



Luca Baschera, Bruce Gordon, Christian Moser, eds. *Following Zwingli: Applying the Past in Reformation Zurich*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2014. 320 pp. \$134.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7546-9405-2.

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Informative Contributions to the Intellectual History of Post-Zwinglian Zurich

This volume of essays on thought and theology in post-Zwinglian Zurich resembles a collection of puzzle pieces which can be assembled in various ways depending on the reader's focus. The obvious element framing them here is the geographical context, and several of the essays are linked by their treatment of the same individual(s) or overlapping thematic questions and approaches.

An introduction by the three editors outlines the frame of the puzzle, describing the situation of the sixteenth-century Swiss confederacy and how humanism and the Reformation were received there. While acknowledging the central role of Huldrych Zwingli in shaping the Zurich church, the introduction also emphasizes the unique aspects of the Swiss movement which led to Zurich's break with Rome: "The Zurich church was the product of a particular moment, of a particular context and of a string of contingencies" (p. 7). It was a "patchwork of old and new" (p. 7), and, indeed, many, "possibly the majority, did not support the changes for a variety of reasons that had little to do with doctrine" (p. 9).

As a "distinctive centre of the European reformation with a carefully hewn theology and ecclesiology" (p. 10), Zurich deserves more attention in the scholarship than it has received. These essays examine the first two generations of reformers, focusing on their intellectual development and the influence of the principal reformers. The editors profess to be interested in the faith of their subjects and to consider their unique personalities. Indeed, the book reads a bit like a prosopography of Zurich's re-

formed sodality, though the varied approaches of the authors and the intellectual bent of the essays prevent it from crystallizing around any one point or figure.

The editors do introduce a conceptual leitmotif: the Renaissance concept of models, which humanists used to orient themselves in the tumultuous period of the early sixteenth century. Following the example set by Erasmus, sixteenth-century humanists sought not just to *imitate*, but rather to *emulate* historical models—to refine rather than reproduce the example. Models functioned at both the personal and institutional levels as the church in Zurich sought a foundation independent of Rome. "The past provided models to be appropriated, but they had to be adapted according to historical circumstances and present needs" (p. 16). In the vacuum that resulted from the break with Rome, new importance was ascribed to biblical, apostolic, and patristic sources. A small group of scholars and theologians—held together not only by common ideologies and goals, but also by familial and matrimonial bonds—provided new models to the audience of their sermons. The individual essays included in *Following Zwingli* examine the application of the new models proposed in Zurich.

The first essay following the introduction is Mark Taplin's analysis of Josias Simler's anthology of patristic texts, his *Scripta veterum latina*. These sources were important, both to establish the tradition leading up to the Zurich church and to defend the Reformation from more radical influences: "the history of the early church was not just a record of distant events, but an essential point

of reference in the controversies of their own day” (p. 42). Simler became an authority in the battle against antitrinitarianism raging within the Polish church, but soon became involved in more local controversies surrounding Anabaptists, antitrinitarians, and Schwenkfeldians and the degree to which religious dissent should be tolerated by the new church. In Simler’s eyes, rulers were obliged to protect their subjects from threats to the welfare of their immortal souls, and those advocating tolerance (the “Academici”) favored a watered-down, philosophical religion. On the one hand, Simler established the continuity of the reformed church with the apostolic and patristic tradition to defend the reformed church’s orthodoxy; on the other, he sought to condemn contemporary radicals as the reincarnation of ancient heretics.

The next chapter, by Jon Delmas Wood, discusses Heinrich Bullinger’s model of a collective episcopacy. Bullinger, who succeeded Zwingli as head of the Zurich church, is credited with “understated genius” in weaving together the “threads that were left to him ... following 1531” (p. 85). Wood’s analysis is based upon handwritten notes prepared by Bullinger in preparation for his exhortations of the assembled clergy at the semi-annual synod sessions, where new clergy took oaths of service and each individual present was subjected to mutual, episcopal discipline. According to the notes of the sermons delivered on these occasions, Bullinger developed a model for the clergy based on the role of the priesthood in the Old Testament. This countered somewhat the concept of the “priesthood of all believers,” for Bullinger ascribed an especial importance to the clergy as role models of how to lead a good life within church and society. Though the evangelicals of the first generation typically preferred the term “pastor” or “preacher” to that of “priest,” which they used in reference to the identity of all believers, Bullinger increasingly addressed the clergy at these closed-door sessions as “priests” and “prophets.” He went one step further as well, treating “ministerial titles such as ‘pastor’ and ‘bishop’ as synonymous” (p. 91). Wood links this to eschatological tendencies in Zurich, and to Bullinger’s view that human history leading to Judgment was a “colossal cosmic conflict with cultic dimensions” (p. 92). Bullinger expected that evil would increase its assault even as reform was introduced and that only cooperation of civil and ecclesiastical authorities could thwart its advance. The vigilance of the clergy as guardians of Zurich’s moral standard would be crucial in these last days.

While Bullinger was concerned about a group serving as role models within Swiss society, the next essay in

the volume, by Torrance Kirby, focuses on one particular individual far removed from Zurich: Queen Elizabeth I, and, more particularly, on Peter Martyr Vermigli’s *Epistle to the Princess Elisabeth*. Vermigli was an Italian reformer who had come to Oxford at the invitation of Thomas Cranmer. Under Queen Mary, Vermigli, like many English Protestant scholars, fled to the mainland. He eventually settled in Zurich, from whence he declined an invitation to reassume his chair at Oxford after Elizabeth ascended to the throne in 1558. Vermigli had, however, addressed the young queen with a letter shortly after she took the throne; he reminded her that she held her station by divine gift alone and that this gift brought extraordinary responsibilities for the guidance and well-being of her nation. Vermigli compared Elizabeth to a variety of biblical kings and figures, including even Christ himself, both to extol the monarch but also to remind her of her duties as a godly ruler.

The subsequent chapter also deals with Old Testament models, albeit for the general laity and not for the queen. Here Christian Moser examines commentaries on the Book of Ruth: several of the leading figures of the Zurich church published exegetical works which held Ruth up as a model Christian, especially for women. The Book of Ruth had traditionally been considered important for establishing the genealogy of Christ, but it was well suited as a description of virtue as well. Ruth was seen as loyal and responsible, obedient, hard-working, and deferential, while also grateful and pious, trusting in God. This made her, in the words of one commentary, “‘a model for all women’” (p. 129). Boaz was also seen as an exemplary male: the perfect head of the household, he displayed concern for workers, was friendly, charitable, humble, and disciplined. Furthermore, he did not drink excessively and married Ruth not for his own sexual pleasure but because it was God’s will. In fact, this sexual aspect of the book—Ruth slips into Boaz’s chamber at night after having bathed and oiled her own body—presented a conundrum to commentators who were forced either to argue that nothing dishonorable had happened between them or that this was an example of Ruth’s human flaws and nothing to be emulated. In all the cases, according to Moser, these commentaries viewed the Book of Ruth as a text with great pedagogical potential for imparting moral lessons to the laity.

While Ruth became a more prominent role model in reformed Zurich, another female figure had to be redefined as well. In the medieval church, Mary had been elevated to the greatest of the saints, honored with a variety of rituals, feast days, and prayers. Reformers, wary

of upsetting their audience, “chose to tread lightly as they gradually reduced the Virgin Mary’s status in the heavenly family” (p. 138). In chapter 6, Rebecca Giselbrecht examines the attitudes of Zwingli and Bullinger towards Mary, and how they presented her as an example of the feminine virtues of obedience, humility, modesty, and chastity. The scriptural part of the Hail Mary remained a part of the regular liturgy in Zurich until 1563, and traditional Marian holidays were celebrated for several decades after Zwingli’s death. Giselbrecht introduces two tapestries woven before and after the Reformation to make the point that lay perception of Mary changed, but only slowly, as a result of the reforms and changes in the broader culture.

Mary, in her role as the mother of Christ, plays a central role in the next essay in the book as well. Kurt Jakob Rüetschi addresses the topic of raising children as discussed in two sermons by Rudolf Gwalther, who eventually succeeded Bullinger as head of the Zurich church. These two sermons expound on the story of the twelve-year-old Jesus staying behind in the temple and his parents’ subsequent search for him (Luke 2: 41-52). In keeping with tradition in Zurich, Gwalther followed Zwingli’s system of a *lectio continua*, making his way systematically through the books of the Bible and incorporating those themes which seemed to him relevant or timely. Thus these two sermons, delivered in 1553, are part of a longer series on the Book of Luke which stretched over six years. Rüetschi provides a detailed summary of the sermons, but his analysis is quite brief. One claim in this description—that Mary and Joseph had traveled to Jerusalem for the Easter (!) festival—gave this reviewer pause. This may well be Gwalther’s anachronism, but if so, it certainly warranted a notation. Essentially, according to Gwalther, childrearing is centered in fear of God, and raising children correctly is hard work which leads in the long run to a transformation of society. Rüetschi closes his essay with the observation that Gwalther, himself adopted by Bullinger as a young man, knew from personal experience about the difficulties of raising children because, in 1552, when the sermons were delivered, his third child had just been born.

The shaping of children’s morals is a central element of the next essay in the volume: Urs Leu discusses the question of censorship within the context of Conrad Gessner’s truncated edition of Martial’s *Epigrams*, published in 1544, which excluded the most offensive texts and abbreviated the others, reorganizing them in thematic groups. In addition, Gessner composed a fictional dialogue in which the figures debate the issue of censor-

ship and arrive precisely at the compromise represented in Gessner’s work: the fictional judge declares that Martial should be “castrated” and the harmful parts cut out, with the remaining text reorganized. In practice, this compromise proved only marginally successful, for Gessner’s edition was printed only once.

The next chapter deals with the reception of somewhat more modern texts, namely, with the reception of scholasticism and Aristotelian philosophy within Zurich. Luca Baschera writes about Otto Werdmüller, a native of Zurich who studied in Basel with Myconious and then with Melanchthon in Wittenberg. He returned to Zurich in 1541 and taught ethics and physics, before being ordained as a deacon in 1543 and subsequently focusing on his work as a theologian and preacher. This essay, however, deals with his *De dignitate, usu et methodo philosophiae moralis*, published in Basel in 1545, an “apology for ethical studies and for Aristotelian ethics in particular” (p. 212). The work is summarized in detail and Werdmüller’s stance compared to that of Melanchthon and other reformers. Baschera argues that Werdmüller placed a greater emphasis on ethics than did the reformers in Wittenberg; he refused to “confine ethics to the sphere of external action and civil life, but insisted on the close relationship between redemption and actual renewal, which must result in the practice of virtue” (p. 230). This perspective lent an especial importance to the nexus of Gospel and Law in reformed Zurich, where reformers were “open to the possibility of letting Aristotle, and philosophy in general, interact with the Bible towards the development of a systematic account of Christian ethics” (p. 231).

Konrad Pellikan, who was born into humanist circles and became a Franciscan friar before eventually leaving his order to become a professor of biblical languages in Zurich, is a central figure in the last two essays of the volume, first in his capacity as a teacher and model pedagogue, and then via the autobiography he wrote for his son’s (and the reader’s) edification. The penultimate essay by Matthew McLean focuses on Pellikan’s relationship with Sebastian Münster, whose dedication and passion impressed his teacher Pellikan in Rouffach (Alsace) and whose translation of the Hebrew Bible was dwarfed as a scholarly achievement only by his *Cosmographia* (1544), which aspired in six volumes to “describe the world.” Pellikan and Münster’s lively correspondence is evidence of the evolution of their collaboration and friendship, which was characterized by generosity of knowledge and literature; this correspondence provides the basis for McLean’s essay. The essay also reflects on

the ways in which the Reformation disrupted the scholarly landscape of humanist Europe by introducing new religious and political boundaries. Both men continued to speak warmly of their order even after they had left the Franciscan fold, but the break necessarily limited certain opportunities and access to knowledge. Both Pellikan and Münster resisted being pulled into these theological disputes, for they understood themselves to be first and foremost philologists and remained in contact with their Catholic mentors and colleagues. As scholars, they felt bound to add to the body of knowledge they had inherited: McLean argues that for them, “imitation meant not stagnation, but the opportunity for each successive generation to add more detail to the existing design, to refine rather than to overwrite” (p. 255).

In a more general sense, the last essay, by co-editor Bruce Gordon, also focuses on the passing on of knowledge and virtue from one generation to the next in the genre of (auto)biographical texts, specifically in Konrad Pellikan’s autobiographical *Chronicon* (1546) and Johannes Jud’s account of his father Leo’s life. These texts were meant as more than simple records of a life; they “shared the intention of persuading their readers of the Christian life” (p. 262). These life stories were intended as models capable of conveying “spiritual lessons through lives that were notable yet led within a world known to the readers” (p. 262). While their authors recognized that the next generation would not necessarily do the mod-

els of their elders justice by emulating and ultimately surpassing them, they did their best to present the stories of these men as human and fallible, guided through tumultuous times by their faith and trust in God. Following the trajectory of the book, the concept of models remains central in Gordon’s conclusion, as he analyzes how Bullinger used the model of Jud’s life to reposition the church in Zurich and how “these texts are about the search for meaning in a changed world” (p. 289).

As the length of this review suggests, this is a volume which contains a great deal of information. Some of the connections between the pieces of the puzzle are more obvious than others, and historians working within the context of other geographic locations or on other historiographical puzzles will find pieces to integrate into their scholarship. This makes it particularly unfortunate that the index of the volume includes only proper names rather than more general terminology: even issues that were central in Zurich, like Anabaptism and humanism, for example, are not indexed.

The authors of this volume are an international group, and the language of the essays is somewhat inconsistent, including varying degrees of Germanic prose and minor inconsistencies in spelling (Basel vs. Basle). These are minor quibbles, however, which in only a few instances impair understanding of content. The present review has adopted the conservative capitalization conventions used in the volume.

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