

Buchbesprechungen

Reinhard Bodenmann, Les perdants: Pierre Caroli et les débuts de la Réforme en Romandie, Turnhout: Brepols, 2016 (Nugae humanisticae 19), xxvii, 487 p. – ISBN 978-2-503-56790-7.

Few of John Calvin's opponents have been as routinely excoriated by both contemporaries and modern scholars as Pierre Caroli. In addition to the vicious attacks on him by his contemporaries, the Sorbonne doctor's frequent reversals between Catholicism and Protestantism have led scholars to portray Caroli as a model of weak-willed inconstancy and opportunism. In "Les perdants," Reinhard Bodenmann sets out to change this perception, and in the process has given us a new definitive study of Caroli.

The titular "Losers," Bodenmann explains in the Forward, are those individuals, both lay and clerical, who "held different perceptions of 'reform' than those which ended up being imposed in the second half of the sixteenth century" and have largely been consigned to anonymity (p. xix). Bodenmann's essential argument is that Caroli, along with his "loser" friends Jean Le Comte and Thomas Malingre (among others), constituted a viable but frequently ignored alternative to the Calvinist system that was ultimately, but not inevitably, imposed in the Suisse romande only in the later sixteenth century. Thus, Caroli should not be viewed as the villain that Calvinist historiography has painted him to be. He simply had a different conception, formed by his earlier experiences in the French evangelical community, of what reform should look like, a vision that did not break as radically as the Calvinists from the traditions of the medieval Church.

To provide a more balanced view of Caroli than has been available until now, Bodenmann makes extensive use of one of Caroli's works that was rediscovered relatively recently, the "Refutatio blasphemiae Farellicarum in sacrosanctam trinitatem" (which Bodenmann recently edited with Olivier Labarthe in Droz's series "Ioannis Calvinii Opera Omnia denuo recognita", series IV, vol. VI, 2016). This work contains a wealth of autobiographical material that presents, for the first time with regard to most events, Caroli's own perspective on his life and conflicts. Thus, we need no longer rely exclusively on the depictions of his enemies. Bodenmann also includes the autobiographical sections from the "Refutatio" in an appendix to "Les Perdants" (339–379). Further, he devotes a great deal of attention to the so-called "Journal" of Jean Le Comte, Caroli's friend and pastor in Grandson. While the "Journal" traditionally has been presented as the work of Le Comte himself, Bodenmann demonstrates that it was, in fact, ultimately the work of Le Comte's descendants, who altered the original account to make Le Comte fit more neatly into what had become the dominant Calvinist orthodoxy to which Jean Le Comte himself never belonged. One should note that Geneviève Gross came to the same conclusion in her 2012 doctoral thesis "Pratique du ministère et terrains d'activité de deux acteurs de la Réforme: Jean Reymond Merlin (1510–1578) et Jean Le Comte de la Croix (1500–1572)" (Université de Genève, pp. 255–297). It appears that Bodenmann and Gross each made this discovery completely independently of one another. The new information about Le Comte, together with the newly discovered text by Caroli, support Bodenmann's argument that Caroli was not an unbalanced, indecisive "lone wolf," solely responsible for the theological quarrels in the Suisse romande in the late 1530s and early 1540s. He had a different perspective on reform, and he had friends who supported that view against the Calvinists.

"Les Perdants" is not strictly speaking a biography, but Bodenmann takes a largely chronological approach to Caroli's life, beginning with his activities as part of the Meaux circle and his years in France. Throughout the book, he makes several important correctives to the traditional narrative of Caroli's life. Two are particularly significant, to this reviewer anyway. First, he dates the

breakdown in relations between Caroli and Farel to their time together in Geneva in 1535, rather than associating them with the later accusations of Arianism in 1537. Thus, if Caroli and Farel ever got along, it was for a matter of weeks at most. Caroli arrived in Geneva probably in April or May 1535. By the end of May, the two – and consequently their allies as well – were already bitterly opposed to one another. Thus, the next two, formative years of the Reformed Church in the Suisse romande must be understood with this sharp opposition between factions in mind. Second, he makes clear that Caroli's attempted return to Romandie in 1539 was far from the hopeless endeavor usually portrayed in the scholarship, underscoring the continuing lack of theological unity in the region a few years later. Far from constituting a united, Calvinist front, the pastors in the area were still deeply divided over issues of doctrine and practice. In this context, Caroli had good reason to believe he might win a second chance to spread his vision of church reform in the region.

“*Les Perdants*” is richly documented; Bodenmann cites original sources for nearly all of his information. It is also thick with details. As such, the book will be indispensable for any future scholar working on Caroli. It may, perhaps, be a bit too thick with details for the general reader. In addition, Bodenmann chose not to divide the book into chapters. There are different sections, but the absence of chapters makes for a long, single narrative, frequently interspersed with digressions to discuss thematic and tangential issues, as well as debates about factual details. This makes the book a difficult read in places. Sometimes adding to the difficulty, and a curious choice given the intended academic audience, quotations of sixteenth-century French are frequently interrupted with modern French equivalents in brackets. Most readers of this book will already be familiar with these archaic expressions; thus, in most cases, their insertion only distracts from the text itself. These critiques, however, do not detract from the important scholarly contribution Bodenmann has made with “*Les Perdants*.” The first truly balanced presentation of this important but much maligned figure of the early Francophone Reformation, the book also begins to point scholarship in an important new direction. For it is only by looking more closely at the losers in history that we can truly

understand both why the winners won and what was lost in their victory.

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Michael Baumann, Petrus Martyr Vermigli in Zürich (1556–1562): Dieser Kylchen in der heiligen gschrift professor und läser, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016 (Reformed Historical Theology 36), 457 S. – ISBN 978-3-525-55099-1.

Überblickt man die seit der Publikation von Joseph C. McLellands bahnbrechender Monografie »The Visible Words of God: An Exposition of the Sacramental Theology of Peter Martyr Vermigli« (1957) erschienene Forschungsliteratur über diese zentrale Gestalt der frühen reformierten Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte, so wird man zum einen rasch feststellen, dass die meisten Beiträge im angelsächsischen Kontext entstanden sind. Zum anderen handelt es sich bei den meisten Publikationen um nicht so sehr historisch, sondern theologiegeschichtlich ausgerichtete Untersuchungen, die im Allgemeinen der letzten Phase von Vermigli's Wirken in Zürich (1556–1562) nicht speziell Aufmerksamkeit schenken. Umso erfreulicher ist es, dass nun eine umfassende Studie in deutscher Sprache über Vermigli's Zürcher Jahre vorliegt, die zudem einen historischen mit einem theologiegeschichtlichen Ansatz überzeugend kombiniert.

Die Monografie – eine überarbeitete Fassung der 2010 vom Vf. an der Theologischen Fakultät in Zürich verteidigten Dissertation – gliedert sich in drei Teile. Der erste Teil rekonstruiert die Hintergründe, die 1556 zu Vermigli's Wahl als Professor an der *Schola Tigurina* führten, und legt detailliert Rechenschaft über die Bedingungen seiner Anstellung sowie über seine Lehrtätigkeit ab (71–117; 124–136). Geschildert werden ferner seine familiären Verhältnisse (117–124), seine Teilnahme am Religionsgespräch in Poissy (1561) und die Umstände seines Ablebens (136–150; 150–157). Der Vf. geht zudem ausführlich auf Vermigli's Korrespondenz ein, anhand derer sich sowohl die Beständigkeit des Kontakts zwischen dem Italiener und den Zürchern von 1542 bis 1556 als auch der Umfang seines eigenen, ab 1556 von Zürich aus ent-