Italian Reform and English Reformations, c.1535–c.1585

M. Anne Overell

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In loving memory of Alan Overell

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ASHGATE

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Series Editor's Preface

The still-usual emphasis on medieval (or Catholic) and reformation (or Protestant) religious history has meant neglect of the middle ground, both chronological and ideological. As a result, continuities between the middle ages and early modern Europe have been overlooked in favor of emphasis on radical discontinuities. Further, especially in the later period, the identification of 'reformation' with various kinds of Protestantism means that the vitality and creativity of the established church, whether in its Roman or local manifestations, has been left out of account. In the last few years, an upsurge of interest in the history of traditional (or catholic) religion makes these inadequacies in received scholarship even more glaring and in need of systematic correction. The series will attempt this by covering all varieties of religious behavior, broadly interpreted, not just (or even especially) traditional institutional and doctrinal church history. It will to the maximum degree possible be interdisciplinary, comparative and global, as well as non-confessional. The goal is to understand religion, primarily of the 'Catholic' variety, as a broadly human phenomenon, rather than as a privileged mode of access to superhuman realms, even implicitly.

The period covered, 1300–1700, embraces the moment which saw an almost complete transformation of the place of religion in the life of Europeans, whether considered as a system of beliefs, as an institution, or as a set of social and cultural practices. In 1300, vast numbers of Europeans, from the pope down, fully expected Jesus's return and the beginning of His reign on earth. By 1700, very few Europeans, of whatever level of education, would have subscribed to such chiliastic beliefs. Pierre Bayle's notorious sarcasms about signs and portents are not idiosyncratic. Likewise, in 1300 the vast majority of Europeans probably regarded the pope as their spiritual head; the institution he headed was probably the most tightly integrated and effective bureaucracy in Europe. Most Europeans were at least nominally Christian, and the pope had at least nominal knowledge of that fact. The papacy, as an institution, played a central role in high politics, and the clergy in general formed an integral part of most governments, whether central or local. By 1700, Europe was divided into a myriad of different religious allegiances, and even those areas officially subordinate to the pope were both more nominally Catholic in belief (despite colossal efforts at imposing uniformity) and also in allegiance than they had been four hundred years earlier. The pope had become only one political factor, and not one of the first rank. The clergy, for its part,

had virtually disappeared from secular governments as well as losing much of its local authority. The stage was set for the Enlightenment.

Thomas F. Mayer,
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Acknowledgements

Michaelmas 2007

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Abbreviations used in Text and Bibliography

(First references are given in full and the abbreviated form is used thereafter)

ARG	*Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*
AS	Archivio di Stato
CPEC	Thomas F. Mayer, *Cardinal Pole in European Context: a via media in the Reformation*
Cranmer, *Miscellaneous Writings*	Thomas Cranmer, *Miscellaneous Writings and Letters of Thomas Cranmer*, ed. J.E. Cox
Cranmer, *Writings and Disputations*	*Writings and Disputations of Thomas Cranmer relative to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*, ed. J.E. Cox
CRP	*The Correspondence of Reginald Pole*, ed. Thomas F. Mayer
CSP Foreign	*Calendar of State Papers, Foreign*, ed. W.H. Turnbull, et al.
CSP Spanish	*Calendar of State Papers, Spanish*, ed. P. de Gayangos et al.
CSP Venetian	*Calendar of State Papers, Venetian*, ed. Rawdon Brown
CSPDE	*Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, Reign of Edward VI, 1547–1553*, revised, ed. C.S. Knighton
CSPDM	*Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, Reign of Mary I, 1553–1558*, revised, ed. C.S. Knighton
DBI	*Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, ed. A.M. Ghisalberti
EHR	*English Historical Review*
Foxe, *AM* (1563)	John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments of these latter and perillous dayes* (1563)
Foxe, *AM* (1570)	John Foxe, *The ecclesiastical history contayning the actes and monumentes* (1570)
Gleanings	*Gleanings of a Few Scattered Ears during the Period of the Reformation in England*, ed. G. Gorham
HJ	*Historical Journal*
HRR	Emidio Campi and Frank James (eds), *Peter Martyr Vermigli: Humanism, Republicanism, Reformation*
JBS	*Journal of British Studies*

JEH	*Journal of Ecclesiastical History*
LLS	Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Life, Letters and Sermons*, trans. and ed. John Patrick Donnelly
LP	*Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, 1509–47*, ed. J.S. Brewer et al.
NS	New Series
ODNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison
OL	*Original Letters relative to the English Reformation*, ed. H. Robinson
Processi Carnesecchi	*I processi inquisitoriali di Pietro Carnesecchi*, ed. Massimo Firpo and Dario Marcatto
Processo Morone	*Il processo inquisitoriale del cardinal Giovanni Morone*, ed. Massimo Firpo and Dario Marcatto
PS	Parker Society
SCH	*Studies in Church History*
SCJ	*Sixteenth Century Journal*
STC	*Short Title Catalogue …1475–1640*, first compiled by A.W. Pollard and G.R. Redgrave, 2nd edn rev. and enlarged, ed. W.A. Jackson, F.S. Ferguson and Katharine F. Pantzer
STC Wing	*Short Title Catalogue …1641–1700*, compiled by Donald Wing
ZL	*The Zurich Letters*, ed. Hastings Robinson

Note on Citation, Spelling and Translation

Conventions for citation of contemporary correspondence vary from one collection to another. Therefore, for all letters I have given senders' and recipients' names and the date in full, but not place unless it is particularly significant. Letters in *Calendars of State Papers* appear with letter numbers (where possible) and page numbers. Collections of reformers' letters (e.g. *Gleanings*, *Original Letters* and *Zurich Letters*) appear with page numbers. For *The Correspondence of Reginald Pole* letter numbers are used. Original spelling is retained in quotations from English language sources. For quotations from languages other than English, the translation appears in the text and the original is given in the footnotes.

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Introduction

There was infinite variety in the experiments we call 'reform'. They could be bold or secretive, individual or communal, progressive or reactionary, 'catholic' or 'protestant'.[1] All over Europe there were faltering expressions, uncertain identities. Here we shall be connecting two of them: the Italian version was enigmatic, evasive and incomplete; the English, political, pragmatic, energetic and liable to pick up other people's ideas and run with them.

During the two short reigns of Edward VI and Mary Tudor, several reformers came from Italy to England. In 1547, in the months after the accession of the young King, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, a great internationalist, invited foreign gurus to come to foster a bolder reformation. Two Italians, 'Peter Martyr' Vermigli and Bernardino Ochino, were the first to arrive.[2] The generosity with which they were received caused comment all over Europe: generous travel expenses, prestigious jobs, hospitality at Lambeth Palace, congregations which included the great and the good of Edwardian England. It was an entry *con brio*.

Seven years later, the catholic Mary Tudor welcomed Cardinal Reginald Pole, English by birth, but intimately involved with reform in Italy, to lead his native country back to papal allegiance. Pole brought with him a group of like-minded men, most of them influenced by Italian reform during their own salad days and together they attempted reform of the English Church. On the accession of Elizabeth I, as the tables turned again, there was further clamour to 'bring back Italians'. This strange sequence was part of an Anglo-Italian connection that spanned three reigns and echoed through the literature of the centuries that followed.

The movement *in* Italy has been characterised as 'a micro-history of defeat', persecuted, and crushed by the 1580s.[3] By then, however, contemporaries in England had become familiar with it. During the 1520s and 1530s English travellers went to Italy, primarily to study, but some also witnessed the first stirrings of reform. Then, the persecutions of mid-

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[1]   Peter Marshall and Alec Ryrie, 'Introduction: Protestantisms and their Beginnings', in ibid. (eds), *The Beginnings of English Protestantism* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 1–13.

[2]   Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (New Haven and London, 1996), pp. 380–83, 394–5, 501; ibid., 'Archbishop Cranmer: Concord and Tolerance in a Changing Church', in Ole Grell and Bob Scribner (eds), *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 199–215.

[3]   Silvana Seidel Menchi, 'Italy' in Bob Scribner, Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich (eds), *The Reformation in National Context* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 181–200 (pp. 181–2).

sixteenth century Europe brought about a series of migrations between the two countries. All these journeys, whether undertaken in hope or fear, created friendships and contacts. Gradually even stay-at-homes became more aware, as scores of translations were made available and a whole cast of Italians entered England's 'Book of Martyrs', written by that committed European, John Foxe.[4]

This connection started in the early sixteenth century when the division and categorisation of Christians was unfamiliar, for many unthinkable. Early contact with the ideas of Luther (from about 1520) did not make Italian reformers into 'protestants'. Later generations have used this confessional shorthand but it would have been meaningless to most contemporaries. In the 1540s some of those attracted to reform decided to stay in Italy, preferring loyalty to the Church, while others fled to lands where reform had taken a stronger hold – including England. Some Italian exiles fitted in well, others remained radicals and misfits in their places of refuge. We shall be concerned with them all: those who stayed and those who fled, confused and convinced, mainstream and radical. From about 1540, the word '*spirituali*' (the spiritual, unworldly ones) came into regular use as a description for Italy's reformers, but it is anachronistic for earlier decades.[5] Despite making different choices later in life, these Italians started out with a wish to reform – both the Church and their own personal faith. They began as reformers and that is what they will be called here – though '*spirituali*' will also be used for the years after 1540.

Where it is necessary to distinguish reformers-who-became-protestants from reformers-who-remained-catholics, I shall specify. But I shall try to avoid using the words 'catholic' and 'protestant' for the period before 1550, on the grounds that these divisions had not come into existence. After the middle of the century, I shall allow those terms to creep in, because around then they came gradually into use, along with all the subdivisions: Evangelical, Reformed and so forth.[6] Reluctantly and wistfully, after about 1560, English and Italian contemporaries accepted that, despite many

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[4]   John Foxe, *The ecclesiastical history contayning the actes and monumentes* (London: John Day, 1570), *STC* 11223 (hereafter cited as *AM* (1570)), book 7, pp. 1068–73; ibid. book 9, pp. 1552–5.

[5]   On the use of this term, see Adriano Prosperi, *Tra evangelismo e controriforma, G.M. Giberti (1495–1543)* (Rome, 1969), pp. 285–6, 314–15; Stephen Bowd, *Reform before the Reformation: Vincenzo Querini and the Religious Renaissance in Italy* (Leiden, 2002), pp. 144–5, 219–20.

[6]   'Evangelical' is a good word for many European non-catholic reformers in the first half of the century but, because 'Evangelism' has caused much controversy among Italian scholars, I have avoided using both terms. For 'Evangelicals' in the rest of Europe, see Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided, 1490–1700* (London and New York, 2003), pp. xx; 353.

attempts at reconciliation, the divisions of Western Christendom could not be wiped away.

'Reform' and 'reformation' also present problems. Reform in Italy was theologically untidy, crammed with paradox. Most adherents thought they were saved by God and by their faith in God, though many shied away from hard-edged doctrines of salvation. They rediscovered the Scriptures with joy, either through reading or listening, and they wanted to see the end of obvious abuses in the Church. They talked about '*reformatio*' by which they usually meant the process of purification, of church and individuals. Yet they lacked the support from secular rulers that proved so vital elsewhere and instead survived in groups with no recognisable organisation and no formal statements of doctrine.[7] Therefore, to suggest that there was ever an 'Italian Reformation' goes a step too far. I shall stick to 'Italian reform', which seems to suit this un-organised, un-institutional phenomenon. By contrast, reformers in England gained spasmodic royal support, agreed on some hazy (and changeable) doctrines and made some rules.[8] By the middle of the century these imperfect arrangements were good enough to qualify as a proper 'English Reformation'. Yet very little of it was original. The English were exceptionally good at copying other European reforms and 'headhunting' their leaders. That is how the connection began.

It is easy to think that European influence on England came in orderly, separate waves, first Lutheran and later Swiss, then Calvinist, with Mary Tudor's Spanish and Italian advisers washed up in 1554 to provide a brief papalist interlude. But Tudor Englishmen could not foresee which groups would emerge as 'influential' and so they found doctrines and role models on a random basis, picking up ideas and contacts in the ordinary course of their travels and their reading. Especially in the first half of the century, influences were extraordinarily eclectic and pan-European.[9] Their variety imparted vibrant eccentricity, together with a capacity to experiment, absorb, discriminate and reconsider. Thus, all the various sources of English 'borrowing' are important, especially those which historians tend to overlook through hindsight. If Italy seems an unlikely source of reform influence, that is because it *became* associated with reaction – but that was later, another story. Before 1550, English contemporaries found this brand

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[7] For introductions, see Dermot Fenlon, *Heresy and Obedience in Tridentine Italy; Cardinal Pole and the counter reformation* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 1–23; Euan Cameron, 'Italy', in Andrew Pettegree (ed.), *The Early Reformation in Europe* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 188–214; Seidel Menchi, 'Italy', pp. 181–200. On Italy's 'Reformation of doubt', ibid., *Erasmo in Italia: 1520–1580* (Turin, 1987), p. 269.

[8] Alec Ryrie, *The Gospel and Henry VIII* (Cambridge, 2003).

[9] For the breathtaking range, see MacCulloch's *Reformation*.

of reform all the more interesting because it had developed in the Pope's back garden and involved his most senior staff.

Reforms in Italy and England were both derivative, which may help explain their mutual attraction. There are some threads in the weave of Italian reform which look indigenous, authentically 'Italian', but the border with Germany and Switzerland was near and the book trade was very brisk, especially around Venice. From 1525, books written by reformers were banned and consequently printers were up to all the tricks of the trade, altering authors' names and titles or binding suspect material together with other impeccably 'spiritual' books. They invented soothing titles, often including confidence-building adjectives like '*pio*' and '*Christiano*'.[10] That wildly controversial book, *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, packed with extracts from the works of Northern Reformers, was described as '*utilissimo*'.[11] Thus, Italians saw reform through a glass darkly and many did not make careful distinctions between Erasmus and Luther or, later, between Luther and Calvin.[12] There was a disposition to hope that disagreements would be resolved and, above all, a wish to keep the peace in close-knit civic society.[13] It is worth remembering that in England doctrines were often equally hazy, oscillating in accordance with the whims of King Henry VIII. Many kept their counsel and hoped that the King or the Pope would see the light.[14] In both countries doctrinal mists cleared very slowly – in most cases long after rulers, reformers and then the Council of Trent issued their various brittle statements of doctrine.[15]

Some looked back wistfully on the first three decades of the century as a time of happy doctrinal free-for-all.[16] Most of the Italian and English reformers who appear in our early chapters were students at that time;

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[10]   Ugo Rozzo and Silvana Seidel Menchi, 'The Book and the Reformation in Italy', in J.-F. Gilmont (ed.), *The Reformation and the Book*, trans. by Karin Maag (Aldershot and Brookfield, 1998), pp. 319–67 (p. 332).

[11]   *Trattato utilissimo del Beneficio di Cristo* (Venice, 1543). This and other sixteenth-century publications of the *Beneficio* in all European languages have been printed together in Benedetto da Mantova, *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, ed. S. Caponetto (Florence, 1972) (hereafter cited as Caponetto, *Beneficio*).

[12]   Seidel Menchi, *Erasmo in Italia*; Fenlon, *Heresy and Obedience*, p. 76.

[13]   Paul Murphy, 'Between *spirituali* and *intransigenti*; Cardinal Ercole Gonzaga and Patrician Reform in Sixteenth Century Italy', *Catholic Historical Review*, 88 (2002), 446–69.

[14]   Andrew Pettegree, 'Nicodemism and the English Reformation', in ibid., *Marian Protestantism: Six Studies* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 86–117; Ryrie, *The Gospel and Henry VIII*, pp. 3, 39–44.

[15]   A.D. Wright, 'The Significance of the Council of Trent', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* (hereafter cited as *JEH*), 26 (1975), 353–62.

[16]   Massimo Firpo and Dario Marcatto, *Il processo inquisitoriale del cardinal Giovanni Morone* (6 vols, Rome, 1981–96) (hereafter cited as *Processo Morone*), vol. 2, p. 465.

they were formed in and deeply affected by all this doctrinal uncertainty. That may explain the noticeable English tolerance of the variety of Italian doctrine and behaviour. Italian books found English publishers with ease and only one editor dared criticise – and even he was very tentative.[17] A revival of Italian literature in the middle of Elizabeth I's reign included some material which would have been considered unorthodox by both 'catholics' and 'protestants'.[18] Similar long-suffering acceptance was evident in relations with the 'church' set up in 1547 for Italian strangers in London. The love-hate relationship between the English reformers and the 'Stranger Churches' in general was more pronounced in the case of the Italians, partly because of several sexual scandals and bitter internal quarrels.[19]

Humanism

Italians and Englishmen shared the 'highs' and 'lows' of the generation that lived through the start of confessional strife. In both cultures, humanism has to be counted among the 'highs', the heady excitements of the age. (Religious persecution was among the worst of its miseries: we shall deal with that in the next section.) Nicholas Mann defined the slippery word humanism as a 'concern with the legacy of antiquity', an antiquity partly located in Italy and certainly rediscovered there. The main interest of humanists was classical texts and the Latin language, but 'encoded in the fibre of the language' they found a powerful morality.[20] This had its own dynamic, firing debate in other important areas of life: government, law, education and – above all, in all – religion. In both Italy and England, humanism supplied context, vehicle and motive for religious reform.

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[17]   Editor's marginals, Sermon 3, Bernardino Ochino, *Fouretene Sermons … concernyng the predestinacion and eleccion of god tr. out of Italian into oure natyve tounge* ([London]: John Day and William Seres [1551?]), *STC* 18767, sigs B vi–vii.

[18]   M.A. Overell, 'Bernardino Ochino's Books and English Religious Opinion: 1547–1580', in Robert Swanson (ed.), *The Church and the Book*, *Studies in Church History*, 38 (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 201–11 (p. 210).

[19]   L. Firpo, 'La comunità evangelica italiana a Londra nel XVI secolo ed suoi rapporti con Ginevra', in D. Cantimori, L. Firpo et al. (eds), *Ginevra e l'Italia* (Florence, 1959), pp. 309–411; O. Boersma and A.J. Jelsma (eds), *Unity in Multiformity: the Minutes of the Coetus of London, 1575 and the Consistory Minutes of the Italian Church of London, 1570–1591*, Huguenot Society of Great Britain and Ireland (London and Amsterdam, 1997), pp. 21–51; Andrew Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth Century London* (Oxford, 1986).

[20]   Nicholas Mann, 'The Origins of Humanism', in Jill Kraye (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 1–19 (p. 2); Ronald Witt, '*In the Footsteps of the Ancients*': *the Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni* (Leiden, 2000), p. 506.