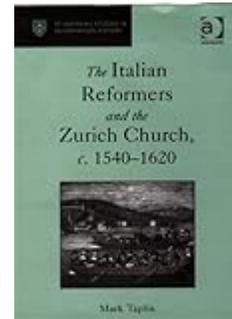




**Mark Taplin.** *The Italian Reformers and the Zurich Church, c1540-1620.* Burlington: Ashgate, 2003. xiii + 368 pp. \$99.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7546-0978-0.



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## Religious Exiles in Zurich

Studies of the Protestant Reformation have long been dominated by interest in Northern Europe, but in recent decades Reformation scholars have begun to take an interest in the Italian reformers.[1] Mark Taplin's research on the relationship between Italian exiles and the leaders of the Zurich church brings the Italians, often considered peripheral to the Protestant Reformation, into the heart of one of the most important issues in mid-sixteenth century reformation history: confessionalization, or the process of systematizing religious doctrine that created distinct religious identities.

Taplin identifies two goals for his work. First, he wants to show that the Reformation grew out of many different centers, not just Wittenberg and Geneva. As part of this goal, he intends to demonstrate the importance of Zurich in international Protestantism, and the role in the development of mature Reformed theology played by lesser-known Zurich reformers such as Rudolf Gwalther and Josias Simler. Second, he addresses the process of confessionalization in the middle decades of the sixteenth century, which should be understood as a process of decisions made in response to current events.

Specifically, he is concerned with the role religious exiles played in the systematization of Reformed theology. As one expects of an argument about sixteenth-century theology, Taplin uses primarily the published works of his subjects, as well as their correspondence. These sources are supplemented by archival research in Zurich, Graubunden, Basel, Bern, and the British Library.

The subject of this book is the community of Italian exiles from Locarno who took shelter under the protection of Heinrich Bullinger and the Zurich city council from 1540-1620. He traces the history of Zurich's relationship with Italy in general and the Italian Reformers in particular. This relationship "oscillated between cooperation and conflict" (p. 13). Lacking state support at home, the Italian reformers never developed their own organized churches. As a result, northern reformers perceived their Italian co-religionists as vulnerable to herodoxy. Indeed, in the 1540s, the Zurich reformer Heinrich Bullinger engaged in debates with Italian reformers over the Eucharist and antitrinitarianism. That early encounter with Italian heresy sets the tone for the future conflicts. However, there were many instances of co-

operation between Zurich and the Italians, in the hope that the Reformed faith would eventually spread to the Italian states.

The relationship changed after 1555, when Zurich invited refugees from Locarno to establish an Italian-language Reformed church under the authority of the Zurich clergy. The Locarnesi church was led by Peter Martyr Vermigli and Bernardino Ochino, who was originally considered a thoroughly orthodox Reformed minister. The 130 exiles faced difficulties assimilating in Zurich, and were not accepted by the city's guilds. However, as "long as the Locarnesi showed no signs of harbouring heterodox opinions" (p.110), their church kept the support of the Zurich church. In 1563, after the death of Vermigli, Ochino's orthodoxy came into question. He published his *Dialogi XXX*, which caused concern in Geneva and Zurich. Bullinger found several points where Ochino's theology was not in line with the official position of the Zurich church, the most damaging the matter of the elect's participation in justification. This position meant that Christ was demoted to "a bit-player in the drama of salvation" (p. 164).

After the Ochino problem, the Zurich clergy consolidated its theology. The important texts from the 1560s and 1570s, the Second Helvetic Confession and the Heidelberg catechism, were written partially in response to the heterodox Italians and their connection with Polish reformers. Polish and Italian antitrinitarianism inspired the Zurich clerics to develop their theology in more explicit detail, and to emphasize their commitment to the orthodoxy set out in the confessions of the early church. The Zurichers also intervened in Rhaetia, helping establish the authority of the Reformed ministers over the religious radicals. Finally, Taplin shows that the Ochino affair did not destroy the Italians' relationship with Zurich. Indeed, after the 1570s, the Zurich church financially sponsored the expansion of the Italian Reformed Church in Graubunden.

Taplin shows an excellent command of theological debates and their importance, however this book is not appropriate for those new to theology. He is to be

thanked for bringing those who have long been ignored by Reformation scholars to our attention. His goals for this work are laudable, but the weakness of the book is that it often falls short of its promises. In spite of the ongoing publication of Heinrich Bullinger's works and correspondence, scholars, particularly those in the English-speaking world, are still unfamiliar with his theology, much less that of the more obscure Zurich reformers and the Italian exiles.[2] Even to one predisposed to accept an argument that establishes the importance of Zurich in a multicentered Reformation, this book does not prove that these events had any importance beyond the Swiss Confederation.

As a study of the theological development of the Zurich and Italian reformed communities, this is an excellent book. However, it does not do much more than trace theological developments in these communities. One wonders how many books on forgotten theologians are necessary. The author could have addressed larger questions, such as the usefulness of the concept of confessionalization for later Reformation studies. Nonetheless, this is a welcome addition to our understanding of the Reformation.

#### Notes

[1]. For recent works on the Italian Reformation, see John Tedeschi, *The Italian Reformation of the Sixteenth Century and the Diffusion of Renaissance Culture: A Bibliography of the Secondary Literature (Ca. 1750-1997)* (Ferrara: Istituto di studi Rinascimentali and Franco Cosimo Panini Editore, 2000), and Frank A. James, ed., *Peter Vermigli and the European Reformations: Semper Reformanda* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

[2]. Readers interested in Bullinger should consult Pamela Biel, *Doorkeepers at the House of Righteousness: Heinrich Bullinger and the Zurich Clergy 1535-1575* (Berne: Peter Lang, 1991); J. Wayne Baker, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant: the Other Reformed Tradition* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1980); and Bruce Gordon and Emidio Campi, eds., *Architect of the Reformation: An Introduction to Heinrich Bullinger* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004).

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