Gualter to the Earl of Bedford in 1566, the Zurich reformers were critical of the English Church, and viewed the use of vestments as a corruption of the original ideals of the Elizabethan reforms. They hoped that 'the reformation of the Church of England, begun with the great admiration of the whole world, be not disfigured by new filth and the restored relics of wretched popery', rather than voicing any concern about the reform at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign.[105] Elizabeth was frequently described as the new Deborah: as Walsham states, 'an agent of providence to restore the Reformation after its rude interruption by Bloody Mary Tudor'.[106] This was not representative of anti-Nicodemite tension and suspicion under the surface throughout this period; rather, perspectives on the progress of the Reformation began to diverge, and as they did it became incumbent to look for reasons as to why the promise of reform in 1558 was not translated into reality.

Cecil and Parker wrote about conscience as a guide for future action rather than as a tool for judging past action. They both claimed to use conscience in decisions to act in a way that was consistent with their beliefs.[107] This did not mean that they had to justify all their previous actions to one another, but rather that they recognised their conscience as an active guide in ensuring the godliness of their future actions. Writing in this way, they were able to use conscience as another reason to reject division based on previous actions and instead focus on intention.

In a letter to Sir Nicholas Bacon in early 1559, Parker spoke about the importance of conscience and consistency in action. Whilst he was concerned about whether he, Parker, was suitable for high office, he declared that he 'thank[ed] God [his] conscience condemneth [him] not' because he had an opportunity to act according to his conscience in the coming years.[108] Parker also wrote that acting in accordance with conscience was in contrast to 'hypocrites' who promoted resistance theory: 'I pray God all be conscience to God, that is sometime so pretended. Men be men, yea, after the school of affliction, men be

[105] Bullinger and Gualter to the Earl of Bedford, 11 September 1566, *ZL*, 1, p. 260.
[106] Alexandra Walsham, '"A Very Deborah?" The myth of Elizabeth I as a providential monarch', in Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman, eds., *The myth of Elizabeth* (London, 2003), p. 144.
[107] Calvin made this argument in his Commentary on Galatians 4:21. Calvin, *Commentary on Galatians and Ephesians*, p. 134.
[108] Parker to Bacon, 1 March 1559, Parker, *Correspondence: Matthew Parker*, pp. 58, 63.

men. Hypocrisy is a privy thief both in the clergy and in the laity.'[109] The contrast between hypocrisy and conscience was clear in Parker's writing: hypocrisy constituted action that was contrary to stated opinions, whereas acting in good conscience meant consistency between belief and action. In June 1559 Parker made clear in a letter to Elizabeth that he viewed 'conscience' as a guide for discharging duty in the right way.[110] Conscience was more active and future-looking than reflective on past actions, and thus in line with the expectations of future reform.

The concept of conscience guiding action in a consistent manner can be seen in a letter from Cecil to Thomas Smith in 1563, written to express his desire to act in the right way. Cecil also claimed that, where he was perceived to be doing wrong, he could always rely on his own conscience. Cecil was not always open about his motivation; his letter in 1563 was about statecraft and decisions as Principal Secretary, but there is an element of similarity to the letter he wrote to his wife from prison in 1554.[111] As Walsham notes, 'it was persecution and pluralism themselves that crystallised and intensified a sense of disjuncture between inner conscience and external conduct, and between language and truth.'[112] Cecil wrote that 'knowing before Almighty God, my disposition to deale with all men playnely[...] yet doo I not escape evill iudgment, desysrous to avoyde as much as I may that opinion, and wher I can not content with pacience and tesymony of my own conscience to endure.'[113] Cecil believed that criticism was not something that could be avoided, but if one were guided by conscience, it was something to endure.

For those who had recently returned from exile, the consistency between belief and action was equally important, although it could be expressed in a different way. Notably, there was a contrast drawn between concealing the actions of attending a Protestant congregation, and the act of concealing internal belief through conformity in attending Mass. In a letter to Bullinger in August 1559, Thomas Lever drew out this contrast: he wrote of a 'congregation of faithful persons' who 'during the rigour of the persecution under that queen they carefully concealed themselves, and on the cessation of it under Elizabeth they openly

[109] Parker to Bacon, 1 March 1559, Parker, *Correspondence: Matthew Parker*, p. 62.
[110] Parker to Elizabeth, June 1559, Parker, *Correspondence: Matthew Parker*, p. 70.
[111] See Chapter 3 for more information about the letter.
[112] Walsham, 'Toleration', p. 5.
[113] Cecil to Thomas Smith, 11 January 1563, BL, Lansdowne, MS 102, fol. 55r.

continued in the same congregation.'[114] Lever had been a contemporary of Cecil's at St John's College, Cambridge, and had been a prominent churchman in Edward's reign. He went into exile and became an ally of Richard Cox against Knox's party in the arguments in Frankfurt in the controversy there over the use of the *Book of Common Prayer* – supporting Cox's moderate view against the more extreme Knoxian party, that the English Protestant congregation should continue to worship using the Edwardian authorised version.[115] Therefore, whilst Lever later became more associated with those urging stricter reform when in 1566 he objected to wearing the surplice, at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign he was connected with many of the moderate reformers that shaped the Elizabethan Settlement.

When he returned from exile, Lever observed a level of discrimination against those who had conformed under Mary, especially in those churches which had been hidden to avoid Catholic persecution. He wrote that 'when the Lord's supper was administered among them, no strangers [that is, foreigners] were admitted, except such as had been kept pure from popery and even from the imputation of any evil conduct; or who, ingenuously acknowledging their backsliding and public offence, humbly sought pardon and reconciliation in presence of the whole assembly.'[116]

Lever was making a distinction between Nicodemites and those who had managed to avoid attending Mass; yet Lever's perception of the Nicodemites who confessed and sought pardon was not negative, and instead he painted a picture to Bullinger of forgiveness, joy, and celebration:

> I have frequently been present on such occasions, and have seen many returning with tears, and many too in like manner with tears receiving such persons into communion; so that nothing could be more delightful than the mutual tears of all parties, on the one side lamenting their sins, and on the other congratulating them on their reconciliation and renewed communion in Christ Jesus.[117]

[114] Lever to Bullinger, 8 August 1559, *ZL*, 1, p. 58.
[115] Ben Lowe, 'Lever, Thomas', *ODNB*.
[116] Lever to Bullinger, 8 August 1559, *ZL*, 1, p. 58.
[117] Lever to Bullinger, 8 August 1559, *ZL*, 1, p. 58.

Lever was careful to show a new beginning in the English Church, rather than mistrust and anger at the former Nicodemites. This was because concealment was no longer necessary – either the godly approach of those who had met in hidden congregations, or those who had concealed their Protestant belief by attending Mass. Therefore, the distinction between the consistently faithful and the Nicodemite was no longer relevant; if the sins of the past were confessed, they could be joyfully forgiven.

Lever wrote a year later to Bullinger to explain how the differences between those who had conformed, those who died and those who went into exile were secondary to the progress of the Reformation in England in Elizabeth's first few years. Lever stated that 'in that last persecution under Mary, some were burnt [at the stake], others went into banishment together with myself; the remainder, long tossed about in great difficulty and distress, have at last, on the restoration of pure religion, invited other preachers, and myself in particular, to proclaim the gospel to them at Coventry.'[118] Lever was simply describing the reality of needing to work together with those who, as he termed it, 'tossed about in great difficulty and distress', and in doing so he focused, not on their decision to attend Mass but, on the challenges in their conscience of doing so.[119] This was a rhetorical twist that allowed Lever to avoid passing judgement on the actions of Nicodemites who were now working with him in promoting reform.

Navigating religious dissimulation in diplomacy

A difficult question for Elizabethan diplomats was whether religious dissembling was ever permissible. The diplomatic conventions about conformity to national laws were not always clear, as it was often viewed that 'an ambassador caught behaving unacceptably lost his diplomatic status automatically'; the ambiguity as to which laws might apply to someone on official ambassadorial business meant that decisions about religious conformity were not easily answered.[120] This meant that dissimulation became a necessary evil for ambassadors, often as the lesser of two evils. This can be demonstrated by examples from Thomas Challoner, Gurone Bertano, and Thomas Danett as they represent different sides of

[118] Lever to Bullinger, 10 July 1560, *ZL*, 1, p. 110.
[119] Lever to Bullinger, 10 July 1560, *ZL*, 1, p. 110.
[120] Keith Hamilton and Richard Lanhorne, *The practice of diplomacy: Its evolution, theory and administration* (Oxford, 2010), p. 52.

diplomacy – Challoner as an English ambassador in Catholic Spain, Bertano as a Catholic cleric communicating with Cecil, and Danett in negotiating the proposed marriage between Elizabeth and Archduke Ferdinand. These examples show religious ambiguity within diplomacy and demonstrate its relevance to the discussion on anti-Nicodemism.[121]

The challenge of representing Protestant England whilst avoiding religious persecution was clearly demonstrated in the case of Challoner when he became the English ambassador to Spain. Upon arriving in Spain in 1562, Challoner wrote to Mason asking whether, and to what extent, he should conform to Catholicism.[122] He wrote the letter because his bags had been searched by the Spanish authorities, and some of his books had been confiscated because of their Protestant content.[123] Challoner wrote to Mason that he 'coulde conform [him] selfe to all tolerable thinges', but that he knew he could get in trouble with the English authorities if he were perceived to conform too much.[124] He wanted assurance from Mason that he could do his job without being under suspicion from both the Spanish and English authorities; he put it that 'this case nippeth him that would doo the best to please both sides, and yett must rather have regarde to the gold than to one course at the base.'[125] For Challoner, questions of religious dissimulation did not disappear with the accession of Elizabeth, but rather they became all the more relevant.

Religious dissimulation could also be useful in diplomacy, as shown in two further examples. One can see this utility in 1564, in correspondence between Cecil and Bertano, a Catholic priest and diplomat working for the Cardinal of Lorraine, about the possibility of concord between the Catholic and English Churches. Bertano had negotiated with Henry VIII on behalf of Cardinal Farnese for a rapprochement with the Roman Curia. Bertano knew England well and appears to have had an existing relationship with Cecil, to whom he wrote

[121] Deliberate ambiguity and diplomatic dissimulation are topics of much scholarly debate. Elizabeth Williamson's recent work provides a good overview of the 'production, management, transmission, and use' of information for diplomatic purposes, and the 'flexibility and ambiguity inherent in Elizabethan diplomacy'. Elizabeth R. Williamson, *Elizabethan diplomacy and epistolary culture* (New York, NY, 2021), pp. 1, 57.
[122] Whilst Challoner was asking an important question, his sense of humour remained apparent in his letter, writing 'censores' in a different and clearer script (apparently to make it easier for them to read) when referring to those in England who would condemn him for conforming in order to perform his function. Challoner to Mason, 9 February 1562, TNA, SP 70/35, fol. 29r.
[123] Clarence H. Miller, 'Challoner, Sir Thomas, the elder', *ODNB*.
[124] Challoner to Mason, 9 February 1562, TNA, SP 70/35, fol. 49r.
[125] Challoner to Mason, 9 February 1562, TNA, SP 70/35, fol. 29v.

encouraging peace and reconciliation with Rome; yet, he was uncertain of the state of reform and Cecil's convictions.[126] In part this was due to the communication from Cecil, who had written in January 1564 that the 'pope lacketh good advise to recover the reverence to that Sea which in former tymes was shewed', but that this was not irrevocable if the pope demonstrated the 'holyness, mildness, learning, and humilite that did first purchase reverence and obedyence to the Sea'.[127] Cecil went on to claim that 'I desyre to lyve only to see some concord, which must be wrought not by extremities, but by tolerance' and that 'if in steade of cursyng of us some blessing, and in stede of condemning, some compassion wer used, more good might be done'.[128]

Cecil was not realistically negotiating rapprochement with the Roman Curia. Cecil's letter was two years after the publication of the *Apologia* that declared that the pope 'hath cast away faith, he is the fore runner of Antichriste'.[129] However, Bertano appears to have remained optimistic and was unsure of Cecil's intentions. In his letters, Cecil was successful at concealing his intentions; Bertano wrote that he had 'persuaded the Pope that it is in your power almost exclusively to cause the present parliament to settle the true form of religion in the kingdom', and that Cecil knew 'without doubt the true doctrine and way of the Catholic religion'.[130] Then, critically, Bertano expressed that he was aware of the uncertainty: 'this may be true; or you may have thought it expedient [to give the impression], regard being had to the state of affairs; or you may have been temporizing, waiting for the opportunity to accomplish so great an act, which ought to be done with the greatest prudence.'[131] Bertano did not know what religious confession Cecil held six years into Elizabeth's reign, but he certainly did not want to accept that the English Church had made a definitive split with the Catholic Church. Either way, Cecil's diplomacy was designed to avoid open confrontation with a former acquaintance; he was suitably and deliberately

[126] Kenneth Bartlett, 'Papal policy and the English crown, 1563-1565: The Bertano correspondence', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 23 (1992), pp. 647, 650–1.
[127] Cecil to Bertano, 29 January 1564, TNA, SP 70/67, fol. 211v.
[128] Cecil to Bertano, 29 January 1564, TNA, SP 70/67, fol. 211v.
[129] John Jewel, *An apologie, or aunswer in defence of the Church of England concerninge the state of religion vsed in the same*, trans. Lady Anne Cooke Bacon (London, 1562), f. 10v.
[130] Translation from *CSP*. Bertano to Cecil, 19 September 1564, *CSP Foreign, Elizabeth, 7, 1558-1559*, p. 208.
[131] Translation from *CSP*. Bertano to Cecl, 19 September 1564, *CSP Foreign, Elizabeth, 7, 1558-1559*, p. 208.

ambiguous in his correspondence to make it possible for Bertano to draw the conclusion that rapprochement was possible.

In 1566, Danett wrote to Cecil asking for guidance in the negotiations for the marriage between Elizabeth and Archduke Ferdinand. Danett was negotiating on behalf of the Elizabethan regime and questions of religious conformity became critical to the potential success of the marriage proposal. Danett wrote that Emperor Maximillian was requesting that whilst Ferdinand would attend a Protestant service he should also be allowed to also attend Catholic Mass in secret.[132] This caused difficulties in the negotiations, and Danett subsequently wrote to Cecil reporting these challenges and asking for guidance on how to overcome them. Whilst eventually Elizabeth refused to give the proposal for religious dissimulation official sanction, Maximillian's proposal was clearly viewed as a realistic and appropriate response to the diplomatic difficulties of the religious differences between England and the Habsburg Empire. In the examples of both Cecil's correspondence with Bertano and the negotiations on the marriage of Elizabeth and Ferdinand, religious dissimulation was not out of the question. Even though the marriage negotiations foundered on the question of religious conformity, it was floated as a potentially acceptable and pragmatic strategy for overcoming diplomatic challenges.

Conclusion

Pettegree notes the collaboration between former Nicodemite and exile in the development and enforcement of the Elizabethan Settlement, and the archival sources show that anti-Nicodemism was not an active factor in the development or enforcement of the Elizabethan Settlement. This chapter has argued that viewing anti-Nicodemism as an expression of religious insecurity explains why this collaboration was possible. Aspects of anti-Nicodemism may have lingered, but there is little evidence to suggest that it was a defining factor in the relationships that influence the political and ecclesiastical policy of the early Elizabethan era. The correspondence shows a remarkably pragmatic approach to the development of the Elizabethan Settlement by both returning exiles and former Nicodemites, who worked closely together to shape the early reform.

[132] Thomas Danett to Cecil, 30 May 1566, TNA, SP 70/84, fol. 118r.

The evidence does not support those, like Harkins, who look to this early period for the roots of later disagreement about the Settlement – the hidden nature of Nicodemism and the opportunities for reform overcame any latent moral incompatibility between those who went into exile and those who conformed during Mary's reign.[133] When Elizabeth came to the throne, she removed the source of the Protestant religious insecurity, and anti-Nicodemism ceased to serve a rhetorical purpose to its proponents – at least until a new source of religious concern grew out of concern for the speed and course of the English Reformation.

Knox's letters to Elizabeth and Cecil in 1559 show that whilst anti-Nicodemism may have been present in the perceptions of some returning exiles, their correspondence and actions were more influenced by their shared interest in reforming the Church. The example of Knox is particularly telling both because it is a lone instance of specific condemnation for Nicodemism, and because Cecil had to point out this shared interest in Church reform. When there was criticism of the state of reform, in the early years of the Elizabethan Settlement a pragmatic view of this shared interest was often the dominant characteristic, certainly over anti-Nicodemite principles.

As demonstrated in Chapter 3, perceptions of Nicodemism were always harsher in principle than they were in practice: Nicodemites were condemned much more in abstract than in reality. This was exacerbated by the power dynamics between powerful former Nicodemites and returned exiles, who were allies in building and sustaining the Elizabethan Settlement. With the Queen, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Principal Secretary all having conformed under Mary, the advocate of further reform was wise not to make accusations against those developing the Elizabethan Settlement.

Religious worry may have led to the development of anti-Nicodemism, but when the conditions that led to religious fragility ended, so did both the criticism of past and present religious conformity. This is evident in both friendships and other pre-Marian relationships.

[133] This is a view which found an early expression in Christina Hallowell Garrett's argument that the origins of Puritanism and the English Civil War can be found in the Marian Exile. The argument that undercurrents of antipathy, originating in the exile, are replicated by others such as Loades and Harkins. Christina Hallowell Garrett, *The Marian Exiles: a study in the origins of Elizabethan Puritanism* (Cambridge, 1938), pp. 58–9; Loades, *The Cecils*, p. 93; Harkins, 'Elizabethan Puritanism', p. 889.

Nicodemism was no impediment to their continuing, as shown by the example of Hilles and Bullinger. Hilles recognised that his conformity was not viewed positively, but that did not stop him from successfully regaining the trust and friendship of Bullinger. In addition, and despite its dangers, religious dissimulation was also a necessity for diplomacy, both because of the challenges of conformity to the country in which one found oneself, and as a tool to further diplomatic negotiations. Conformity was a careful judgement, and although it was fraught with challenges it did not carry the implications given by anti-Nicodemism.

The emphasis in most of the sources was on the future rather than the past, and the sense of shared endeavour was a strong driver in bringing former Nicodemites and exiles to work together. The concept of conscience was that it provided a guide for consistent action, rather than judgement of the past; consistency between belief and action was important, but sins could easily be forgiven where the sinner promised future faithfulness, especially in the shared project of Church reform. Protestant religious insecurity had shaped the public discourse in Mary's reign through anti-Nicodemism, but when these conditions ended, so did the influence of anti-Nicodemism.

Chapter 5: Anti-Nicodemism and the role of women

Women played an important role in the maintenance of the Marian Protestant Church yet faced significant pressure to conform to Roman Catholicism, not least because of the social expectation that they were to act under the authority of men. The correspondence shows that the need to encourage women to avoid conformity was a challenge to the assumption that women should be submissive in religion. Increased emphasis was placed by anti-Nicodemites on the importance of purity, women's agency, and their ability to discern the right way to act without male guidance. As women played an important role in the maintenance of the Protestant community under Mary, concern about women conforming was an understandable and powerful motivator – in letter after letter, Protestant leaders wrote to women encouraging greater freedom over social norms. This chapter will argue that anti-Nicodemite religious insecurity temporarily led to a relaxation of social expectations on women.

Social norms in the sixteenth century very much followed the understanding and expectation that women were inferior to men, across all classes and situations. Jacqueline Eales states that the analysis at the time was based on both the Bible and contemporary medical understanding. Paul's letters and Aristotle's theories gave religious and humoral medical validity to social misogyny.[1] Eales points out that women were 'described by male authors as morally, intellectually and physically weaker'.[2] Kirsi Stjerna has argued how, 'women also lost their role as female prophets and mystics in the Protestant Church, where their spiritual life was more or less confined to the domestic world'.[3] Whether Protestant or Catholic, women viewed were inferior to men and were to submit.[4] Stories of women in the Bible are far fewer in number, and women who are mentioned are often included in narratives to show God's ability to overcome human weakness: God could work through prostitutes like Rahab, old women like Sarah, and young unmarried women like Mary.[5] In

[1] Jacqueline Eales, *Women in early modern England, 1500-1700* (London, 1998), p. 3.
[2] Eales, *Women*, p. 3.
[3] Kirsi Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation* (Maiden, MA, 2009), p. 13.
[4] Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in early modern England 1550–1720* (Oxford, 1998), p. 136.
[5] Joshua 2; Genesis 17; Matthew 1:23.

the New Testament, the dominant teaching was for women to play a subservient role in church and family life: Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 14, 'let your women kepe silence in the Churche: for it is not permitteth vnto them to speake: but (they ought) to be subiect, as also the Law saith. And if they wil learne anie thing, let them aske their housbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speake in the Churche'.[6] The understanding was that they were to place themselves under the headship of men and under the ultimate headship of God, who became incarnated through the male Jesus.

It is important to stress that this is not a modern theological understanding of gender norms in the Bible *per se*, but to Marian and early Elizabethan Protestants (and Catholics) it was the ubiquitous view that women were inferior to men. John Knox wrote in *The first blast* that 'Nature I say, doth paynt them furthe to be weake, fraile, impacient, feble and foolishe: and experience hath declared them to be vnconstant, variable, cruell and lacking the spirit of counsel and regiment.'[7] Indeed, as shown in Chapter 2, anti-Nicodemite texts were replete with examples of early modern misogyny.

Yet, as MacCulloch has shown, women sometimes actively participated in reform in a way that was 'not fettered by the Church structures created by males' – as in the examples of Anabaptist women in north-east Switzerland.[8] There are many examples of changes in the patriarchal social norms during the Reformation, often because of women's action. Whilst anti-Nicodemite published texts were consistent regarding social perceptions of women, the experience of Protestants living in a Catholic state provided a contrast to society's patriarchal norms. The imperative of avoiding conformity was a challenge to the perceived role of women when, for example, society expected one behaviour – in this case, attendance at Marian Mass – and conscience required the opposite. Women were faced with the challenges of how to remain faithful. For Protestant women this meant avoiding Mass, including when they were married to or under the leadership of men who wanted them to attend Mass. The dissonance between expectations of external obedience and internal faithfulness was addressed by anti-Nicodemites in a blunt way – when faced with a

[6] 1 Corinthians 14:34-35.
[7] Knox, *The first blast of the trumpet*, p. 10.
[8] MacCulloch, *Reformation*, p. 167.

threat to internal faithfulness to the Protestant confession, women were to eschew social norms if necessary.

The tension was articulated as a choice between following God or man – even where there was a biblical injunction to obedience to man, the emphasis from anti-Nicodemites was on purity of faith. For Protestant anti-Nicodemites, purity and faithfulness were synonymous with avoiding attendance at Mass; to anti-Nicodemites, women who conformed and attended Mass were unfaithful and impure – this utilised language of marital unfaithfulness, but often to argue that duty to God went before duty to one's husband. This meant a choice between which man to obey, the preacher or the husband. The sources are rich in unintended irony, of the preacher telling women to show more agency and follow the advice they were given.

In a series of letters from and to women, this chapter will argue that anti-Nicodemism demonstrated the importance of women to the maintenance of the Protestant community in England. Women played an important role, yet fewer letters to them remain. Ahnert and Ahnert argue that 'these women have been largely overlooked […] because they do not necessarily look that important by other measures and statistics […yet] despite low letter betweenness they are still well connected. Why? One reason is that their acts of charity put them in direct contact with the hubs in the network, the martyrs.'[9] Therefore, evidence that does exist needs to be highlighted – it is possible to see the critical role of women, and the impact of anti-Nicodemism on their lives.

The argument that anti-Nicodemite insecurity increased women's agency contributes to the scholarly understanding of the relationship between threats to confession and social norms. As Ahnert and Ahnert have demonstrated, the role of women has not been explored sufficiently, and this chapter does so in the context of anti-Nicodemism for the first time. Mary's reign is a particularly useful period to study because the changes were rapid and short-lived. This chapter argues that once the conditions for anti-Nicodemism ceased when Elizabeth's reign began, women were no longer encouraged to use their judgement to decide what actions were justified, and any gains in religious agency were quickly reversed.

[9] Ahnert and Ahnert, 'Protestant letter networks', p. 16.

Diarmaid MacCulloch has claimed that Protestant views on women were often more shaped by the theology and circumstance than any considered position on sexuality – the need to 'weigh up that balance of massive practical continuity against equally significant change and transformation'.[10] This chapter argues that this was the case for anti-Nicodemism, where religious insecurity drove transformation in cultural norms, but only when it was deemed necessary. Purity of faith was prized above all else, but as examples from Knox's letters to Anna Locke show, this did mean that women had to be trusted to act faithfully. Finally, the chapter explores the advice given by Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk, and how women had agency and responsibility within a Protestant community that relied on them.

During Mary's reign Princess Elizabeth conformed, but the only contemporary condemnation of this fact came from a letter from Knox (see Chapter 4). Instead, most other sources followed the example of Foxe in portraying Elizabeth as a faithful Protestant who suffered after the failure of Wyatt's rebellion and survived through 'the miraculous protection of God, so gratiouslye preseruing her in so many straightes and distresses' rather than through conformity.[11] Elizabeth's subsequent role as monarch, and her political power, mean that she is not a helpful case study in seeking to understand perceptions of Nicodemism and how they relate to gender. In addition, there is little to add from this study to the general understanding of Elizabeth herself – it is an understatement to say that much more has been written and with much greater detail than can be attempted in this chapter.[12]

Women as sustainers

Freeman, Ahnert and Ahnert, and others have shown that women played an important role in the maintenance of the Protestant Marian congregations, providing shelter, sustenance and financial aid, alongside their role as 'hubs' in the Protestant letter network.[13] The term

[10] MacCulloch, *Reformation*, p. 615.
[11] *TAMO* (1563), p. 1801.
[12] From Neale to MacCulloch and Alford, and Doran to Bowers, there have been significant studies aiming to understand Elizabeth's religion and motivation. John Ernest Neale, *Queen Elizabeth I* (London, 1934), pp. 62–64; Diarmaid MacCulloch, *All things made new: writings on the Reformation* (London, 2017), p. 211; Alford, *Burghley*, pp. 90–92; Susan Doran, 'Elizabeth I's religion: the evidence of her letters', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 52/4 (2000), p. 720; Roger Bowers, 'The Chapel Royal, the first Edwardian prayer book, and Elizabeth's Settlement of Religion, 1559', *The Historical Journal,* 43/2 (2000), p. 317.
[13] Freeman, '"The Good Ministrye"', p. 10; Ahnert and Ahnert, 'Protestant letter networks', p. 15.

used by Foxe to describe them was 'sustainers' because of their role in supporting the martyrs and their importance to the maintenance of the wider Marian Protestant Church.[14] Ahnert and Ahnert argue that early Elizabethan letter collectors, especially Foxe, 'edited out' what they term 'infrastructural figures' – individuals, often women, who ensured that the Protestant networks functioned, without being major innovators or authors themselves.[15]

The faithfulness of women sustainers was of existential importance to the survival of the Protestant network because without them it would have struggled to function – concern about their conformity was linked to fear about the survival of English Protestantism. Letters to women like Joan Wilkinson, Lady Fane, Anne Warcup, Anne Hartipole, Joyce Hales, and Margery Cooke are numerous, and correspondence with them survives from several Protestant martyrs. As Thomas Freeman argues, these 'female sustainers were truly cornerstones of Marian Protestantism, at once supporting it and helping to fix its boundaries', and 'to ignore the majority of Marian Protestants who did not die for the gospel is to study the steeple and believe that you have examined the whole church'.[16] Yet, compared to men, their relative lack of freedom had the potential to create a significant impact on their ability to avoid Nicodemism – for example if they had a husband who pressured them into attending Mass.

This was the case with Agnes Glascocke, among others, who received a letter encouraging her to repentance and to avoidance of further lapses.[17] The only records to Glascocke are in Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, with three letters from John Careless and three from William Tyms – two Protestant martyrs, who, at the time of writing their letters, were in prison. No manuscript copies of these letters remain. In Foxe, there is the additional detail that Glascocke was from Hockley in Essex, and in 1582 an Agnes Glascocke (also referred to as Annys) was accused of witchcraft in the same town, although it is not conclusive whether this was the same person.[18] Her historical record is therefore defined by her role as a

[14] Freeman, '"The Good Ministrye"', p. 9.
[15] Ahnert and Ahnert, 'Protestant Letter Networks', p. 17.
[16] Freeman, '"The Good Ministrye "', pp. 8, 24.
[17] *TAMO* (1563), p. 1922.
[18] Marianne Hester, *Lewd women and wicked witches: a study of the dynamics of male domination* (London, 1992), p. 180.

sustainer – we do not hear her voice, but those of men writing to her about the problems they believed she faced.

In these letters to women about the importance of avoiding Catholic religious conformity, Protestant leaders often expressed strong emotional connections. This took the form of statements about their hopes and fears, and often included phrases about the love they had for the women with whom they corresponded. These expressions of love were couched in Christian terms, with letters frequently addressed to a beloved 'sister in Christ', and the writers were often extremely tender in their tone, citing their love as a motivation for giving the anti-Nicodemite warnings. For instance, John Philpot, a prisoner and future martyr introduced in Chapter 3, wrote to Lady Fane: 'I love you and not just as it is mete Christians to love one an other in god[…] Christ be with you and blisse you both in body and sowle, and my praier shall follow yow wher so ever you go, as I desire that yow may be with me[…] love me as yow do, and the god of love be with yow'.[19] Lady Fane was a prominent sustainer, including to Bradford, Careless and Philpot, and was committed even when she was experiencing financial and legal difficulty – in 1555 she was even forced into hiding for nearly two years.[20] She clearly meant a lot to Philpot, and others.

There is evidence that women not only supported imprisoned Protestant men but also one another. Joyce Hales wrote to a certain Mrs Hall that she 'hartelye praised god for your pacience & faith' and that 'it is geven unto yow not onlie to beleve in Christe, but also that you shuld suffer for his sake'.[21] Hales' letter is very similar to those many women received from imprisoned Protestant leaders and is an example of how women viewed their role in increasingly equal terms – with the imperative of avoiding conformity.

It is clear, then, that women played an important role in the maintenance of the Marian Protestant community, and that coerced conformity was perceived to be a threat. Advice about how to avoid conformity and maintain the network of sustainers was often addressed privately – in letters from one individual to another – as private pragmatism prevailed over public abstract arguments. As argued in Chapters 2 and 3, public, conceptual comments

[19] Philpot to Lady Vane, n.d., BL, Additional, MS 19400*, fol. 63r-v.
[20] Cathy Shrank, 'Fane [Vane; née Brydges], Elizabeth, Lady Fane', *ODNB*.
[21] Joyce Hales to Mrs Hall, n.d., ECL, 262, fol. 233r.

invited generalised and hyperbolic consideration of the 'other', whilst private letters caused writers and recipients to reflect on the realities of individual lives.

The advice in the letters emphasised some social norms over others: in this case, the importance of remaining faithful, as brides of Christ – a deliberately gendered reference to the purity of the Church as described in Revelation.[22] This purity was emphasised above the expectation of conformity to wider social, and marital, expectations. Careless, a Protestant in prison, who wrote numerous letters and was introduced in Chapter 3, wrote to Glascocke to say that her responsibility to remain pure in her religious practice – that is not attend Mass – was more important than her duty to her husband; this did not free her from duty, but made it clear that she had individual responsibility beyond simply obeying her husband's commands.[23] Social norms were subverted through the argument that women were equal in faith, and that their individual agency in faith meant that they had a responsibility both to remain faithful and to support their fellow Protestant brothers and sisters. The biblical women highlighted in these letters were those who had played an active role in remaining faithful to her confession and doing what was right. Letters stressed the discernment of women to make decisions themselves; often these choices were not black and white, but the letters demonstrate a high level of trust in – at least some – women's biblical understanding and ability to act with discernment. As will be discussed later in the chapter, this can also be seen in the self-awareness of women like Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk, who in 1569 wrote of her important role in counselling Cecil – as Wabuda concludes, she was an advocate for lifting the religious restrictions on women's agency.[24]

'Neither male nor female': equality of faith and individual agency

In Galatians 3:28, Paul wrote that 'there is nether Iewe nor Grecian: there is nether bonde nor fre: there is nether male nor female: for ye are all one in CHRIST IESVS.'[25] Following this biblical motif, the theme of equality in faith is prominent in the letters to women from the Protestant prisoners they sustained. Anti-Nicodemism emphasised the importance of

[22] Revelation 19:7-9.
[23] Coverdale, p. 638; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.
[24] Susan Wabuda, 'Bertie [née Willoughby; other married name Brandon], Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk', *ODNB*.
[25] Galatians 3:28.

religious faithfulness and faithfulness in supporting imprisoned Protestant leaders: letters about support consequently emphasised the agency women had over their own faith – women were responsible and had to act in a way that safeguarded their religious identity, even if this meant suffering, because the maintenance of the Protestant community in England depended on it.

Philpot wrote a letter to a 'Syster of hys', sent sometime after 1554, stating that, 'thereby you are called to an equall portion of the euerlastyng inheritaunce of Christe, yf nowe in no wyse you doe shewe your selfe an vnnaturall syster to hym in forsakyng hym in trouble, whiche I trust you wyll neuer for no kynde of worldly respecte doe'.[26] Philpot clearly believed that he needed to emphasise the perspective that women were held just as culpable for Nicodemism as men, something which hints that the existence of the contrary perspective – that women could not be blamed as much as men for Nicodemism – needed to be overcome. This follows the contrast in the Bible between the concept of equality expressed in Galatians 3:28 and the teaching of submission in 1 Timothy 2:11, where it says 'let the woman learne in silence with all subiection'.[27] Women were expected to be submissive to men, including in religion; however Philpot made clear that this did not mean that women held any less responsibility for their faith. In Mary's reign, many Protestant women were in the paradoxical position where they were expected to obey their husbands who instructed them to attend Mass, whilst also avoiding attending Mass on the instruction of their Protestant leaders. The challenge was what to do when two men told you different things; and it is no surprise that Protestant ministers like Philpot argued that it was their instruction that should be given primacy.

In his letter to an anonymous woman, Philpot wrote that women were called to 'an equall portion of the euerlastyn inheritaunce of Christe' if they remained faithful to Christ in times of persecution and trouble.[28] The woman to whom Philpot was addressing his letter had clearly communicated that she was having to 'abide the triall of that doctrine which she had fruitefullye professed', as Coverdale put it in his introduction to the letter.[29] In response,

[26] Coverdale, p. 237.
[27] 1 Timothy 2:11, Galatians 3:28.
[28] Coverdale, p. 236.
[29] Coverdale, p. 236.

Philpot emphasised her equality with men in her faith, because she was called 'to Christ hymself, who voucheth you in this your vnfained faith, worthy to be his sister'.[30] Her association with the male Christ made her female faithfulness equal to that of any other man.

The Protestant prisoner and future martyr Bradford wrote much the same message to 'Maystres M. H. a godly gentlewoman', emphasising her equality in Christ to urge perseverance of faith in times of persecution. It is not clear to whom he was writing, but his message was the same as in Philpot's letter: 'therefore (as I sayde) because God is your father in Christe, and requyreth of you straightly to beleue it, geue your selfe to obedience, although you do it not with such feelyng as you desyre.'[31] Bradford made no distinction between male and female, because faith depended on God and not man or woman: 'caste therefore youre selfe wholye vppon hym, and thynke without al waueryng that you are gods child, that you are a citizen of heauen, that you are the daughter of god, the temple of the holye Ghoste &c.'[32] That is to say that men and women were treated equally here, and womanhood was not an excuse to hide behind in matters of faith.

The importance of keeping a clear conscience in a time of temptation and persecution was repeatedly emphasised in letters to women as an individual responsibility. The best examples of this theme come from correspondence with those who had conformed and then repented. One such example comes in the letter from Philpot to Anne Hartipole, in which he warned her about the dangers of pretending that her conscience had not been affected by her conformity. Not much is known about Hartipole, but she had a long association with Protestant resistance; Philpot made reference to her role in supporting Anne Askew before the latter's death in 1546 – Askew was executed for her reformist views on the order of Henry VIII and had an 'enduring renown as a protestant saint' thanks to John Bale's hagiography *The first examinacyon of Anne Askewe, latelye martyred in Smythfelde* from 1546, and *Lattre examinacyon of Anne Askewe* from 1547.[33] In 1554, Hartipole may

[30] Coverdale, p. 237.
[31] Coverdale, pp. 299–300.
[32] Coverdale, p. 302.
[33] There are also references to her in Privy Council records as having been implicated in 1552 with Mary Arundel, Countess of Sussex, for having practiced sorcery and been sent to the Tower of London. John Gough Nichols, ed., *Narratives of the days of the Reformation, chiefly from the manuscripts of John Foxe the Martyrologist* (Westminster, 1859), 77, pp. 313–4; Diane Watt, 'Askew [married name Kyme], Anne', *ODNB*.

still have been part of Mary Arundel, Countess of Sussex's, household and Philpot's letter strongly implies that she had attended Mass in order to avoid persecution.

Philpot made it clear that it was not possible to hide an unclean conscience from God, and so urged Hartipole to avoid anything that she knew was wrong. Philpot wrote:

> Me thynke I heare your excuse, pretendyng your conscience to be sounde before GOD notwythstandyng, and that your conscience wyll geue you leaue thus to doe wyth the common sorte of dissemblers both wyth God and man: but I must tell you playn (Syster) in Gods cause, that your conscience so affected, is a syckelye and vnsound conscience and craftely blinded, for before GOD there is no suche conscience alowed, whyche alloweth your bodye to do that whiche it condemneth. [34]

This letter was not one of condemnation, but a call for repentance and reformation, as Philpot wished that she 'maye become a newe woman in a godlye and newe perfection' because of his writing. Philpot was particularly disappointed in the behaviour of Hartipole because of her history of ministering to Protestant leaders and 'at such tyme as that blessed woman Anne Askewe (nowe a glorious Martyr in the syghte of Iesus christ) was harboured in your house'.[35] He wrote that this had given him the impression that it would be 'superfluous and not nedefull to wryte thereof vnto you, that of so long tyme haue ben instructed, and by so many learned bookes confyrmed' because 'the loue of the truthe had beene so graffed in youre harte, that neyther persecution, sworde, fyre, nor gallowes myght haue broughte thys to passe, that at the voyce of a handemayde in the fyrste temptation, you shoulde haue denyed Christe.'[36]

Philpot had expected that Hartipole would be strong enough in her own faith to avoid conformity, and he made clear that she had no excuse for doing otherwise; she needed purity of conscience as an individual and as any man would.[37] The equality and freedom of women to choose meant that they were expected to be responsible for the purity of their own conscience and could not hide behind any 'pretendyng your conscience to be sounde

[34] Coverdale, p. 248.
[35] Coverdale, p. 247.
[36] Coverdale, p. 248.
[37] Coverdale, p. 248.

before GOD notwythstandyng'.[38] The threat of conformity was articulated as real to all, irrespective of gender, and the responsibility for remaining faithful was universal. There was a tension here between the social norms that limited the role of women, and the anti-Nicodemite concern that women needed the agency to avoid religious conformity. Anti-Nicodemism gave women greater freedom to act, because women's obedience to men could be a threat to the maintenance of English Protestantism.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the letter from Elizabeth Longshaw to Bradford showed that the fear of failure to remain a faithful Protestant and to avoid Mass was as serious a concern for women as it was for men. Longshaw wrote eloquently of these worries, and of the comfort she received from God for keeping her conscience pure.[39] The letter demonstrated an understanding and knowledge of biblical texts, and that she had the confidence to express theological concepts – clearly, she did not believe her gender limited her agency in understanding and expressing her own faith.

In a letter sent sometime after 1554 Careless wrote to Mary Glover, the wife of Robert Glover and reportedly the Edwardian reform leader, Hugh Latimer's, 'favourite niece'.[40] Careless stated:

> Even unto many godley vertuouse honorable wemen he hathe geven most excellent gifts of knoweledge and understanynge in his truthe, so that theye are not only well hable to infourme theyre owne consiencs (in all things necessarye to salvacion) but also moste Swetelye to comforte theyre Sorowefull brethrene and sisterne that sustayne any trouble for the testymonye of gods truthe[41]

For Careless, women had the responsibility to both inform themselves and act in a way consistent with their beliefs. Like Careless later, Robert Glover was a Protestant martyr; and before his death he wrote to his wife Mary to call for her to avoid any conformity with the Marian Church: she should 'haue no fellowshyppe with them therfore, my deare wife, with their doctrine, and traditions, least you be pertaker of their synnes: for whom is reserued a

[38] Coverdale, p. 248.
[39] Elizabeth Longshaw to Bradford, n.d., ECL, 260, fol. 200v.
[40] Susan Wabuda, 'Glover, Robert', *ODNB*.
[41] Careless to Mary Glover, n.d., BL, Additional, MS 19400*, fol. 85r-v.

heuye dampnation, wythoute spedye repentaunce.'[42] Glover emphasised that his wife's faithfulness to Protestantism was essentially her responsibility, especially once Glover had been imprisoned and killed.

Careless' letter to Mary Glover went further, stating that not only did she have responsibility for her own faith, but that she also had a responsibility to support anyone who 'sustayne[d] any trouble for the testymonye of gods truthe'.[43] Careless emphasised that she had the agency to understand the truth and follow her conscience, even if this led to persecution. In doing so, she was able to support and comfort her brethren and – notably – 'sisterne' to do likewise.[44] The ways in which she would achieve this were twofold: first, through the example she gave to those around her; and second, through the support she was able to give to people like Careless who had been imprisoned. Therefore, to emphasise her agency in avoiding Nicodemism was also to underline the importance of women like her in sustaining the Protestant community through the Marian persecution.

The emphasis on avoiding Nicodemism because of equality of faith was used to highlight the imperative of serving other Protestants – concern about the faithfulness of women was linked to the importance of women supporting Protestant prisoners, and acting as a hub for Protestant communication.[45] Bradford wrote that women needed to 'geue ouer your self wholye to helpe and care for others that be in neede', because the focus was to be on the 'desyre to be at home with your good and sweete father [that is, God]'.[46] The equality of faith in God overcame any earthly distinction between man and woman, and became manifest in the willingness of all faithful believers, male or female, to avoid conformity and serve their fellow Protestants. This was the same message given to Elizabeth Browne by Careless, in another letter, where he stated 'look for no token, for tokens have I none, a true harte shall you have when all tokens begone' – the priority was Christ, even when it meant the end of life itself.[47]

[42] Coverdale, p. 530.
[43] Careless to Mary Glover, n.d., BL, Additional, MS 19400*, fol. 85v.
[44] Careless to Mary Glover, n.d., BL, Additional, MS 19400*, fol. 85v.
[45] Ahnert and Ahnert, 'Protestant Letter Networks', pp. 15–16.
[46] Coverdale, p. 302.
[47] Careless to Elizabeth Brown, n.d., BL, Additional, MS 19400*, fol. 73r.

Exhortations to remain pure in faith

From thy true word and testament,
All the dayes of my life:
Nor from thy churche most innocent,
Thine owne true spouse and wife.

But from that filthy whore of Rome.
Lord kepe me euermore:
As gratiously thou hast yet done,
Thankes be to thee therfore.

John Careless, undated poem[48]

The language of purity in the letters to women emphasised the anti-Nicodemite trope of comparing unfaithfulness to God with marital unfaithfulness – and often added that duty to God went before duty to one's husband. This theme came out strongly in Careless' note to Jane Glascocke, who visited him in prison. Careless' note 'in a booke of hers when she came to the pryson to visite hym' is the only record of Jane; what her relationship (if any) to Agnes Glascock was is only guesswork. In his note, Careless made a link between bodily and spiritual faithfulness, clearly drawing from 1 Corinthians 6, as he made a great deal of use of the Pauline metaphor in his correspondence, that 'know ye not, that your body is the temple of the holy Ghost, which is in you, whom ye have of God? and ye are not your own. For ye are bought for a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit: for they are God's.'[49] For Careless, the association of bodily and spiritual unfaithfulness was particularly apt for warning women against Nicodemism.

In his note in Jane's book, Careless echoed Paul's letter to the Corinthians in stating 'for the Lordes sake, beware of popery and popish idolatry, the idylle of the wicked Masse, and other Idolatrous seruice. Make not your body, which is a member of Christ, a member of Antichrist.'[50] For Careless, a woman's obedience to her husband was secondary to her duty to God; she should honour God before her husband. Because Jane was a 'member of Christ',

[48] Coverdale, p. 637.
[49] Coverdale, p. 638; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.
[50] Coverdale, p. 638.

her responsibility to avoid attendance at Mass was primary – in a way, this gave her freedom from the patriarchal social mores. Careless' argument was that she was not the property of her husband, but the property of Christ, and she needed to act in a way that was consistent with her belonging to Christ. This was not complete freedom from the social constraints placed upon her as a woman and a wife, and it was certainly not the freedom to ignore or disobey her husband whenever she wished, but it was an affirmation that her choices mattered, and she was individually responsible for them. Careless showed no awareness that, despite this, he was still a man telling Jane what to do.

The use of the imagery linking marital unfaithfulness with Nicodemism is also notable in the case of Agnes. Foxe wrote of Agnes that she had 'through infirmity, and her husbandes perswasion, [been] allured to goe to Masse', and that this was the context in which Careless had written to her.'[51] Careless had therefore written to her because of her 'great sorrow and repentance' in order to encourage her; Foxe noted that after these letters she was 'constante in the syncere profession of the verity, and in danger for the same of persecution'.[52]

An important thing to note is that both Careless and Tyms sought to comfort Agnes and assure her of the forgiveness of God for her attendance at Mass. Tyms wrote that Agnes' repentance was a sign of God's favour and providence, that:

> My deare sister, I haue me most hartely commended vnto you & as I haue lamented your falling from God, by being partaker with that Idolatrous Priest, so haue I since I heard of your earnest repentance, very much reioysed, and also praysed almighty God for his mercy shewed vnto you, in that he hath not left you to your selfe, but since your denyall he hath shewed his mercy on you by looking backe on you as he did on Peter, and so caused you to repent as Peter did, & bitterly to weepe for your sinnes.[53]

[51] *TAMO* (1563), p. 1955.
[52] *TAMO* (1563), p. 1955.
[53] *TAMO* (1563), p. 1922.

Agnes, according to Tyms, had denied Christ as Peter had done when Jesus was being tried in Luke 22; but her repentance was the same as Peter's in John 21, where Christ affirmed his forgiveness.[54]

The emphasis on choice – that of purity over conformity – came out in John Hooper's short letter to Joan Wilkinson. The focus was on the need to remain pure, even if this led to earthly suffering – an argument that was emphasised repeatedly in letters to women. Wilkinson was a leading supporter of Protestant prisoners during Mary's reign. She supported former senior Edwardian reformers Hooper, Nicholas Ridley, Latimer, and Cranmer, among others, and received letters from all of them both thanking her and calling for her to remain faithful. She had been a silk-woman to Anne Boleyn; that is an established, skilled and respected craftswoman with a specific link to the Tudor family.[55] In addition, she had property in Gloucester and was one of the most prominent women who sustained the reformers in prison, before she died in 1556.[56] It is unsurprising, therefore, to find that Gloucester-based Hooper had been supported by Wilkinson and that he was keen to write to encourage her in her faithfulness to the Protestant faith and identity.

In his letter to Wilkinson dated 2 February 1554, Hooper wrote that, although he was pleased to receive the 'louing tokens' that she had sent:

> I am a great deale more glad to heare how christianly you auoyd idolatry, & prepare your selfe to suffer the extremity of the world, rather then to endaunger your selfe to God. You do as you ought to do in this behalfe, and in suffrynge of transitory paynes, you shall auoyde permanent torments in the world to come.[57]

Hooper argued that this was important because, to avoid 'permanent torments in the world to come', it was sometimes necessary to risk suffering 'transitory paynes' by prioritising God and remaining faithful and pure.[58] The message was aligned to a biblical eschatological theme, outlined for example in 2 Corinthians 4:17-18, where Paul wrote that 'for our light

[54] Luke 22; John 21.
[55] Marian K. Dale, 'The London Silkwomen of the Fifteenth Century', *The Economic History Review*, 4/3 (1933), p. 324.
[56] Caroline Litzenberger, 'Wilkinson, Joan', *ODNB*.
[57] Coverdale, p. 131.
[58] Coverdale, p. 131.

affliction which is but for a moment, causeth vnto vs a farre moste excellent and an eternal waight of glory: while we loke not on the things which are sene, but on the things which are not sene: for the things which are sene, [are] temporal: but the things which are not sene, [are] eternal'.[59]

Hooper wrote to Wilkinson that she needed to ensure she relied on God for all her needs, and not on reason, because reason 'wil choose & follow an errour with the multitude if it may be allowed, rather then turne to fayth and follow the truth wyth the people of God'.[60] He then referenced the biblical story of Moses choosing to identify with the Hebrew people in Egypt rather than with the Pharaoh's daughter – who had found him abandoned as a baby, rescued him, and brought him up.[61] The reference is complex, because when he became an adult Moses had made it clear that he was a Hebrew by murdering an Egyptian and, to some extent, the Moses of Exodus 2 suffers because of the judgement of God as a consequence of his act of murder. The overall story of Exodus, though, is of the transition of God's people from slavery in Egypt to freedom in Israel, which clearly relates to the situation in which Protestants found themselves in Marian England. Reflecting on this, Hooper argued that Moses did the right thing in 'choosyng rather to be afflicted with the people of God, then to vse the libertye of the kynges daughter that accounted hym as her sonne'.[62] Hooper was clearly not urging Wilkinson to commit murder, but was emphasising that she needed to be clear with herself and with others that she identified as part of the Protestant network, as opposed to the 'Egyptian' Catholics, and to be active in protecting her spiritual purity. Again, using biblical references, this time from Jesus in Matthew 5, he stated that he wanted her to 'praye for contentation and peace of the spryte, and reioyce in such troubles as shall happen vnto you for the truthes sake, for in that part Christ saith you be happy.'[63] In other words, her happiness was contingent on her remaining faithful.

The sense that faithfulness, purity, and sacrifice went together can also be seen in a second letter written to Wilkinson, this time from Bradford. In it, Bradford urged her to accept any price for her faith, and went as far as to say that if God 'shall blesse you with an other

[59] 2 Corinthians 4:17-18.
[60] Coverdale, pp. 131–2.
[61] Exodus 2.
[62] Coverdale, p. 132.
[63] Matthew 5:3; Coverdale, p. 132.

blessing which is more rare, I meane to cal you forth as a Martyr and as a witnes against this filth, I hope you will become double thankful.'[64] Bradford contrasted those who stood against the filth of this world with those who submerged themselves within it, stating that 'yf we loue the mucke of this molde and couple it wyth the loue of Gods religion, then parre we stake, then marre we the markette, then the spiryte of GOD wyll departe'.[65] God was with those who witnessed against the muck and filth of the fallen world; but, Bradford warned, if Wilkinson did not, they would 'playe we as Ananias and Saphyra dydde, and so sooner or later shall fall to perdition wyth them', referring to the biblical story in the Acts of the Apostles, where two members of the early church claimed to be giving God the proceeds of a sale, but instead kept some of the money back from themselves and as a result died under God's judgement.[66] As with Ananias and Sapphira, God would harshly judge those who did not give their full selves to his ministry.

Another theme was to encourage women to follow good biblical examples. In his letter to a woman referred to as 'Elizabeth C', Bartholomew Green encouraged her to follow the example of biblical women in her actions and set herself apart for the sake of God's church. Green was known to be a popular and genial Protestant reformer, who was initially treated well by Mary's infamous enforcer, Bishop Bonner, after his arrest, prompting suspicions that he had recanted.[67] This was not the case, and he was burnt at the stake in January 1556. Elizabeth was referred to by Green as a widow, but one who had responsibility for children. Elizabeth C may well have been a reference to Elizabeth Cooper, whom Green mentioned as 'good wyfe Cooper (for shee is worthye to be holpen)' in his final letter to his friends.[68] He was asking them to look after her, but Foxe recorded that Elizabeth Cooper, who lived in Norwich, was 'a Pewterers Wife' who had recanted, and then 'beyng vnquyet for the same, and greatlye troubled inwardlye', went to her local church and publicly revoked her recantation.[69]

[64] Coverdale, p. 342.
[65] Coverdale, p. 344.
[66] Coverdale, p. 344; Acts 5:1-11.
[67] Freeman writes that 'John Philpot wrote a letter to Green rebuking him for backsliding. Green responded, in a letter printed by Foxe, indignantly denying this, and reproving Philpot for believing "slanders" made against him'. Jane Freeman, 'Green, Bartholomew [Bartlet]', *ODNB*.
[68] Coverdale, p. 559.
[69] *TAMO* (1583), p. 2029.

In his letter, sent before his death in 1556, Green wrote: 'of Anna praise is wrytten, that she neuer went out of the temple, but serued God wyth fastyng and prayer nyght and daye: so well had she espoused Christ. Iudith ware a smocke of heare contynuyng in fastyng, and had good reporte of al men.'[70] Green made particular reference to the biblical examples of Anna and Judith. Anna was recorded in the Gospel of St Luke as an 84-year-old woman who had been a widow for many years, and served God in the temple with 'fastings and prayers night and day' until she came to recognise the child Jesus and declared him to be the Messiah.[71] Green wanted to highlight that she was faithful and had waited until God called her to action.

The reference to Judith is perhaps more enlightening about the role Green envisaged for a widowed Protestant woman. First, the Book of Judith was not found in the Protestant canon, but in the Protestant Apocrypha. The *Geneva Bible* described the Apocrypha as a collection of 'bokes which were not received by a commune consent to be red and expounded publickely in the Church, nether yet serued to proue any point of Christian religion, saue in asmuche as they had the consent of the other Scriptures called Canonical to confirme the same.'[72] The Apocrypha did have a role to play as a support to Canonical Scripture, but they were not viewed as authoritative, and Apocryphal books were believed to be easy to misunderstand. For Green to use Judith in his letter to Elizabeth suggests that he expected her to be able to discern the right way to read an Apocryphal book, and that he trusted her to make the necessary theological distinctions. Second, the Book of Judith told the story of a young widow who trusted God and freed Israel from oppression by using her female qualities of charm and beauty to overcome and kill an Assyrian general, Holofernes. In writing to a Protestant widow living in Marian England, the instruction would have been clear – she was to do what she could to undermine the Marian church; she should trust God and do what she could to free God's people from oppression.

Both in the Bible and extracanonical writings (as in Judith's case), there are several examples of women who were notable for their active faithfulness. These stories do not contain passive women, and in drawing attention to them as exemplars for contemporary women,

[70] Coverdale, p. 556.
[71] Luke 2: 37-8.
[72] Whittingham, trans., *Geneva Bible*, p. 349.

the English Protestant leaders were calling for women to play an active role in the sustaining of the church. Green was reminding Elizabeth of her priorities – to live for Christ.

In addition, widowed women had a particular responsibility for living faithfully as brides of Christ. Green stated that 'she that liveth in pleasure is deade, even yet alive. And verelie a fine widowe is she that hath married Christe, forsaking the vanities of the world and the lusts of the fleshe.'[73] The concept of marriage to Christ emphasised Elizabeth's femaleness. Men were part of the church, which was the allegorical bride of Christ – as St Paul had written in Ephesians – yet for Green, a woman was for all intents and purposes married to Christ and should act accordingly.[74] An anti-Nicodemite argument about and to women, particularly widows, was that they had responsibility to be faithful as brides of Christ.

Thomas Whittell, another Protestant martyr, wrote from prison to 'a certayne godly woman' that 'Godly wemen of the olde testamente and newe, whiche liued in Gods seruice and feare' should be an example for all women.[75] The action expected was to call upon God, trust in him and follow his will, even if that meant suffering, 'and if it please hym to lay his crosse vppon you for his Gospells sake, refuse it not, neyther shake it of by vnlawfull meanes, leste you shoulde (as God forbyd) fynde a more greuous crosse, and tormente of conscience, if you shoulde dissemble and denye the knowen veritye, then is any persecution or death of bodye.'[76] For the Protestant leaders in Marian England, women needed to follow biblical examples, in viewing religious dissembling as worse than any earthly suffering.

Women's freedom to discern what was right – John Knox to Anna Locke

> Nather my penne, nather yit my presence, can prescribe unto you how farre yee are addebted to expone your self to daungers for these imperfectiouns in religioun which ye cannot remedie; but yee, directing your heart to advance God's glorie, sail be instructed by his Holie Spirit how farre yee may condescend, and how farre ye are bound to abstaine.
>
> Knox to Anna Locke, letter dated October 1559[77]

[73] Bartlett Greene to the 'right washipfull Maystres Elyzabeth C', n.d., BL, Additional, MS 19400*, fol. 27r.
[74] Ephesians 5:22-23.
[75] Coverdale, p. 655.
[76] Coverdale, p. 655.
[77] Knox, W*orks*, 6 (Edinburgh, 1895), p. 84.

Despite public misogyny, private letters emphasised the freedom of women to protect themselves from conformity. In his letters to Anna Locke, even Knox demonstrated a remarkable respect for her ability to discern the right course of action – actions that Knox made clear should be devoted to sustaining her purity and those around her. The relationship between Knox and Locke has interested historians in part because of the respect that the famously misogynist Knox held for her, despite her gender; the historiography notably includes both Patrick Collinson and Susan Felch.[78] Her father, Stephen Vaughan, was a wealthy merchant with links to Thomas Cromwell, and she had married an associate of his, Henry Lok (or Locke), sometime before 1553.[79] Both her father and husband were Protestant supporters, and she first met Knox when he came to stay with the Locke family in 1552-3.

Unfortunately, only Knox's letters to Locke remain and the returning correspondence is lost, although some of her other writings remain. Felch suggests that these letters show her to have been strongly Protestant in conviction, skilful in her rhetoric and frustrated by the limited role that her gender forced her to play.[80] Jane Dawson argues that 'her authorial voice and discovering a means to subvert the inferior position of women within the church' can be shown her 1560 publication of her translation of *Sermons of John Calvin upon the songe that Ezechias made*, which included her own *Meditation of a penitent sinner*, on Psalm 51.[81] The letters from Knox show that there was a lively and respectful correspondence between the two.[82] Notably, Knox's friendship was primarily with Anna and not with her husband, who did not travel with Anna to Geneva; none other than Robert Louis Stevenson remarked that Locke was 'the woman that Knox loved best', something that demonstrates the strength of feeling in Knox's letters.[83]

[78] I shall not go into much detail about Locke's biography and the wider implications of her correspondence with Knox, as these are covered well by Collinson, Felch and others. The summary is intended as context and the focus here is on implications of the relationship on our understanding of the perceptions of Nicodemism. For more on Locke see, Patrick Collinson, *Godly People: essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (London, 1983); Patrick Collinson, 'The role of women in the English Reformation illustrated by the life and friendships of Anne Locke', *Studies in Church History*, 2 (1965), pp. 258–272; Susan M. Felch, '"Dear Sister": The letters of John Knox to Anne Vaughan Lok', *Renaissance and Reformation*, 19/4 (1995), pp. 47–68.
[79] Collinson, 'The role of women', p. 263.
[80] Felch, '"Dear Sister"', p. 49.
[81] Dawson, *Knox*, pp. 147–8.
[82] Felch, '"Dear Sister"', p. 50.
[83] Felch, '"Dear Sister"', p. 51; Stevenson quoted in Collinson, 'The role of women', p. 264.

In 1556, Knox wrote to Locke and her half-sister, Rose Hickman, encouraging them to leave England for the sake of their consciences, even against the wishes of their husbands. Knox argued that they should:

> remember the promissis maid to thois that obey God's holie commandementis. Lay befoir your eyis the horribill plagues that hath fallin upon idolateris, of whome nane sail entir into the kingdome of God; and call first for grace by Jesus to follow that whilk is acceptabill in his syght, and thairefter communicat with your faithfull husbandis, and than sail God, I dout not, conduct your futsteppis, and derect your consallis to his glorie: So be it.[84]

Locke and Hickman did travel to Geneva without their husbands, and returned to England in 1559, at which point Locke and Knox restarted their correspondence.

Knox's letter to Locke and Hickman in 1556 reflected many of the trends that have already been argued in this chapter. He noted their responsibilities to their own consciences and the primary importance of their relationship with God, especially over their relationships with their husbands. They show that Locke was committed intellectually to Protestantism throughout Mary's reign, and that gender was not an entirely impassable barrier in questions of faith.[85] Felch summarises that 'what is clear from this letter is that, for these protestant women and for their spiritual mentor, godliness, particularly that expression of godliness which involves an active rejection of idolatry, is the prime directive.'[86]

Whilst Knox's letters during Mary's reign reaffirm the relationship between gender and Nicodemism seen elsewhere, the letters after Locke returned to England in Elizabeth's reign offer an important insight into how much Knox expected Locke to discern for herself, and how she was to engage with the reforming Elizabethan church. In his letters, Knox treated Locke as his spiritual equal and discussed issues relating to the church settlements in England and Scotland in an open and respectful manner.[87]

[84] Knox, *Works*, 4 (Edinburgh, 1895), p. 221.
[85] Felch, '"Dear Sister"', p. 54.
[86] Felch, '"Dear Sister"', p. 52.
[87] Felch, '"Dear Sister"', p. 55.

In his first letter after her return to England, Knox was extremely sceptical about the Elizabethan Settlement. He wrote in April 1559 from Dieppe that 'now it is no tyme to flatter, nor to dissemble', that there was a lack of legitimacy in the English Church as 'none can be a lawful minister of Christ's Sacrament, who first is not a minister of his blessed Word', and that the 'great Booke of England' – the Book of Common Prayer – bore 'the mark of the Beast' (that is, it was of the devil).[88] In a letter two months later, he claimed that he wrote 'not onlie against Papisticall priests, but also against dissembled professours, who preferre darknesse to light, and vanitie to the truthe'; he concluded that 'if your Reformatioun be no better nor your Acts expresse [the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity], I repent not of my absence from England.'[89] Knox clearly did not view Locke's gender as a barrier to the complexities of these religious and political discussions.

The letter from Knox to Locke in October 1559 provides the clearest example of the respect that Knox had for Locke's theological and spiritual judgement. He wrote that 'we ought not to justifie with our presence such a mingle mangle as now is commaunded in your kirks', but that 'if the heart abhorre corruptioun in God's service, and feare least that by leaning with our corruptioun we be drawen in another, God sail absolve such as men unjustlie damne.'[90] Yet, Knox argued that it was up to the conscience of Locke as to how much she should abstain from attending services in the new church: 'directing your heart to advance God's glorie, sail be instructed by his Holie Spirit how farre yee may condescend, and how farre ye are bound to abstaine.'[91] This was not a letter that told Locke how to act; rather, it was one that respected her view. Knox wrote that, if she acted in a way that was consistent with her conscience, it would not lead to damnation (even if it went against what Knox himself believed to be right). Known for his direct and unbending style, Knox was happy to allow an element of personal judgement in matters of faith even in his communication with a woman. Knox's concern was with the 'papisticall superstitioun' that was still tolerated within the Elizabethan church.[92]

[88] Knox, *Works*, 6, pp. 11–12; 14.
[89] Knox, *Works*, 6, p. 30.
[90] Knox, *Works*, 6, p. 83.
[91] Knox, *Works*, 6, p. 84.
[92] Knox, *Works*, 6, p. 83.

The clear distinction between conformity and faithfulness is eroded in these letters, in part because Knox trusted Locke to make the right decision. All Locke required was the right intention, and faithfulness to Protestantism. As Felch points out

> there is no suggestion either that she disagreed with Knox's theology, which forbid women to rule in the home, church, or government, or that she allowed this prohibition to curtail her progress in the school of Christ […yet] evidence of the letters, whose rhetoric is remarkably ungendered, suggests that while hierarchical distinctions were recognized, they were not necessarily seen as coercive.[93]

Knox clearly had a huge affection for Locke, but the difference between his public misogyny and private support for Locke's religious agency was driven by the importance he placed on her continued support. In personal correspondence, women were ascribed much greater agency than in published work, like *The first blast*, in discerning the right actions, especially when the clear distinctions between the Nicodemite and the faithful became blurred in the complex contexts of Marian and early Elizabethan England.

Advice for the future: Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk, to Elizabeth and to Cecil

To say after slavvrey blessade be the lord god off Isserail wyche hathe viysseted & delivered your maieste & by you us his & your mysserabley afflected subiectes, for if the Isserallenes of might joye in there Debora how muche more we englyshe in our Ellersabethe the delyvereance off our throubled conshense than first your maieste hathe grett cawsse to prayse god that it plessed him to appoint you.

Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk, to Queen Elizabeth, letter dated 25 January 1559[94]

The letter from Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk, to Elizabeth in January 1559 provides an interesting case of a woman's initial perspective on Elizabeth's religious role. The Duchess of Suffolk was the fourth wife of Henry VIII's childhood friend and favourite, Charles Brandon, and a prominent supporter of Protestant reform; she later married Richard Bertie. Her association with Katherine Parr was particularly important in her developing religiosity.[95]

[93] Felch, '"Dear Sister"', p. 62.
[94] Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk, to the Queen, 25 January 1559, TNA, SP 12/2, fol. 17r-v.
[95] Susan Wabuda, 'Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk', *ODNB*.

She was close to most of the leading men and women in Elizabethan England – Elizabeth's childhood in Katherine Parr's household was a strong link, and the Duchess of Suffolk had worked with Cecil to convince Parr to publish *The lamentacion of a sinner* in late 1547.[96] Her children were taught by Martin Bucer in Cambridge and tutored by Coverdale, and she had gone into exile in 1555 because of her Protestant belief. She was intelligent, educated, and had extensive correspondence with prominent reformers across England and the European mainland. Gender, whilst important, did not hold the Duchess of Suffolk back, and Daybell argues that although 'social status did affect the lives and experiences of women; as a group they were united less by ties of gender, than divided by differences of rank.'[97] In short, there was no credential she lacked as an English Protestant, and her regular correspondence with Elizabeth and Cecil after 1558 demonstrated her interest in influencing the course of the Elizabethan reform.[98]

Wabuda argues that the 'puritan cast' of the Duchess of Suffolk's religion meant that her relations with Cecil and Elizabeth became 'strained'.[99] However, in 1559 there is no indication of any concern or strain, but rather that Elizabeth's accession was a relief from the past; the Duchess of Suffolk wrote that 'as helthe is most delectably felte after extreme sikeness, so is the sense most inward in changes chyffely when opressen or deliverance off conshense shonthe it self'.[100] The Duchess of Suffolk's letter was about the 'leberttay or freedom of conssense' that was afforded by Elizabeth coming to the throne and the cause for rejoicing at the end of the spiritual slavery of Mary's reign.[101] Following the example of many returning exiles, the Duchess of Suffolk cast Elizabeth as a sixteenth century Deborah who delivered the people from slavery. The Protestant Duchess of Suffolk saw Elizabeth's role as delivering people's consciences from the burdens placed on it by Nicodemism, notably conformity with the Catholic Mass. The letter to Elizabeth shows that she believed that a woman of her background could play an important role in advising religious policy; as

[96] Wabuda, 'Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk'.
[97] James Daybell, 'Introduction: rethinking women and politics in early modern England', in James Daybell, ed., *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450-1700* (Florence, 2004), p. 3.
[98] Melissa Franklin Harkrider, *Women, reform and community in early modern England: Katherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk, and Lincolnshire's godly aristocracy, 1519-1580* (New York, NY, 2008), pp. 73–4.
[99] Wabuda, 'Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk'.
[100] Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk, to the Queen, 25 January 1559, TNA, SP 12/2, fol. 17r.
[101] Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk, to the Queen, 25 January 1559, TNA, SP 12/2, fol. 17r.

the Old Testament model of Deborah nicely illustrated, religious faithfulness was more important than gender.

The Duchess of Suffolk also wrote regularly to Cecil, with whom she maintained a close friendship. In 1559 she wrote to say that she and Cecil were as one and 'so I wold to god all our holle nation were lykewisse one in jesu creste'.[102] She urged action on reform, stating that she 'fyered men have so long worne the gospul slope wyes that they wol not glaydhly have it again strayt to ther lyges [legs].'[103] As with Elizabeth, she made no mention of Cecil's conformity or the fact that Cecil had himself 'worne the gospul slope wyes' – her accusation of the wider English population.

Nevertheless, she appears to have played an important role in advising and mentoring Cecil, always emphasising the future and not criticising past actions. She wrote to warn him against over-reliance on human wisdom and to focus on the essential foundations of reform first.[104] She also urged against delaying reforms because of other political concerns, stating that '"beware in time" is good; for though God wink at them, He sleepeth not, and will undoubtedly at length pay such turncoats home'.[105] In a 1569 letter to Cecil to advise him on the need to provide support for Dutch refugees in England, she wrote that it was a 'womans work' to 'troble har good frynde wyth har owne mynde' – she clearly felt that her gender gave her the ability and responsibility to give particular advice to Cecil.[106]

The Duchess of Suffolk's interest in the purity of religious reform did not lead her to condemn Cecil, or Elizabeth, for their religious conformity in Mary's reign: their actions of the past could be reconciled through support for godly reform. The Duchess of Suffolk's social rank gave her greater opportunity, yet her frank guidance to Cecil made her exceptional.[107] Her role as a counsellor – however informal – was at odds with the social norms, yet it did align with the messages given to women during Mary's reign: that purity

[102] Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk, to Cecil, 4 March 1559, TNA, SP 12/3, fol. 85r.
[103] Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk, to Cecil, 4 March 1559, TNA, SP 12/3, fol. 85v.
[104] Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk, to Cecil, 4 March 1559, *CSP Foreign: Elizabeth, 1, 1558-1559*, pp. 160, 161.
[105] Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk, to Cecil, 4 March 1559, *CSP Foreign, Elizabeth, 1, 1558-1559*, p. 160.
[106] Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk, to William Cecil, 29 March 1569, TNA, SP 12/49, fol. 171v.
[107] Daybell argues that the role that the Duchess of Suffolk played in shaping policy challenges the 'Eltonian perceptions of Elizabethan policy-making as institutional'. Daybell, 'Introduction', p. 5.

was important; that women had agency and responsibility; and that the Protestant community relied on them. This gave women agency to speak and to act.

Conclusion

This chapter argues that by addressing the risks of women conformists, Protestant leaders broke down some of the existing gender norms regarding women's inferiority to men. In part, they emphasised other social expectations, especially the importance of purity, but they also ascribed to women greater agency over the literal application of misogynist theology. This was because conformity was perceived, largely by imprisoned Protestant men, as a threat to Protestant women, and by extension it was seen as a threat to the maintenance of the Marian Protestant community. Religious insecurity could have a transformative effect on social norms, if only for the period when the specific conditions that facilitated anti-Nicodemism existed.

Avoiding religious conformity, when the social expectation demanded obedience to men, and therefore doctrine, was a challenge to the concept of anti-Nicodemism. In some cases, women had to choose between obeying men deemed to be their superiors and rejecting conformity – and the argument from the anti-Nicodemite Protestant correspondence is clear: they were to avoid conformity at all costs.

Language on conformity was gendered, especially in the comparisons between marital obedience and religious faithfulness. This language was used directly in letters to women. As shown by the letter from Philpot to Lady Fane, existing relationships and emotional ties were often used to strengthen calls to preserve purity of faith; Hooper and Careless in their letters to Wilkinson and Glascocke, respectively, emphasised language on purity, particularly the metaphor of marital obedience. Anti-Nicodemite messages challenged some of the existing social norms by calling for women to prioritise faithfulness to Christ over obedience to their husbands. In the letter from Green to Elizabeth C, marital faithfulness became more than simply a metaphor and, with reference to biblical examples, Green claimed that widows were literally married to Christ – Nicodemism became unfaithfulness in both religion and marriage. As demonstrated in Knox's correspondence with Locke, there were also relationships of mutual respect between Protestant men and women who were seeking to maintain theological positions against the threat of persecution.

The letters analysed here recognised that in a time of persecution women had to act with an increased level of independence and agency. As the letter from Careless to Glover showed, women had responsibility for their own faith in the same way as any man, and Philpot argued to an anonymous woman that there was equality in faith between men and women. This was important because faith led to action, and imprisoned Protestants were trying to encourage women in the important supporting role they played – this can be seen clearly that Philpot wrote to Anne Hartipole. Yet even this new independence had limits. It was agency to follow the instruction of the Protestant male minister, in contradiction to husbands, or other male figures of authority. Nevertheless, a lack of proximity to direct all actions meant that Protestant ministers afforded an increased level of trust in women's actions.

Throughout Mary's reign, conformity was a threat to the Protestant community, including for women, and the result was that anti-Nicodemism tended to emphasise women's agency in remaining faithful to the Protestant confession. Entrenched gender norms were not sustainable when the existence of the network depended on women to play a leading role in sustaining it, although only in times of extremity. Once the Protestant reform was established under Elizabeth, fears of Nicodemism no longer functioned as a platform for increasing women's agency, but throughout Mary's reign Protestant women were encouraged to use their judgement in deciding questions of practical theology.

Chapter 6: The reasons for Catholic anti-Nicodemism in England

In Elizabethan England, the changes in religious doctrine may have removed the conditions for Protestant anti-Nicodemism, but they were a dilemma for all religious conservatives. The question was whether it was possible for a religious conservative to demonstrate fealty to a Protestant monarch whilst remaining faithful to their conscience.[1] Thomas Cornwallis, a religious conservative who was faced with this question in 1569, wrote that 'the indyngnation off the prynce, with the consyderation off the peryll that thretynethe to every subiect, ys terryble, but yete the danger toffende Almyghtye God ys, or owghte to be, more Weyghed then all the perylls in the Worlde besides.'[2] Eventually, Cornwallis did subscribe to the royal supremacy, but in his submission he focused on the rights of the sovereign, whilst explicitly noting that this was despite his conscience. He wrote that 'upon better consyderation off the matyer and therwythe weyghing how mercyfullye yt lykythe yowr hyghnes to deale, in seekyng no further to serche or examyn my conscyence, then wythe the shew off my sellffe to be an humble and obedyent subiect vnto yowr maiestie in frequentyng the Chyrche and servyce therin now usyd.'[3] In Cornwallis' case, politics outweighed religious conviction, at least in the public realm – and that was sufficient for the Elizabethan state, which could tolerate religious conservatism but increasingly saw non-conformity as a political threat.[4]

The Elizabethan state requirement for outward conformity was a contributor to the development of Catholic anti-Nicodemism. Anti-Nicodemism was not linked to one religious confession; rather, it was a reflection of religious fragility and insecurity for Protestants and Catholics alike. Alexandra Walsham has tracked the development of anti-Nicodemism in Catholic writing after the arrival of the Jesuit missionaries in 1574. She concluded that the experience and form of Catholic Nicodemism in Elizabethan England was comparable to that

[1] Chapter 1 includes a short discussion on and definition of religious conservatism.
[2] Thomas Cornwallis to Cecil, 21 June 1567, TNA, SP 12/43, fol. 29v.
[3] Submission of Thomas Cornwallis to the Queen, n.d. 1567, TNA, SP 12/43, fol. 31r.
[4] Younger, 'How Protestant?', pp. 1076–77.

of the English Protestants in Mary's reign.[5] The previous chapters have developed an argument based on the characteristics of Protestant anti-Nicodemism; this chapter argues that where certain conditions were present, condemnation of those who conformed was as prevalent in Catholic as in Protestant communities.[6]

This equivalence is found in anti-Nicodemite writing as well, with Walsham finding that 'both in printed propaganda and through their pastoral endeavours in the field, leading Jesuits and secular priests maintained that staunch recusancy was the only stance sincere Catholics could adopt', and that 'men and women who inwardly adhered to the religion of their forefathers but outwardly complied with Protestant ordinances were declared to be guilty of the heinous sin of "schism" and threatened with eternal torment in hell.'[7] The Jesuit mission had an explicit objective to address Nicodemism; as Stefania Tutino has argued, Jesuits were to 'concentrate on revitalizing the faith of those Englishmen who were Catholic but conformed either through fear or for personal advantage.'[8] This culminated in Henry Garnet's entreaty in 1598, that, as good Catholics, 'may we never, no not for to save our lyfe or goods or the whole worlde eyther expressely make any shewe in worde or deede of a false religion, or geve any sufficient cause that probablye others may thincke so of us.' [9] In this way anti-Nicodemism became a central element to Catholicism in England by the 1590s.

Yet, anti-Nicodemite condemnation was not a dominant theme in the evolution of Catholicism in England in the 1560s. This chapter argues that trends in Catholic anti-Nicodemism can be understood in the same way as Protestant anti-Nicodemism. The concept of anti-Nicodemism required a strong, even uniform sense of confessional identity and coercion to conform to another confession; Nicodemism was an expression of the 'black sheep', reflecting a deviance from a strong social identity. This chapter will contend that in the 1560s there was neither a clear concept of Catholicism in England as distinct from religious conservatism, nor concern about the survival of religious conservatism. Nor did the

[5] Walsham, *Catholic Reformation*, p. 87.
[6] Walsham, *Catholic Reformation*, p. 59.
[7] Walsham, *Catholic Reformation*, p. 89.
[8] Tutino, 'Between Nicodemism', p. 539.
[9] Garnet was, in part, responding to the justification for Nicodemism outlined by Thomas Bell, who, unknown to Garnet, had just reconverted to Protestantism. Henry Garnet, *A treatise of equivocation*, or, *A treatise against lying and fraudolent dissimulation,* quoted in Tutino, 'Between Nicodemism', pp. 546–7.

Elizabethan state yet draw a link between conservative belief and resistance to policies. This explains why systematic condemnation of those who conformed in England was not prevalent in Catholic writing until the 1570s – when these conditions changed. In turn, this demonstrates how the nature of anti-Nicodemism, as a reaction to religious insecurity, was not limited to one confession.

The chapter draws on a wide range of primary sources, as well as being informed by recent historiography. Walsham's work has been foundational in the identification of Catholic anti-Nicodemism in the 1570s, but the absence of Catholic anti-Nicodemite themes has not been a subject of discussion in recent scholarship. Yet, Catholic anti-Nicodemism does not come out of nowhere, and this chapter gives reasons for this development. This thesis sits within the sociological approach to English Catholic history begun by John Bossy, through the revisions of Christopher Haigh, and onto the modern historiography of Walsham and Michael Questier.[10] The chapter concludes that the reason for the relatively modest anti-Nicodemism of early Elizabethan Catholicism can be found in the intrinsic nature of anti-Nicodemism, and the later growth in Catholic anti-Nicodemism is because religious insecurity became an important factor in the evolving Elizabethan Catholic identity. This chapter contributes to the scholarship by linking the development of archetypal enemies to the evolution of Elizabethan Catholic identity and insecurity.

Whilst there were practical examples of criticism of conformity in early Catholic writing in English, these were secondary to the doctrinal questions of authority that monopolised Catholic published work. These works were written for fellow exiled Roman Catholics, with only a few circulating in England – they were not aimed at changing the perspective of those who conformed to the Elizabethan Protestant Church, but at developing a nascent religious identity. Focusing the distinction on authority left unclear what faithful Catholics should do in practice: whether they should abandon the English Church and refuse to attend, or simply continue to attend largely unreformed churches, with the implication that they externally recognised the religious authority of the Queen, whilst acknowledging the authority of the papacy internally.

[10] For a good outline of the historiographical developments see Walsham, *Catholic Reformation*, pp. 9–12.

This chapter also uses evidence from the State Papers and *Zurich Letters* to show how Protestant concern about the slow speed of reform in England reveals how widespread conservative practice was in the English Church. These insecurities were essentially about religious conformity but were linked with the political stability of the Elizabethan state. This chapter demonstrates this through the examples of Thomas Cornwallis, Francis Englefield, and the Wharton family. Stronger enforcement of conformity made the distinction between loyalty to the Queen a religious question as well as a political one; it also created clearer ideological and practical distinctions between Catholics and Protestants and allowed the necessary conditions for concepts of Catholic anti-Nicodemism to develop.

Catholicism's focus on authority in England

Until 1570, most anti-Protestant literature, from authors like Thomas Harding and Thomas Stapleton, focused on arguments about authority as the basis of Catholicism. Most of these writers had gone into exile soon after Elizabeth's accession to the throne, and the ideological emphasis on the doctrine of papal authority was not entirely novel as it built on Cardinal Pole's unfinished reforms and doctrinal approach.[11] Most of the published work argued that the prince might rightly claim temporal authority, but the papacy had religious authority.[12] This was the clear distinction drawn by Catholics, combatting Protestant arguments and ensuring that there could be no coexistence within the English Church. A lack of strict enforcement from the state was a major factor in the abstract and doctrinal nature of Catholic writing, and in the first decade othering of supposed-Nicodemites was not a priority.

In the 1560s, Catholic exiles published their works from Louvain, Antwerp, and other harbours for those who left England to avoid taking the Oath of Supremacy. The Oath was contained within the Act of Supremacy, 1559, that required all churchmen and any 'having your Highnes Fee or Wagys within this Realme' to make the oath that Elizabeth was 'thonelye supreme Governour of this Realme and of all other her Highnes Dominions and

[11] Duffy, *Fires of faith*, p. 197.

[12] Such as Thomas Stapleton, *A fortresse of the faith: First planted amonge us englishmen and continued hitherto in the universal Church of Christ. The faith of which time Protestants call Papistry* (Antwerp, 1565); and Thomas Heskyns, *The parliament of Chryste auouching and declaring the enacted and receaued trueth of the presence of his bodie and bloode in the blessed Sacrament, and of other articles concerning the same, impugned in a wicked sermon by M. Iuell* (Antwerp, 1566).

Countrreis, aswell in all Spiritual or Ecclesiasticall Thinges or Causes, as Temporall'.[13] As the Oath required recognition of the Queen's authority to define England's religion, it was the focus of Catholic dissention.

Catholic exile published works were primarily aimed at countering the arguments made by Elizabethan Protestant leaders about the historicity and authority of the English Church; the main target of these publications was Jewel's *Apology for the English Church.* They also translated the developing Catholic theology of mainland Europe to an English audience – mainly an exiled Catholic English audience. The most prominent of those writing was Thomas Harding, who published in 1565 a work titled *A confutation of a booke intituled an apologie of the Church of England.* Harding had been known as a proponent of reformed religion in Edward's reign, and had been a correspondent of Bullinger, but he recanted under Mary, was an executor of Bishop Gardiner's will, and moved to Louvain soon after the accession of Elizabeth following a confrontation with the new Bishop of Salisbury, Jewel.[14]

Harding published the *Confutation* as part of what has become known as the Jewel-Harding Controversy.[15] He described Jewel's *Apology* as a book that 'conteineth many great errours concerning the necessary doctrine of faith, beside diuerse vntruthes and slaunders touching sundry estates and persons, to no smal dishonour of our countrie and offence of godly and honest hartes.'[16] Harding's book was addressed to Queen Elizabeth, and the aim was not to provide instruction to a nominal Catholic community in England, but to draw the distinction between what Harding termed the 'doctrine of faith' and the errors of the reformed Church.

Thomas Stapleton, another prominent Catholic exile, also focused on the historicity of Catholic authority. Stapleton had been a prebend at Chichester Cathedral but went into exile in 1559. He returned briefly in 1563, but left again after refusing to subscribe to the

[13] Luders, A., Tomlins, T. E., Raithby, J., et al., *The statutes of the realm,* 4 (London, 1819), p. 352.
[14] L. Wooding, 'Harding, Thomas', *ODNB*.
[15] Harding's side of the Jewel-Harding Controversy include: *An answere to Maister Iuelles challenge* (1564), *A brief answere* (1565), *A confutation of a book intituled an apologie* (1565), *A reionder to M. Iewels replie* (1566), *A reioindre to M. Iewels replie against the sacrifice of the Masse (1567), A detection of sundrie foule errours* (1568). Peter Milward, *Religious controversies of the Elizabethan age: a survey of printed sources* (London, 1977), pp. 3–6.
[16] Thomas Harding, *A confutation of a booke intituled an apologie of the Church of England* (Antwerp, 1565), fol. 2r.

Supremacy.[17] Like Harding, Stapleton went to Louvain to study theology at the University; he declared in his *Compendium* in 1598 that 'fearing the contagion of schism in my tender years, I came a fugitive to the learned benches of Louvain'.[18] Milward concludes that Stapleton acted 'mainly as a translator of books chosen for the support they gave to the Catholic position in the "challenge" controversy [with Jewel].'[19]

Stapleton's translations brought Catholic perspectives from the European mainland into the Catholic confutations of English Protestant theology. The *Apology of Fridericus Staphylus counsellor to the late Emperour Ferdinandus* included a 'discourse' on the doctrines of Luther, Melanchthon and 'especially' Calvin.[20] In publishing translations of mainland European anti-Protestant texts, Stapleton clearly saw the confrontation with English Protestants in the wider context – the development of Catholicism in England was part of the development of Catholicism in Europe as a whole.

In 1565, Stapleton published the *Fortresse of the faith*, which made it clear that the distinction between Catholic and Protestant could be found in the long history of papal authority – the fortress in question was identified in the subtitle as the faith 'first planted amonge vs englishmen and continued hitherto in the vniuersal Church of Christ. The faith of which some Protestants call Papistry.'[21] The immediate, and aggressive, focus of the work was on the authority of the papacy. The *Fortresse* was published in Antwerp in 1565 as part of a series of translations which aimed to confute Protestant theology, whose readership was primarily exiled Catholic theologians.[22] The focus on historicity is further highlighted by the publication in the same year by Stapleton of a translation of Bede's *History of the English Church*, which Stapleton used to argue that the Church in England had always been based on papal authority, asking 'what can then move you to reject this history of Venerable

[17] Gary Jenkins, 'Thomas Stapleton: Loathes Calvin, Will Travel' in Gary Jenkins, Torrance Kirby, and Kathleen Comerford, *From Rome to Zurich, between Ignatius and Vermigli: essays in honor of John Patrick Donnelly* (Leiden, 2017), p. 71.
[18] As translated in Marvin O'Connell, 'Stapleton, Thomas', *ODNB*.
[19] Milward, *Religious controversies*, p. 8.
[20] Thomas Stapleton, *The apologie of Fridericus Staphylus counseller to the late Emperour Ferdinandus, &c. Intreating of the true and right vnderstanding of holy Scripture* (Antwerp, 1565), fol. 145r.
[21] Thomas Stapleton, *Fortresse*, sig. [A.1]r.
[22] These included: *A Sermon* (1564), *An apologie of Fridericus Staphylus* (1565), *The history of the Church of Englande* (1565), and *Of the expresse worde of God* (1567). Milward, *Religious controversies*, p. 9.

Bede?'[23] Instead, he argued that in 1558 there came a 'fewe newe lying masters' who had undermined the true Catholic nature of the nine-hundred-year history of the Church.[24]

In *Fortresse*, Stapleton aimed to show that the Catholic Church was supported by history: 'for this being proued that the vniuersal knowen churche of Christ can not possibly faile, and yet if papistry (as you call it) be not this vniuersal knowen church, all these ix hundred yeares and more there hath ben no such church at all, what can you possibly farder saie, to maintaine this opinion of youres withall?'[25] At the heart of the argument in *Fortresse* was the well-worn ground of scriptural interpretation. The Council of Trent stated that the Roman Church held the right 'to judge the true meaning and interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures'.[26] In line with Catholic assertion across Europe, Stapleton made it clear that the authority of the Church was linked to the statement by Jesus that 'thou art Peter, and vpon this rocke I will buylde my Church: and the gates of hell shal not ouercome it.'[27] He used the familiar Catholic interpretation that the Church was guaranteed not to fail, and that, as a result, the years of papal supremacy could not be seen as a deviation from the true historical Church.

The beginnings of an argument against conformity were in Stapleton's arguments. However, this was not explicitly put, nor was it the purpose of the publication. Protestant anti-Nicodemites focused on the importance of avoiding Catholic practice, whilst Stapleton's purpose was to identify faithfulness to the universal Church with papal authority, and to call for English people to return. This was why he stated that 'who soeuer will be ashamed of me I will be ashamed of him before my father, saieth the Son of God our blessed Sauiour. The Catholik church is the true and naturall mother. She will not haue vs diuided.'[28] Stapleton claimed that scripture showed the unfailing nature of the Church, that papal authority had long been a part of the Church, that the Church could not be divided, and thus

[23] Stapleton, *Fortresse*, fol. 3r.
[24] Stapleton, *Fortresse*, fol. 2r.
[25] Stapleton, *Fortresse*, fol. 3r.
[26] 'The Tridentine Profession of Faith', in John O'Malley, *Trent: what happened at the council* (Cambridge, MA, 2013), p. 283.
[27] Matthew 16:18.
[28] Stapleton, *Fortresse*, fol. 158r.

papal authority was an inherent part of the true doctrine of the universal Church. Subscribing to the Oath of Supremacy represented schism.

In making a claim to historicity, the importance of uniformity of belief, and faithfulness to the authority of the Church, Stapleton was beginning to lay the foundations of post-Reformation Catholicism in England:

> God is a zelous God, he parteth not his honour to any other. He requireth to be serued, *toto corde, tota anima, totis viribus*. With oure whole hart, with the whole soule, with al our strength. Therefore these mean moderatours, and half halters, they are not for God which speaketh vnto vs in holy scripture, but for some other God of their owne making and diuising.[29]

Further, he gave examples of Christians who had stayed faithful in the face of Arian persecution.[30] Yet, this argument did not make it clear what true faithfulness to the Catholic Church meant in concrete terms in the context of England in the 1560s – it was not aimed at giving practical advice, but building a new theological basis for Catholicism in England.

In 1567, Stapleton continued to develop his arguments in *A counterblast to M Hornes vayne blaste against M Fekenham*. This work was again focused on a rhetorical battle with English Protestant apologists, and the aim was to undermine the Oath of Supremacy. It was an important intervention for Catholicism in Elizabethan England, and Gary Jenkins has described it as 'a veritable summa of recusant theological and political thought'.[31]

In *A counterblast,* Stapleton again argued that Protestant claims of reliance on scripture and history were misplaced. The argument was about the doctrine of authority, rather than practice; as a result, it had very little to say about Catholics who conformed, but it set the parameters for the concepts of Catholicism against which conformity and non-conformity could be judged. The book was written in English with the intention of strengthening the conviction of Catholics who remained in England, because 'after al this struggling and

[29] Stapleton, *Fortresse*, fol. 158v.
[30] Stapleton, *Fortresse*, fols 159r–160v.
[31] Jenkins, 'Thomas Stapleton' in Jenkins, Kirby, and Comerford, *From Rome to Zurich*, pp. 67–8.

wrastling against the Truth by you and your felowes M. Iewel and the rest, the Truth is daily more and more opened, illustred, and confirmed.'[32]

Stapleton argued that temporal and spiritual governance had different aims, and that papal authority was not the challenge to the Queen's authority that it was portrayed to be in the Act of Supremacy. He again focused on the historicity of his argument, using examples from the lives of Constantine and subsequent emperors to support his claims, as well as Church Councils and medieval French royalty. As the title suggested, the aim was to counter Horne's argument, Stapleton wrote that

> in the which spiritual bodie, commonly called Christes Catholike Churche, there are other heades and rulers then ciuill Princes: as Vicars, Persons, Bishops, Archebishops, Patriarches, and ouer them al the Pope. Whose gouernement chieflye serueth for the furtherance and encrease of this spiritual Kingdome, as the ciuil Princes do for the temporal.[33]

All of this meant that, for Stapleton, it was not possible to subscribe to the Supremacy whilst recognising the concept of the universal Church. Echoing Augustine's *City of God*, and even Luther's articulation of the Two Kingdoms, Stapleton contended that it was a false choice to have to decide between loyalty to the state and to the Church, because 'when you renounce euery forain Prelat you doe plainly renounce al Prelates whatsoeuer without the realm of England: and so you renounce al society, communion and Feloshyp of saints, that is of faithful folk in the Church of Christ.'[34] Although Stapleton made a distinction between membership of the Church and allegiance to princes, these loyalties were not contradictory but related to the distinct temporal and spiritual kingdoms.

Nicholas Sander, in both the *Rocke of the Church* and *A treatise on the images of Christ*, took up the argument of historicity as a defining characteristic of Catholicism. Sander was an academic in New College, Oxford, until he left England in 1560 rather than take the Oath of Supremacy. He witnessed the Westminster Conference, which appears to have had a big impact on him – as he left soon after, travelling to Rome with Cardinal Housins to take part

[32] Thomas Stapleton, *A counterblast to M. Hornes vayne blaste against M. Fekenham* (Louvain, 1567), sig. **v.
[33] Stapleton, *Counterblast*, fol. 29v.
[34] Stapleton, *Counterblast*, fol. 425r.

in the theological discussion about the Council of Trent, before settling in Louvain.[35] Both *Rocke* and *A treatise* were written in 1567, published in Louvain and aimed to undermine Protestant claims that the true Church had remained hidden during a period when the Catholic Church had slipped into error under papal leadership. Sander used Jesus' statement in Matthew 5:14 that 'ye are the light of the worlde. A citie that is set on an hill, can not be hid' and interpreted this as meaning that the true Church could not remain hidden, stating:

> Now for asmuch as your faith was not openly alwaies professed in many nations together, but was altogether hidden before these fifty yeres, and so hidden, that no history or Chronicle doth make mention of any congregation at all professing your faith from tyme to tyme in any Cities, Townes, Villages, or priuate houses of diuerse prouinces and countries at once: nothing can be iustly said or alleaged, why you should not renounce this obscure religion of yours, which is so slaunderouse to Gods gloriouse name, and returne again to that our Churche, which stode for euer vpon the hil[?][36]

Sander claimed that Protestant theology was the culmination of all the errors made by the ancient heresies, and that they had gathered all the heretical attributes into one: 'were a thing without end thus to prosecute euerie particular agreance of our new Protestants with the old prophets of Antichrist. But this one thing seemeth to gather all into one.'[37]

The intention of both of Sander's works was to counter Protestant arguments, but he recognised in *A treatise* that these arguments also might be able to 'moue my Countriemen (not only in this point of honouring holy Images, but much rather in all the reast) to returne again to the Church, wherein they and their Fathers had ben baptized, instructed, brought vp, and nourished.'[38] Protestants argued that the true Church had lain hidden through the centuries of papal oppression; however, Sander acknowledged that arguments against these

[35] John B. Wainewright, ed., 'Some letters and papers of Nicolas Sander, 1562-1580', *Catholic Record Society, Mescellanea XIII* (London, 1926), p. 1.
[36] Sander, *Rocke of the Churche*, sig. A.iiiv.
[37] Sander, *Rocke of the Churche*, p. 559.
[38] Nicholas Sander, *A treatise of the images of Christ and his saints: and that it is vnlaufull to breake them, and lauful to honour them. With a confutation of such false doctrines as M. Iewel hath vttered in his Replie, concerning that matter* (Louvain, 1567), sig. *iiv.

Protestant claims could become a powerful source of drawing theological distinctions in the development of Catholicism.

As these examples demonstrate, the argument of authority based on historicity was the dominant theme of Catholic publications. It was also taken up by Thomas Heskyns in the *Parliament of Chryste*. Heskyns was at one point a strong Catholic advocate in Wiltshire, likely Salisbury, but wrote the *Parliament* nominally to John Jewel from Antwerp.[39] The *Parliament* was extremely long and detailed, going through the exposition of one Church father after another on specific biblical texts, with a focus on the question of the real presence. The *Parliament* was a refutation of a supposed Protestant argument and was not written to comfort or exhort Catholics in England.[40] However, the 1578 reprint shows how the arguments made against Protestants became central to Catholicism in England: as with Stapleton, Catholics became defined as people who believed in papal authority and the real presence, in contrast to the Reformed Protestants.

Heskyns' argument repeatedly came back to a question of authority, as he stated throughout that the scriptures were not easy to interpret and therefore needed the accumulated learning of the established and universal Church – that is, the 'Parliament of Chryste' – to provide that interpretation through tradition. This parliament was an obvious contrast to the English parliament that had passed the Act of Supremacy. He stated that 'the lippes of the preist shall kepe knowledge, and they shall require the lawe at his mouthe. For he ys the messenger of the Lorde of hostes.'[41]

From doctrine to practice

Doctrines based on authority slowly became the hallmark of Elizabethan Catholicism, but the practical implications of these doctrines were not clear in the 1560s. Religious practice was far from reformed in the early Elizabethan regime, which meant that it was possible to attend Church faithfully whilst holding conservative religious views, without internal contradiction. As Neil Younger writes, it 'is widely acknowledged that this was a period when the religious settlement was very loosely enforced', and a good proportion of

[39] Natalie Mears, 'Public worship and political participation in Elizabethan England', *Journal of British Studies*, 51/1 (2012), p. 4.
[40] Heskyns, *The parliament of Chryste*, sig. ¶.iiiv.
[41] Heskyns, *Parliament of Chryste*, sig. D.r.

Elizabeth's councillors remained from previous regimes whose 'religious positions are probably better characterised as conforming and conservative'.[42] Scholarship has shown that, because of this lack of uniformity in the practice of English parishes, whilst there was some concern about attendance at English Churches, there was no clear sense of what Catholicism meant in contrast to the established Church.[43] Indeed, Ryrie has shown that it was never a simple dichotomy between established Protestant and Catholic theology, and that loyalty to Henry VIII's model of reform – doctrinally conservative, but situating authority with the monarch – existed 'long after the old king's death.'[44]

The dominant themes of English Catholic writing in the 1560s were those of doctrine, not practice. Laurence Vaux was an early example of a writer beginning to address the implications of a doctrine of papal authority on religious practice. He wrote his *Catechism* to outline the defining characteristics of this doctrine and their practical implications. Vaux was a Catholic priest who left England in 1564 for Louvain; he subsequently travelled to Rome and was entrusted by Sander and Thomas Harding, the Pope's apostolic delegates to England, to return to England to pronounce the new papal ban on attending English Church services. Vaux did not spend long in England, he was back in Louvain in 1567 and published his *Catechism* in 1568.[45] The *Catechism* was not intended for polemic use, but rather as instruction for 'children and ignorant people'.[46] The continued circulation in Manchester of Vaux's *Catechism* appears to have led to Vaux's arrest in England in 1580.[47]

Vaux wrote that openness in faith was necessary for salvation, and that 'we must come vnto God by faith: for without faith it is impossible to please God.'[48] This was a question of authority, because adherence to the Catholic Church's articulation of faith was the same as following the first commandment: 'who breaketh the first Commandement of God by deniyng of Faith? They that wil not couselle the Catholique Faith with their mouthes, although they beleue it in their arts [*sic*]: for a Christian man ought to be of such constancie,

[42] Younger, 'How Protestant?', p. 1065.
[43] Questier, *Catholicism and community*, p. 66.
[44] Alec Ryrie, 'Paths not taken in the British reformations', *The Historical Journal*, 52/1 (2009), p. 19.
[45] John J. LaRocca, 'Vaux, Laurence', *ODNB*.
[46] Laurence Vaux, *A Catechism, or a Christian doctrine necessarie for chyldren and ignorant people* (Louvain, 1568).
[47] LaRocca, 'Vaux', *ODNB*.
[48] Vaux, *Catechism*, fol. 4r.

that he should rather suffer his life to be taken from him, then his faith.'[49] In this anti-Nicodemite argument, Vaux associated faith with the Church, and therefore religious practice with religious confession – for Vaux, these could not be separated.

The identification of authority with faith meant that Vaux could use similar language to that used by Protestant anti-Nicodemites in describing the importance of faithfully living out what they had been told; for Protestants, the source of authority was scripture, but for Vaux it was the Roman Church. Vaux wrote that 'Who breaketh the first Commaundement of God by worldly feare? Fyrst all they, that for feare of princes, Lordes, Magistrates or Maisters, doe not obey the Comaundement of God. Secondly, they that fear more the displeasure of any man, then of God. Thirdly they that for feare to be talked of or scorned, withdraw themselues from Divine seruice, or woorshipping of God, or of his Saintes.'[50] This was not yet as specific as Protestant anti-Nicodemite opinion because it was not clear what one should or should not do as a faithful Catholic in England, but as Walsham argues, this was a novel argument upon which it became possible to build a distinctively Catholic identity, and then to build a concept of Nicodemite – or Church Papist – as the contrast to faithfulness.[51]

English Catholic exiles did write about a developing community, but it is unclear how much this required outspoken non-conformity with the English Church. As with the Protestant exiles during Mary's reign, Catholics in Louvain, Antwerp, and other mainland European centres were both part of an English and a wider European Catholic community. In 1562, Sander wrote in a letter to John Rastell, a Catholic who stayed in England, that remaining and not conforming was a praiseworthy thing. Rastell stayed until 1564 when he also left and went to Louvain. Sander knew him from New College, Oxford, where they both were in Mary's reign, and in his letter he praised Rastell for remaining, and recognised that he, Sander, had 'sin[ned] in not being now amongst you.'[52] Sander wrote at the end of his letter that he was sending 'greeting to you and your brother and sisters and all Catholics', with the

[49] Vaux, *Catechism*, fols. 31v–32r.
[50] Vaux, *Catechism*, fol. 36v.
[51] Alexandra Walsham, 'Wholesome milk and strong meat: Peter Canisius's catechisms and the conversion of Protestant Britain', *Recusant History*, 32/3 (2015), p. 304.
[52] Wainewright, ed., 'Some letters and papers', p. 3.

assumption that a self-identifying Catholic community existed in England in 1562 and was part of the wider European community.[53]

Modern scholarship emphasises the resilience of conservative practice, which had been supported by the Marian Church, in responding to the challenge of the Elizabethan Settlement.[54] Smith argues that the roots of Elizabethan Catholicism could be found in the Marian Church, which conditioned the clergy's reaction to Elizabeth's settlement; that the Marian clergy became 'leaders of a co-ordinated and creative campaign in favour of principled nonconformity with the Church of England from as early as 1560.'[55] As Duffy has argued, clergy leaving their positions during Elizabeth's reign was evidence of the success of Cardinal Pole's intellectual transformation in England during Mary's reign, and especially the reorienting of confessional theology towards loyalty to the Pope.[56] However, Smith argues that many did not face a question of their conformity until much later in Elizabeth's reign, and retaining their positions should not be taken as evidence of their confessional conviction.[57]

There had been significant changes in religious practice numerous times over the previous two decades, and Haigh argues that people did not view the Elizabethan Settlement as something that would inevitably remain – for example, churches in Sussex kept their chalices in case of a return of the Mass. Haigh states that Catholic leaders initially tried to encourage laity to abstain from communion in English Churches, and that this position was strengthened when the Pope issued an injunction; however, as Walsham has shown, non-conformity was rare because of lack of guidance from the hierarchy of the Roman Church until after *Regnans* was published in 1570.[58]

Conservative belief endured well beyond the 1570s, and the Elizabethan state was unable to enforce conformity; indeed, conservative practice existed for as long as parishes were not

[53] Wainewright, ed., 'Some letters and papers', p. 5.
[54] For example, Questier writes of 'altars, images and other "popish ornaments" ready to be set up for Mass again within 24 hours warning... [in] the town of Battell'. Questier, *Catholicism and community*, p. 32.
[55] Frederick Smith, 'The origins of recusancy in Elizabethan England reconsidered', *The Historical Journal*, 60/2 (2017), p. 305.
[56] Duffy, *Fires of faith*, p. 197.
[57] Smith, 'Origins of recusancy', p. 306.
[58] Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: religion, politics, and society under the Tudors* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 252, 259; Walsham, *Catholic Reformation*, p. 88; Walsham, *Church papists*, p. 23.

forced to conform.[59] In addition, conformity itself was neither a capitulation to Protestantism, nor an attempt at creating an underground Church – Walsham's work on church papists has concluded that 'conformity was not merely a stepping stone on the road to recusancy, but an enduring and viable strategy for surviving persecution and for reconciling the competing allegiances to crown and faith that confronted those who clung to the faith of their forefathers.'[60] Not all conformity was as clear cut as anti-Nicodemites implied: the distinctions between full allegiance, wilful obedience, religious apathy, reluctant conformity and resistance to the Elizabethan Settlement were not clear until both Catholic advocates and English Protestants made them clear; anti-Nicodemism was not a priority when religious uniformity could not be successfully enforced, when diversity of religious practice was possible and when distinctions in practical theology were still unclear.

Walsham writes that, from very early in Elizabeth's reign, Catholics were unequivocal on 'the evils of partaking in "Calvin's supper"' – and she highlights the 1561 treatise by John Murren, who is referred to in a list of religious non-conformist texts as 'the person who cast abroad the seditious libel in Chester'.[61] According to James Pilkington's rebuttal of this text, the tract stated that 'in receiving communion as now used, you break your profession made in baptism and fall into schism, separating yourself from God and his church, refusing the bishops, your true pastors; so entering into the malignant church of Satan'.[62] It then asked the question of 'whether the people, compelled with fear for loss of worldly goods or temporal punishment, may receive the communion as bread and wine, not consenting to it in the heart?' and concluded, as had done the Protestants before, that 'to kneel down to receive that cursed and polluted bread, ye commit idolatry; nor is it not lawful to dissemble herein'.[63]

The language in the tract is remarkably similar to that of Protestant anti-Nicodemites during Mary's reign; and, as Smith has concluded, the Catholic clergy learned from Protestants in

[59] Duffy, *The stripping of the altars*, p. 566.
[60] Walsham, *Catholic Reformation*, p. 10.
[61] Schedule, signed by Edmund [Grindall], Bishop of London, Richard [Cox], of Ely, William [Downman] of Chester, n.d. 1561, TNA, SP 15/11, fol. 77r; Walsham, *Church papists*, p. 22.
[62] The words of the tract remain only in their quotation in Pilkington's rebuttal. James Scholefield, ed., *The works of James Pilkington, B.D., Lord Bishop of Durham* (Cambridge, 1842), p. 634.
[63] Scholefield, ed., *Works of Pilkington*, pp. 636–7.

their support of and approach to their co-religionists.[64] The tract used the same extreme (and gendered) examples of the lengths to which people should go to avoid conformity, including the story of Ustazadis and of 'a good woman, one Olympias, that rather than she would receive the communion, was content to have her paps writhen off...for if we receive it against our conscience, we be traitors to God, and dissemblers with the queen.'[65] Nevertheless, Murren's tract did not quite succeed in bridging the gap between the conceptual importance of recognising authority and the practical question of what a faithful Catholic should do. This was consistent with the anti-Protestant writing of English Catholic exiles; whilst they noted the importance of avoiding Protestant communion, their arguments centred on authority, and the idea that 'no man ought to obey the queen and her laws against God and his laws.'[66] In the context of continued toleration of conservative practice, where it was perfectly possible to attend unreformed services, it was unclear what early Catholics were asking people to do differently.

In the 1560s, there was a remarkable endurance of conservative belief, but there is little evidence of a developed concept of recusancy. This is because, without a fixed definition of what it really meant to be a Catholic in England, questions of conformity were 'situational and contingent', and they were hard to argue from the statistics.[67] Walsham has concluded that questions of religious practice did not become well established until later in Elizabeth's reign. She argues that 'during the 1560s, this form of conscientious objection had been enjoined by a small rump of recalcitrant priests, but the campaign in favour of fully-fledged nonconformity did not really take off until the arrival after 1574 of bands of missionaries trained in seminaries in the Low Countries and Rome.'[68] In February 1570, the Papal Bull excommunicating Elizabeth was issued – known as *Regnans in Excelsis* – and Aislinn Muller has also concluded that '*Regnans in Excelsis* raised acute questions amongst English Catholics about the limits of obedience and loyalty to the crown.'[69]

[64] Smith, 'Origins of recusancy', p. 322.
[65] Scholefield, ed., *Works of Pilkington*, p. 637.
[66] Scholefield, ed., *Works of Pilkington*, p. 639.
[67] Peter Marshall and John Morgan, 'Clerical conformity and the Elizabethan Settlement revisited', *The Historical Journal*, 59/1 (2016), p. 13.
[68] Walsham, *Catholic Reformation*, p. 89.
[69] Aislinn Muller, *The excommunication of Elizabeth I: faith, politics, and resistance in post-Reformation England, 1570-1603* (Leiden, 2020), p. 11.

For many, there was no choice necessary: as Marshall and Morgan argue, the slate was officially wiped clean for Marian clergy, and many were never asked to take the Oath of Supremacy.[70] It was not a settled fact that adherence to conservative belief required the avoidance of English Church services – especially when in many churches there was little difference between practice during Mary's and Elizabeth's reign. As a result, outspoken non-conformity in the early Elizabethan years came to look less like a religious and more a political choice, whilst quiet conformity was less of a religious conundrum for conservatives.

Growing Protestant concern at unreformed religion

There was a perception amongst Protestant leaders that many of the priests in England were not overly fussy in their belief or practice. Jewel wrote to Peter Martyr in 1559 that, 'if inveterate obstinacy was found any where, it was altogether among the priests, those especially who had once been on our side. They are now throwing all things into confusion, in order, I suppose, that they may not seem to have changed their opinions without due consideration.'[71] Jewel's analysis was that many priests did not actively welcome back reform because they did not want to appear to have made the wrong decision. He mocked Harding, Henry Sidall, and others, claiming that they flip-flopped between reform and Catholicism. For example, he wrote of Richard Smith:

> But your friend Smith, what has he done? You will ask. Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Believe me, that he might retain his old consistency, he has now at last recanted for the fifth time! The silly man, when he saw religion change, changed his habit, and forthwith prepared to take refuge in Scotland; but while he was loitering on the borders, he was apprehended, and brought back from his travels. And now this grave personage, this prop and support of religion, has come over to us, deserted all his party, and become all of a sudden the most inveterate enemy of the papists. Go now and deny transubstantiation, if you can.[72]

Smith had been a consistent challenger to Archbishop Cranmer, had preached at the burning of Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley in 1555, and had presided over Cranmer's trial

[70] Marshall and Morgan, 'Clerical conformity', pp. 15, 17.
[71] John Jewel to Peter Martyr, 2 November 1559, *ZL,* 1, p. 60.
[72] Jewel to Martyr, 2 November 1559, *ZL*, 1, p. 61.

in Oxford in 1555. Jewel's point about good coming 'out of Nazareth' was a reference to the Gospel of John, where Nathaniel asks sarcastically about the origins of Jesus – the term was used as an idiom by Jewel to question whether Smith could possibly settle on one side of the Reformation.[73] When Elizabeth acceded to the throne, Smith was caught attempting to escape to Scotland and subscribed to the Supremacy to avoid prison, as Jewel related. However, he later escaped house arrest and went into exile with English Catholic leaders in Louvain.[74]

In a later letter to Martyr, Jewel returned to the theme of dissembling Catholics, this time in relation to Sidall, who had been associated with Protestantism in Edward's reign but had conformed to Catholicism during Mary's.[75] Jewel referred to Sidall as being a follower of Harpocrates, the god of silence, secrets, and confidentiality: 'Our friend Sidall is a disciple of Harpocrates, and conceals his opinions; so that he is now reckoned neither among the birds nor beasts.'[76] Yet this was not a stark criticism, more as a reflection on Jewel's confusion about Sidall – he later stated that Sidall was 'a good sort of man' who may 'lay aside this dissembling, and join us of his own accord, and openly come forward.'[77] Jewel's optimism proved well founded, as Sidall was quick to subscribe to the Supremacy.

Despite these questions over the strength of Catholic conviction, there were many concerns expressed by Protestant bishops about the religious beliefs held by their people in their diocese. In 1559, Edmund Guest wrote to Cecil about the Dean of Worcester, Seth Holland, who would 'not renounce the pope', despite efforts to promote reform.[78] Guest wanted him to be replaced, and although he was replaced by John Pedder, a former Marian exile, Guest's letter and the request showed the limits of the authority of bishops and that the process of replacing Catholic clergy was by no means automatic.

There were also a number of lists of suspected 'papists' right from the outset of Elizabeth's reign, such as the 'schedule, signed by Edmund [Grindal], Bishop of London, Richard [Cox], of Ely, William [Downman] of Chester, and three other Commissioners, of recusants who are

[73] John 1:46.
[74] J. Andreas Lowe, 'Smyth [Smith], Richard', *ODNB*.
[75] E. I. Carlisle, 'Siddall, Henry', *ODNB*.
[76] John Jewel to Peter Martyr, 1 September 1560, *ZL*, 1, p. 104.
[77] Jewel to Martyr, 1 September 1560, *ZL,* 1, pp. 104–5.
[78] Edmund Guest to Cecil, 31 August 1559, TNA, SP12/6, fol. 70r.

at large.'[79] This contained a list of men who were said to be Catholics, and where they lived or were confined. It included Thomas Harding, before he left for the European mainland, who was described as 'lernyd in K. Ed tyme preacid the trewth earnestly and nowe still in papystrie and thinkyth very much good of him self.'[80] The list shows that there was an intelligence operation to discover and record where prominent Catholics were, but this did not necessarily lead to any religious persecution. There is no indication that the list was used to pressurise people to change their religious practice, but rather to ensure that they did not actively criticise the nascent Elizabethan state.[81] In other words, the writers of the list were more concerned with political threats than religious devotion.

Where there was active persecution, it was closely aligned with political concerns. The approach taken by the authorities in arresting and questioning Thomas Wood, formerly one of Mary's chaplains, is a case in point. He was arrested and threatened, and in 1561 Nicholas Bacon, the Lord Keeper of the Seal and one of the most senior English statesmen, wrote an account of Wood's questioning. In this account, Wood was noted as having stated that 'he hath neither sayd nor had any masse since the first of midsomer', and there was a link drawn in the questioning and Bacon's account between attendance at Mass and engagement with foreign powers – especially with Spain.[82] The point raised in this account was not that attendance at Mass was the focus of the investigation, but that it was indicative of willingness to conspire and commit treason. This was not grounds for active religious persecution – and in any case, the state lacked the ability to prosecute a coordinated and comprehensive religious persecution even if it wanted to – but Wood's religious non-conformity was taken as an indicator of his political threat.

However, there were constant complaints from Protestant bishops, deans, and other clergy to Cecil about the state of religion in their dioceses and parishes. One was from John Scory in 1561, in which the new Bishop of Hereford described his diocese as 'a very nurserye of

[79] Schedule, signed by Edmund Grindal, Bishop of London, Richard Cox, of Ely, William Downman of Chester, n.d. 1561, TNA, SP 15/11, f.74r-77v.
[80] Schedule, signed by Edmund Grindall, et al., 1561, TNA, SP 15/11, f.74r.
[81] The Schedule contains future exiles and critics of the Elizabethan Church, none of whom faced immediate sanction because of being identified. There are also a number of otherwise unknown people on the lists, who presumably continued living with no repercussions at all.
[82] Examination of Thomas Wood, 22 April 1561, TNA, SP 12/16, fol. 141r-v.

blasphemy, whoredom, pryde, superstition, and ignorance.'[83] Bishop Scory was a former Marian exile, and he wrote again a month later to express once more his concerns about the general observance of Catholic rituals.[84] The letters serve to demonstrate the lack of power the new Protestant Church leaders had to enforce any form of conformity, and the widespread acknowledgement that it was not difficult to practice as a Catholic in early Elizabethan England.

In 1564, diocesan bishops sent reports to the Queen's council on the 'state of the Justices of the Peace (JPs)' in their diocese, in response to a request from Cecil.[85] These reports focused on the religious conformity of the JPs. There were some dioceses that reported better religious practice than others, demonstrating how bishops interpreted the brief given in a different way – clearly there was a variety of religious practice, and the letters show that a lot of JPs were conservative in their religion – but the lack of uniformity in how the religion of the JPs was reported shows that there was no settled view of what conformity meant and what minimum practice was required.

These letters were an opportunity for some bishops to push for religious conformity beyond the specific religious observance required by law.[86] There was concern from the 'hotter sort' of Protestant Church leader about the religious conformity of the magistrates, and they saw the request from Cecil as an opportunity to address their concerns. In Carlisle, there were many JPs whose conformity was questioned, such as Richard Balkeld was 'not good in relligion' or William Middleton and William Pyckringe, both recorded as gentlemen, who were 'in relligion evil & not meatt'; although some others were found to be 'in relligion good & meat'.[87] In Chichester, with the former Marian exile William Barlow as bishop, there were records of Laurence Andrew and Rafe Chanteles, who were 'notorious obstinate adversaries', and a group of five JPs were found to be 'forwardly supersticious and should have their licences revoked'.[88] There were some found to be 'favourable in Religion', with a number also 'learned in the lawe', but many more who were not, and even one declared

[83] Bishop Scory to Cecil, 21 June 1561, TNA, SP 12/17, fol. 66r.
[84] Bishop Scory to Cecil, 17 August 1561, TNA, SP 12/19, fol. 45r.
[85] A Collection of Original Letters from the several Bishops, November 1564, CP, MS 235, fols. 2r-89r.
[86] Julian Lock, 'Bullingham, Nicholas', *ODNB*.
[87] A Collection of Original Letters from the several Bishops, November 1564, CP, MS 235, fol. 48r.
[88] A Collection of Original Letters from the several Bishops, November 1564, CP, MS 235, fol. 6v.

'wickedly obstinate' and another 'a stoute scorner of godlines'.[89] These letters did not lead to a widespread persecution of conservative JPs, but they do demonstrate that there were early questions about how far religious conformity was relevant and important in assessing political loyalty.

In 1568, Bishop Downham wrote to Cecil to describe his experience of a visitation in Lancashire, and how it promoted conformity. Downham had been Elizabeth's chaplain during Mary's reign, essentially facilitating her conformity to the Marian Church, but his Protestant credentials were confirmed with his preferment to the Bishopric of Cheshire in 1561. He wrote that the visitation had included the punishment of those who were not conforming, and ended with the confident statement that 'the punishment of these men hath done so muche good' and that he doubted he should 'need be trobled agayne with the like'. [90] The letter articulated a sense that non-conformity was often due to misunderstanding, and that preaching, and fear, would solve many of the challenges of non-conformity.

The political distinction between conservative and Catholic

Despite the concerns of Protestant Church leaders, the state did not yet draw a direct link between conservative belief and resistance to the Elizabethan political project. The distinction drawn was the same as that of the exiled English Catholic writers, namely that there was a difference between religious and political non-conformity. The difference between conservative and Catholic centred on the Oath of Supremacy. Before the Northern Rebellion and the publication of *Regnans* heightened the perception of religious non-conformity as an existential threat, the primary concern of the early Elizabethan state was to ensure political submission through the Oath of Supremacy. A good example comes from the Wharton family, with father and son both named Thomas. In 1561, the younger Thomas was arrested for 'sundry plans for using unlawfull practises to the breache of good order and religion', as the Earl of Oxford wrote to the Queen's Council.[91] The younger Wharton

[89] A Collection of Original Letters from the several Bishops, November 1564, CP, MS 235, fol. 6v.
[90] Bishop Downman to Cecil, November 1568, TNA, SP 12/48, fol. 75r.
[91] Earl of Oxford to the Council, 19 April 1561, TNA, SP 12/16, fol. 121r.

had enjoyed considerable preferment during Mary's reign; he was known to be a religious conservative and was arrested during Elizabeth's reign because of his attendance at Mass.

Oxford's letter gives a description of a non-confrontational exchange between Oxford and Wharton, relaying the latter's claim that his allegiance was to the throne; yet it did not hide Wharton's conservative practice and that Mass had been said in his house. Wharton stated to Oxford that 'onely touchinge the masse he was an offendor'.[92] Oxford claimed that he had 'founde muche submission in Sir Thomas Wharton', and that his letter was written to fulfil his promise to speak on Wharton's behalf.[93] Regardless of Oxford's letter and support, the younger Wharton was indicted at the general assizes of Essex, where he appeared in person to answer his indictment.[94] He appears to have been found guilty, as there is record of him being committed to the Tower on 29 May 1561, and he was there until July 1561, when he was released having submitted to the Supremacy.[95]

The fortunes of the younger Thomas Wharton contrast with those of his father, who had swiftly submitted to the Supremacy. As a result, the elder Wharton was appointed to inquire into offences against the Acts of Uniformity and Supremacy in 1561.[96] John Best, the Protestant Bishop of Carlisle, observed to Cecil that the arrival of the elder Wharton to promote the royal supremacy was welcomed by the 'common people', who 'with muche reioyce assured they had been deceaved' in their religion.[97] Best claimed that the elder Wharton was 'a worthy wise man & in the contrey verie well loved', in contrast to the priests who were 'wicked ympes of Antichrist & for the moste parte very ignorante & stubborne'.[98] With Wharton's influence, 'onlie three [priests] absented themselves in [Best's] visitacion & fled because they wolde not subscribe'.[99]

In his mission to Carlisle, the elder Wharton had had a significant impact in his promotion of the Acts of Uniformity and Supremacy. However, despite this prominence in promoting the

[92] Earl of Oxford to the Council, 19 April 1561, TNA, SP 12/16, fol. 121r-v.
[93] Earl of Oxford to the Council, April 1561, TNA, SP 12/16, fol. 121v.
[94] Petition of Sir Thomas Stradlyng to the Queen, 5 June 1561, TNA, SP 12/17, fol. 37r.
[95] The names of the prisoners for the mass, April 1561, TNA, SP 15/11, fol. 10r; names of all the prisoners in the Tower, 3 July 1561, TNA, SP 12/18, fol. 7r.
[96] Grummitt, 'Wharton, Thomas, first Baron Wharton', *ODNB*.
[97] Bishop Best to Cecil, 19 July 1561, TNA, SP 12/18, fol. 111r.
[98] Bishop Best to Cecil, 19 July 1561, TNA, SP 12/18, fol. 111r.
[99] Bishop Best to Cecil, 19 July 1561, TNA, SP 12/18, fol. 111r.

Supremacy, the whole family was evidently conservative in religious conviction. When the elder Wharton died in 1568, his will included the explicitly conservative formula: 'I do fyrst humblie gyve my soull to Almyghtie God, desyringe the Blessed Virgine Marie and all the hollie Companye in heaven and in earthe to praye for me'.[100] This reflected the trend in Mary's reign for wills to follow a set Catholic formulation.[101] The example of the Wharton family demonstrates how the key distinctions were not those of religious belief and practice, but of the authority of the papacy in England.[102]

How conservatives were treated by the state also depended on social status. Several people were arrested along with the younger Wharton, and they did not have as easy a time. One was John Devon, who was questioned by Bishop Grindal. Grindal called for Devon to face 'extraordinarie punishmente' as an example for his 'magic and conjuration'.[103] The charge against Devon was that he had attended Mass, and was seen with others having a candle in his hand and being 'mynystered with that daye holly wafer and holly breade', and was part of a Catholic community that included the younger Wharton.[104] Devon was later pilloried in Westminster and Cheapside for the charges described by Grindal.[105] The relatively harsh treatment of Devon, who was from a far less prominent family, showed how social status was clearly another determinant of the outcome of non-conformity.

Cornwallis and Englefield – blurring the lines of politics and religion

The persecution of English Catholics by the Elizabethan state was a result of how religious non-conformity came to be seen as a political threat – and in doing so it created the conditions for Catholic concepts of anti-Nicodemism to develop. There is a clear link between the beginning of persecution and the use of anti-Nicodemite language. The

[100] J. F. Hodgson, 'Kirkby Stephen Church', *Transactions of the Cumberland & Westmorland Antiquarian & Archaeological Society* 1/4 (1880), p. 240.
[101] Duffy, *The stripping of the altars*, pp. 520–1.
[102] The Wharton family are one of many examples of those who exemplify, as Walsham puts it, 'the muddy and ambivalent currents that ran through English Catholicism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.' Walsham emphasises the Throckmorton family as another prominent example. Walsham, *Catholic Reformation*, p. 118.
[103] Grindal to Cecil, 17 April 1561, TNA, SP 12/16, fol. 115r.
[104] Examination of John Devon, n.d. 1561, TNA, SP 12/16, fol. 117r.
[105] Ian Archer, Simon Adams, and G. W. Bernard, eds., 'A "journal" of matters of state happened from time to time as well within and without the realm from and before the death of King Edw. the 6th until the yere 1562', in Ian Archer, ed., *Religion, politics, and society in sixteenth-century England* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 72.

growing ambiguity between the political and religious implications of non-conformity can be seen in the handling of the case of Sir Francis Englefield. Englefield was a conservative who later became associated with both the Ridolfi plot in 1571 and the Throckmorton plot in 1583, both of which posed significant religious and political challenges for the Elizabethan state.[106] In 1562, though, Englefield had left England under licence, and had not returned when the licence expired despite a letter from the Queen requesting his return; he lobbied hard to gain a new licence because he could not align his loyalty to his monarch with his religious conscience. Francis Peyto, a minor noble, wrote in a letter to Nicholas Throckmorton that he had spoken to Englefield who assured him 'that of the two evils, having his conscience so shackled as one way or other he must do thyng contrary to hur majesties will and deternmynacyon, he does rather choose this of absence... than with her presence and not plyable to the religion there set forth and commanded by her lawes, to show hym self well not a conformable subiect.'[107]

Englefield wrote to the Queen, recognising that he had received her letter commanding his return home, but that his conscience would not allow him to conform to England's religion.[108] He alluded openly in his letter to the Queen's experience during Mary's reign, making it clear that she must understand his dilemma, which he articulated as the choice between 'the insatiable worm of a guilty conscience, whose teeth cease not gnawing here or elsewhere, or to be displeasant to her.'[109] He was making a point that there was a distinction between religious and political non-conformity, and that his choice was equivalent to that which Elizabeth faced during Mary's reign.

Englefield's case was taken up in 1566 by King Philip of Spain. John Man, the English Ambassador to Spain, wrote to Cecil that there was a significant diplomatic effort from the Spanish side. The Count de Feria wrote separately to Man to intercede on behalf of Englefield, who was characterised by the Spanish as 'a quyet subject to the quene and his owne conscyence.'[110] The effort was not successful, with the Queen refusing to grant Englefield a new licence, and in 1568 she wrote to King Philip of her concerns that the

[106] Alford, *Burghley*, pp. 171, 254.
[107] Francis Peyto to Throckmorton, 29 May 1562, TNA, SP 70/37, fol. 190r.
[108] Englefield to Queen Elizabeth, 31 May 1562, *CSP Foreign, Elizabeth,* 5, p. 65.
[109] Englefield to Queen Elizabeth, 31 May 1562, *CSP Foreign, Elizabeth,* 5, p. 65.
[110] John Man to Cecil, 19 December 1566, TNA, SP 70/87, fol. 115r.

religious non-conformity of Englefield had become political: in drafts of the letter that was sent, Elizabeth stated that he was 'never molested in the matter of relligion', but that Englefield had now 'cam to mayntean certen lewd and seditious persons fled out of our realm under pretence of religion.'[111] The language here is important, in that it makes a distinction between sedition and religious non-conformity, but also notes that there was now a narrative in which non-conformity in religion and treason were becoming associated.

The Queen's letter even made the claim – perhaps in recognition of Englefield's point from six years previously that she must sympathise with him – that Englefield's case was different from the Protestant Marian exiles. She claimed that, although the Protestant exiles 'for their conscience did refuse to return into this realm', they did so because of the way they had been treated for their religion by the Marian regime.[112] Elizabeth attempted to draw a distinction between the Marian religious persecution of Protestants and the actions of the Elizabethan state against those who did not conform, and indicated that it was political threat and not religious non-conformity that drove her policy. Of course, Elizabeth was writing to the Catholic King of Spain, but he was Mary's former husband and co-monarch, so Elizabeth's claims of religious tolerance implied criticism of policies with which King Philip was associated.

Another case that showed the changing distinction between the politics of royal supremacy and religious practice was that of Thomas Cornwallis. Cornwallis was a member of Mary's privy council and an executor of Mary's will. In 1559, there were concerns raised about Cornwallis and the practice of his whole household – in one list kept by Cecil, there is reference to Robert Churchfield who was a 'servant to Sir Thomas Cornwallis' and whose whole family had not attended communion – and there were claims that Cornwallis and his wife were also failing to attend Church.[113] There is no record of what happened with this list, but there was little action taken on the case of Cornwallis until years later. Whilst there was clearly concern over his religious practice, the lack of political problems associated with his case ensured that he was broadly left alone for years.

[111] The Queen to Philip II, 25 February 1568, TNA, SP 70/96, fol. 193r.
[112] The Queen to Philip II, 25 February 1568, TNA, SP 70/96, fol. 193v.
[113] Recusants in Suffolk, n.d. 1559, CP, MS 2, fols 21r, 22v.

This changed in 1569, when after the Northern Rebellion the links between religious and political non-conformity became a significant driver of policy. Cornwallis was a correspondent and friend of Cecil, and whilst he had been deprived of the positions he had held under Mary, he had suffered no other persecution or arrest.[114] Yet, after the rebellions of 1569, he was arrested and questioned about his religious views. Gabriel Goodman, the Dean of Westminster, wrote to Cecil in 1570 about a public disputation he had had with Cornwallis, who was then under arrest, on the question of the authority of Rome. Goodman described Cornwallis' position as one of 'conscience' and said that he could be persuaded to change given a pardon and more time.[115] Goodman's letter advocated toleration of dissent and argued that the main concerns should be about questions of authority not practice.

McGrath and Rowe conclude that 'whether Sir Thomas conformed and went to the parish church from time to time in the fifteen-sixties, we do not know. He may well have done so, as did many other Catholics', but he only became embroiled in controversy because of his links with the Duke of Norfolk, and even so he spent much time under house arrest with Jewel, and was released in 1570.[116] In the letter to Cecil referenced at the start of this chapter, Cornwallis provided a good summary of the dilemma he faced when confronted by his obligations to the monarch and his faith in God. He wrote that this was the greatest threat, but that offending God was worse than any other peril.[117] In his eventual conformity, Cornwallis did recognise his obligation to the monarch, but also that he could maintain his internal belief without confrontation with the demands of the law.[118]

The impact of the Northern Rebellion, *Regnans* and the Jesuit missions

In the first decade of Elizabeth's reign, there was an ambiguity in the distinction between religious non-conformity and political threat. In the case of Englefield, he clearly believed

[114] Thomas Cornwallis to Cecil, 21 June 1567, TNA, SP 12/43, fol. 29r; Patrick McGrath and Joy Rowe, 'The recusancy of Sir Thomas Cornwallis', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology*, 28 (1958-60), pp. 231, 233.
[115] Gabriel Goodman to Cecil, 21 June 1567 (actually refers to 1570), TNA, SP 12/43, fol. 27r-v; whilst a number of letters about Cornwallis were recorded in the Calendars as from 1567, they were in fact from 1570, after the Northern Rebellion. McGrath and Rowe, 'Recusancy of Cornwallis', p. 259.
[116] McGrath and Rowe, 'Recusancy of Cornwallis', pp. 233–5.
[117] Thomas Cornwallis to Cecil, June 1567 (1570), TNA, SP 12/43, fol. 29v.
[118] Sandeep Kaushik provides another example, that of Thomas Tresham, who balanced condemnation of those who aimed to overthrow Elizabeth with maintained commitment to his conservative religion. Kaushik, 'Resistance, loyalty and recusant politics', pp. 37–72.

the gap too small to risk returning to England, whilst for the elder Thomas Wharton it was big enough for him to remain a religious conservative and still promote the Elizabethan political agenda. The concept of Catholicism in England, as a religious and political distinction from the Elizabethan Church, was yet to emerge fully, and it allowed for conservative practice to be observed without it being an implicit or explicit political challenge. As many Protestant bishops observed and complained, Mass was being openly said by many priests in many churches throughout the decade; and as Younger has argued, a significant number of Elizabethan nobles and councillors were religiously conservative.[119]

However, by the end of the first decade of Elizabeth's reign, this began to change. In 1567 Richard Hurleston, a gentleman living in Lancashire, wrote to the Earl of Pembroke, 'there is in Lancashire a great nomber of gentylmen and others of the best sort it is reported that have taken a solemyne oath amongest theymselves that they will not come at the communyon nor receyve the sacrament during the Quenes Majesties regne'.[120] These gentlemen were reported to be awaiting the imminent invasion of England by the Spanish.[121] In 1568, the Queen's Council wrote to Bishop Grindal stating concerns that non-conformist religious practice was associated with attempts from abroad to undermine the Elizabethan state. They claimed that there were 'evill disposed subiects [who]… do obstinatly not only refuse to obey the lawes of the realme… but also do make secret collections of money which they send out of the realme to the maytenance of such as are notoriously knowen enemyes to the Queen'.[122]

Any ambiguity of perception of Catholicism as a threat began to disappear by the second decade of Elizabeth's reign, as those who identified as Catholic began to threaten the political aims of the Elizabethan state. Responding to the perceived political threat posed by the Catholicism in England became a priority for Elizabeth's councillors; this response increased the conceptual separation of Catholic, conservative, and Protestant belief and

[119] Younger, 'How Protestant?', p. 1076.
[120] Richard Hurleston to the Earl of Pembroke, 20 December 1567, TNA, SP 12/44, fol. 116r.
[121] Hurleston to Pembroke, 20 December 1567, TNA, SP 12/44, fol. 116r.
[122] The Council to Bishop Grindall, 1 March 1568, TNA, SP 12/46, fol. 101r.

practice, ultimately leading to the development of Catholic anti-Nicodemism.[123] This finally created the conditions for English Catholic othering of religiously conservative conformity.

The important turning point was in 1569, when the Earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland started a rebellion in the north of England which brought together a coalition of religiously conservative groups; as Loades has summarised, 'a general rising of Catholics seems to have been feared'.[124] This threat was increased by the problem of royal succession, and by support from the rebels for the claim of the Scottish Queen Mary.[125] In February 1570, *Regnans* was published in support of the rebels, and though it was not backed by the major European powers, it formally released Catholics from their allegiance to the Queen and her laws.[126]

The events of 1569 were important in the perceived gap between religious non-conformity and political threat closing. They created the environment for Catholicism in England to be a defined confessional identity. As the links between identity, religious practice and political threat became clear, there was an opportunity for the Catholic concept of anti-Nicodemism to develop further. Anne Dillon demonstrates the importance of 1569 on development of distinct confessional identity through the use of the term 'martyr' to describe Catholics who were killed by the Elizabethan state. She argues that the context of martyrdom does not really work before the Northern Rebellion and publication of *Regnans*.[127]

Smith argues that the argument between those who believed that Elizabethan Catholicism would not have survived were it not for the Jesuit missionaries in the 1570s – a school of thought associated with Bossy – and those who see resilience in Catholic religious community – in particular Haigh.[128] Yet, even Haigh has accepted that the survival of English Catholic practice required the Jesuit mission, and it was this mission that largely led the future development of Catholicism in England.[129]

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[123] Walsham, *Catholic Reformation*, p. 112.
[124] David Loades, *The Cecils: privilege and power behind the throne* (Kew, 2007), p. 85.
[125] Loades, *The Cecils*, p. 87.
[126] Aislinn Muller, 'Transmitting and translating the excommunication of Elizabeth I', *Studies in Church History*, 53 (June 2017), p. 212.
[127] Anne Dillon, *The construction of martyrdom in the English Catholic community, 1535-1603* (Aldershot, 2002), p. 13.
[128] Smith, 'Origins of recusancy', p. 330.
[129] Smith, 'Origins of recusancy', p. 302.

The process that led English Catholic anti-Nicodemism to develop was largely due to the growth of intolerance in the Elizabethan state for conservative practice. After 1569, the Northern Rebellion and the timing of *Regnans* led many Elizabethan leaders to confirm their suspicions that conservative practice was a political threat. This was not only because of the domestic threat, but external political ones such as those posed by the military ambitions of Spain.[130] Although the Northern Rebellion was a reflection of conservative religion, and not of Catholicism in England, the identification by Protestants of English Catholic identity as a distinct and threatening force was a major driver in the evolution of Catholicism in England.[131] The creation by the Elizabethan state of a binary choice between perceived 'loyal' Protestant and 'treacherous' Catholic brought about the conditions for Catholic anti-Nicodemism to develop further in the 1570s, especially with the arrival of missionaries after 1574.[132]

Whilst these examples show the development of concern that linked Catholic confessional identity with perceived political threat, the clearest articulation from Cecil came in his note on the State of the Realm in 1569. Cecil was the architect of the Elizabethan break with the Roman Church and had outlined a political agenda based on distinction from Papal authority as early as 1558.[133] After the Northern Rebellion and publication of *Regnans*, and the emergence of a potential link with threats from Spain, Cecil concluded that the primary threat to the realm was the connection between the practice of Catholicism and treason. The whole document focused on threats to the Elizabethan state, and he concluded that, 'changying the state of england to popery, which can not be accomplished whylst the Q majesty livith'.[134] In this document, Cecil effectively linked Catholicism with treason – something that was subsequently written into law in the 1571 Treason Act.[135]

As Cecil saw it, the threat was that 'the service of God and the syncere profession of Christian Relligion is much of late decayed and in place thereof, principlly papacy and partly paganism and irrilygion ar crept in'.[136] Cecil's articulation of a reduction in Protestant

[130] Stephen Alford, *The watchers: a secret history of the reign of Elizabeth I* (London, 2012), pp. 46–7.
[131] Duffy, *The stripping of the altars*, p. 583.
[132] Walsham, *Catholic Reformation*, p. 89.
[133] Alford, *The watchers*, p. 91.
[134] The State of the Realm, n.d. 1569, CP, MS 157, fol. 10r.
[135] Alford, *The watchers*, p. 45.
[136] The State of the Realm, 1569, CP, MS 157, p. 11r.

religious belief in England was not an evidence-based assertion, but a perception that what he termed irreligion was increasingly a political challenge. Cecil blamed 'long prosperite' and 'negligence' that had allowed the Queen's enemies to develop 'irreligion' in England. His solutions were: first, that the Queen should marry in order for her to give birth to heirs; and second, to ensure that there were 'laws and ordinances for Relligion', which equated to increasing the fines for recusancy.[137] It is not entirely clear what Cecil intended beyond the laws and policies of the Elizabethan Settlement, but he evidently now saw that identifying and reducing religious non-conformity was a central policy for the continuity and security of the Elizabethan state. Religious identification and intolerance developed as national policies, helping to create the environment for the development of Catholic identity in England and anti-Nicodemism.

Conclusion

English Catholics and Protestants both developed forms of anti-Nicodemism. In fact, Catholic anti-Nicodemism borrowed heavily from the Protestant writing during Mary's reign, as in Vaux's *Catechism*. Condemnation of those who conformed reflected the level of religious insecurity, caused by a fragile identity and the external pressure of a conflicting confession. This chapter has shown how the conditions for Catholic anti-Nicodemism developed over the 1560s, so that when the Jesuit missionaries arrived, the othering of conforming religious conservatives was a natural next step. This was because of the work done by English Catholic exiles, building an identity around papal authority, but it was also due to the changes in Elizabethan state policy which forced the choice between conformity and recusancy on a broadly religiously conservative population.

As Smith, Duffy, Walsham, and others have argued, Catholicism in England did not simply develop from religious conservatism; rather, it was a novel confession emerging from the Reformation. Recent scholarship has contended that Elizabethan Catholic identities evolved out of both the intellectual transformation led by Catholic exile thinkers, and through confronting the realities of non-conformist practice.[138] This chapter has explored the exile

[137] The State of the Realm, 1569, CP, MS 157, p. 13v.

[138] Brad Gregory provides a clear overview of scholarship on the evolution of early modern English Catholicism, and how it developed from theological and practical roots. Brad Gregory, 'Situating early modern English Catholicism', in Kelly and Royal, eds., *Early modern English Catholicism*, pp. 17–18.

Catholic writers' preoccupation with papal authority as the central theological reference point, and the evolution of Elizabethan Catholic identity resulting from increasingly rigid confessional distinctions as a matter of national policy. The chapter contributes to scholarship by identifying how these two trends explain the absence of Catholic anti-Nicodemism in the 1560s, and its subsequent growth in the 1570s and beyond.[139]

Through the 1560s, most of the population did not have to choose between conservatism and conformity. However, Protestant insecurity grew because of the lack of progress in enforcing a reformed practice, and the Northern Rebellion pushed Cecil and others into viewing Catholicism as a threat to the Elizabethan political project. The growing intolerance for those in the middle between the hardening Protestant and Catholic confessions, meant that choice became increasingly necessary – and choice in one direction brought derision and condemnation from the other. In this way, the majority who were religiously conservative and chose conformity became the church papists and schismatics vilified by Catholic writers – the Catholic versions of the conforming Protestant Nicodemites during Mary's reign. Anti-Nicodemism was not really a religious question at all and did not relate to specified and self-identifying Nicodemites. Rather it was a symptom of a developing identity in a pressurised context – the process of othering was a reaction to religious fragility, brought about by the increasingly rigid doctrinal differences and the pressure of conformity.

[139] Walsham, *Catholic Reformation*, p. 87.

Conclusion

The thesis concludes as it began, by returning to the 1555 English translation of Wolfgangus Musculus' play, *The Temporysour*. In his introduction, the anonymous translator and editor, R. P., described the choice of many in England not to stand against Mary's Church, stating that they had instead chosen

> the loue of thy selfe, of the worlde, of thy goodes and ryches, thy landes and possessions, thy wyfe and chyldren, thy fylthy pleasures, and fleshly delites, the which al, thou thinking by thy dissimulate ypocrisie to saue and preserue, thou shalte most certaynly lose and forgo, as witnesseth the verytie, saying: Whosoeuer goeth about by any fraudulent meanes to saue his lyfe, he shall most certaynly lose thesame: yea, euen this transitory lyfe, besyde the perpetual damnation of soule and body in the lyfe to come.[1]

This description of 'the infyrmitie of fayth that resteth in the Nicodemistes' was written during Queen Mary's reign and published to the English Protestant exile community in Wesel.[2] As Chapter 2 argues, the audience for this work had already decided to go into exile, so the description of 'dissimulate ypocrisy' was not primarily aimed at changing the behaviours of the so-called Nicodemites but to confirm the position held by those who had chosen to leave England. *The Temporysour*'s main characters discussed the need to face the dangers of Protestant faithfulness in the face of persecution, persecution that both the translator and audience had chosen to escape. Contrasted with the pastoral work intended for the beleaguered Protestant in Marian England, also dealt with in Chapter 2, anti-Nicodemism was uncompromising, blunt, and judgemental – in large part because it was aimed at justifying decisions already made by Marian exiles to avoid the dangers of conformity.

The wide and sweeping denunciations in the *The Temporysour* make clear the central argument of this thesis: anti-Nicodemism was malleable and reactive, aimed at justifying

[1] Musculus, *The Temporysour*, sig. A.iiiir.
[2] Musculus, *The Temporysour*, sig. [F.vii]r.

and strengthening existing theological perspectives. It was to address the 'infirmytie of fayth' that rested not in those who conformed, but those who were unsure about the future of their religious confession. Anti-Nicodemism attacked those who conformed, either Protestants attending Mass or Catholics attending Reformed services, as a reaction to religious insecurity. It was not really about dissimulation but stereotyping deviance from religious norms as a way of responding to external pressure. Anti-Nicodemism attacked ambiguous, un-named targets, and revealed far more about the concerns of those under religious, social, and cultural pressure than it did about the lived reality of the so-called Nicodemite.

As Chapter 1 discusses, Nicodemism is named after a biblical figure, whose essential characteristic was ambiguity. Chapters 3 and 4 conclude that anti-Nicodemism was not targeted at specific individuals, and it had little demonstrable impact on the relationships between exiles and conformists either during or after the Marian persecution. Stephen Alford raises the question about a 'theory' of Nicodemism, and he highlights the need for more research to be done on it – the central argument of this study is that no theory of Nicodemism existed, and nor did any real unifying concept of the Nicodemite in Marian and early Elizabethan England.[3] This is an important contribution to understanding William Cecil – the focus of Alford's work – but also critical for understanding Marian and Elizabethan England more widely.

Chapter 5 shows the impact on the roles of women and contends that religious insecurity led to challenges to the social norms that governed women's role in religious life. The advice given to women broke down some of the gender norms regarding women's inferiority, in part because of the importance of women's support to the Protestant network. Kirsi Stjerna asks the question of whether 'Protestant theology and reforms promote spiritual equality and emancipation for all concerned, including the women?', and she concludes that 'the answers are ambiguous.'[4] This thesis makes clear that anti-Nicodemism did have an impact on the spiritual equality and emancipation of women; but it was only transitory – when the conditions for anti-Nicodemism were no longer present, the arguments for women's greater

[3] Alford, *The early Elizabethan polity*, p. 26.
[4] Kirsi Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation* (Maiden, MA, 2009), p. 11.

religious agency were no longer viewed as important. Anti-Nicodemism was a temporary response to a threat and not a vehicle for lasting social change.

Chapter 6 demonstrates that this approach to understanding anti-Nicodemism translated to the Elizabethan Catholics. Scholars have shown the use of anti-Nicodemism and anti-Nicodemite tropes by Catholics in mid/late Elizabethan England, and this thesis explains why these grew out of the increased religious pressure put on conservative and Catholic people after 1570. The religious fragility that defined Catholic anti-Nicodemism was not present in the first decade of Elizabeth's reign. Only when people were forced to choose between allegiance to confession or crown did the conditions for anti-Nicodemism develop. Anti-Nicodemism was not linked to any one confession; rather it was a reaction to religious persecution of any stripe. Several scholars have argued that Nicodemism was not a unified theory but a response from people living in fear; the argument in this thesis is that anti-Nicodemism was also a symptom of fear.[5]

The thesis has shown that the unspecific charge of Nicodemism did not lead to individual stigma. Andrew Pettegree, Carlos Eire, Alexandra Walsham, Anne Overell, and others have clearly articulated the broadly European nature of Nicodemism. This thesis adds to the scholarship by concluding that whilst there may have been many individual justifications of conforming to another confessional practice, there was no cohesive theory, theology or Nicodemite community in the way imagined by anti-Nicodemites. Anti-Nicodemism was indicative, and an expression, of more generalised religious insecurity; the corpus of anti-Nicodemite writing is not a useful source for understanding religious conformity in Reformation England.

The term 'Nicodemite' is problematic because it was a stereotype developed by opponents, and neither an owned identity, nor a useful starting point for exploring lives, motivations, or beliefs. It is always problematic to define people by the terminology of their detractors. The thesis' analysis of anti-Nicodemism as a symptom of religious anxiety makes it possible to distance anti-Nicodemite sources from the study of religious conformity and dissimulation,

[5] Overell, *Nicodemites*, pp. 4, 6; Brigden, *London and the Reformation,* p. 561; Eire, 'Calvin and Nicodemism', p. 69.

and explain how research into religious dissimulation need no longer start from the premise of the anti-Nicodemite.

The conclusion must be drawn that, although the language used to articulate anti-Nicodemism was theological, it was not a particularly theological phenomenon. This does not negate the importance of Kenneth Woo's recent theological analysis of Calvin's anti-Nicodemite *Quatre sermons* and their English reception. The argument Woo lays out is that Calvin, and subsequent English translators of *Quatre sermons,* used anti-Nicodemism to articulate a theological rationale for their own decision-making. As Woo states, 'questions about the identity of Calvin's Nicodemites—diverse by his own account and unresolved in the scholarship—fall off to the side, as the problem of dissimulation becomes a foil to serve Calvin's personal apology.'[6] Woo's approach to the question of anti-Nicodemism is different, but it leads to the same conclusions as this present study: that anti-Nicodemism explains more about their authors than those they were attacking. This thesis goes further, however, by arguing that anti-Nicodemism was a reaction to external pressures and did not adversely affect relationships even between its proponents and those it appeared to be attacking.

This conclusion allows for a different approach to some difficult paradoxes. First, Alford's 'paradox of William Cecil', who was able to be both a loyal subject in Marian England and be one of the principal authors of the Elizabethan Protestant Reformation.[7] Cecil was never an identified Nicodemite and would not have recognised himself within the categorisations of the anti-Nicodemites. The thesis argues that Cecil was not personally stigmatised by anti-Nicodemism, because its generalisations were far too broad to capture the actions of individuals, let alone a complex person like Cecil. Second, the thesis has important implications for understanding the lack of consistency between John Knox's published work and personal correspondence. Knox was staunchly anti-Nicodemite and misogynistic in his published work – yet through analysis of his letters to Elizabeth, Cecil, and Anna Locke, this thesis has shown that this reflected the generalised theological reaction to perceived religious threats rather than an unbending dogma. Knox's relationships with others were far more complicated than would be deduced from his published work alone, and this study of anti-Nicodemism unpacks an important aspect of this incongruence: it is explained by

[6] Woo, *Nicodemism*, p. 208.
[7] Alford, *Burghley*, p. 93.

understanding anti-Nicodemism as a general reaction to a threatening context, rather than a vehicle for specific personal rebuke.

Anti-Nicodemism involved the polemical identification of unspecified 'others' who were portrayed as having betrayed their God to secure temporal safety. As a defensive and forceful response to fear, anti-Nicodemism does not stand alone; and it was a reaction that can be described through different sociological frameworks, notably social identity theory. Nicodemites were a stereotyped 'black sheep' whose identification set the boundaries of acceptable behaviour, and whose lack of loyalty was perceived to be a threat to coherence of confessional identity. In making this argument, this thesis uses a theory which emerged from the study of human behaviour in the twentieth-century workplace, demonstrating how anti-Nicodemism was a characteristically human response to the challenge of persecution. This response was neither unique to early modern Europe nor to religious communities.

Walsham argues that concepts of religious toleration in the Reformation are often misunderstood; scholarship on toleration is often driven by anachronistic and misleading understandings of the polarities in early modern life: of 'behaviour and belief, thought and action, pragmatism and principle, faith and practical rationality'.[8] She states that religious toleration grew out of an inability to force conformity and the developing view that dissimulation was more of a threat to civil society than honest disagreement.[9] This leads her to the fascinating conclusion that we need to see 'early modern toleration as a form of dissimulation itself', in that 'it involved the discomfort of suspending one's conviction that a religion or creed was wrong and wicked in the context of circumstances that dictated the necessity of accommodating the presence of those who adhered to it.'[10] Religious persecution and anti-Nicodemism were two indicators of an unwillingness to accept dissimulation at all: the unbending nature of confessional absolutism, that marked both, led to a refusal to allow for any incongruence between conscience and conduct, belief and behaviour – but in doing so, they reinforced a culture of intolerance that forced people to dissimulate. Enforced conformity will always lead to the question of whether people do what they do because of belief or simply because they must – that was the challenge in

[8] Walsham, 'Toleration, pluralism, and coexistence', p. 184.
[9] Walsham, 'Toleration, pluralism, and coexistence', pp. 184–5.
[10] Walsham, 'Toleration, pluralism, and coexistence', p. 185.

early modern England, and is the challenge faced within any intolerant and polarised society.

Walsham describes how the fear of the 'besetting sins of anachronism and presentism' has meant modern historians are often 'temperamentally averse to drawing parallels with contemporary affairs and to suggesting that the past can provide lessons for the present.'[11] This study illustrates how reactions to persecution and insecurity often lead to the stereotyping and identification of others, especially those who were perceived to have been disloyal to a norm-based identity. This was particularly the case with those who were perceived to be unwilling to face the consequences of their inner convictions and who, as a result, dissimulated. The firm conclusions outlined above in the thesis are about the English anti-Nicodemites of the Marian and early Elizabethan period, but it is important to respond to the challenge set by Walsham and accept that there are clear links between how people responded to religious insecurity in the sixteenth century and how people and groups respond to threats in social and political discourse now. This is a tentative suggestion, but one which requires consideration and further scholarship.

There is another question which this thesis poses but has yet to be addressed, namely: why did the identification of Nicodemites never become an owned identity? Labelling theory, emanating from criminology, describes the process of external identification becoming an owned identity, and notably how characteristics ascribed to a particular label become self-fulfilling. Labelling is linked to a pre-existing stereotype, imposing that stereotype on people regardless of individual characteristics. The theory outlines how 'a perception of oneself from the standpoint of others may lead to a change in self-concept; the person may begin to see him or herself as a deviant person, taking on the role of the deviant.'[12] This describes the process of internalising identification to develop identity, even when the identification was negative and stigmatising.

Labelling theory outlines how Nicodemism could become a lived identity, yet it did not. This is explained by understanding two important aspects of labelling theory: firstly, the process takes a significant amount of time, and neither Protestant nor Catholic anti-Nicodemism

[11] Walsham, 'Toleration, pluralism, and coexistence', p. 189.
[12] Jón Gunnar Bernburg, 'Labeling theory', in Marvin D. Krohn, Alan Lizotte, and Gina Penly Hall, eds., *Handbook on crime and deviance* (London, 2009), p. 194.

lasted beyond a few decades; secondly, there would have needed to have been a difference between the social status of Nicodemite and anti-Nicodemite. Bernburg explains that 'an important aspect of labeling [sic] theory argues that disadvantaged groups are more likely than other groups to experience labeling [sic].'[13] Returning Protestant Marian exiles often had the same social status as those who had remained and were now in control of the progress of reform; and developing English Catholicism was bound up in the social and cultural changes of Elizabethan English religious identity. In other words, the respective social status, and extant relationships between conformists and anti-Nicodemites, meant that there was no individual stigma associated with the general charge of anti-Nicodemites, and the conditions for the label to become an identity did not exist. This theory largely articulates what is explained in Chapters 3, 4 and 6.

Scholars have tended to use anti-Nicodemite texts as a means to understand Nicodemism. In contrast, this thesis has focused on anti-Nicodemism as a way of understanding how religious insecurity was manifested in Reformation England. Nicodemism was never an owned identity, nor did it lead to individual stigma. Rather, it was a negative stereotype used by anti-Nicodemites to conceptualise the persecution that others who belonged to their confession were facing, and define the boundaries of behaviour that were expected. Thus, anti-Nicodemism was not really about dissimulation but an expression of religious fragility, which does not give a clear or accurate picture of real motivations and relationships. By definition, religious dissimulation is difficult to study, but scholars should be careful about using anti-Nicodemite writing as a shortcut to understanding the complex, heterogenous and personal experiences of those who religiously dissimulated to avoid persecution.

[13] Bernburg, 'Labeling theory', p. 192.

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