

APPENDIX I

‘*VERMILIUS ABSCONDITUS*’: THE ZURICH PORTRAIT*

In 1560, at the pinnacle of his distinguished and varied career as a reformed theologian and biblical scholar, Peter Martyr Vermigli sat to have his portrait painted in Zurich. The painting now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in London. The presence of Vermigli’s likeness in the Gallery stands as testimony to his distinction as the first protestant reformer to occupy the Regius Chair of Divinity in the University of Oxford. While the portrait is unsigned, the evidence suggests strongly that Hans Asper (1499–1572), the leading portrait-painter of mid-sixteenth-century Zurich, was the artist.¹ Asper’s authorship has not stood unchallenged. In his catalogue of the Gallery’s Tudor and Jacobean portraits, Roy Strong refrains from ascribing the painting of Vermigli to Asper and characterizes the piece as of “workshop quality, perhaps once part of a set of reformers.”² More recently, however, Asper’s title to authorship has been reaffirmed by Marianne Naegeli, Urs Hobi and their collaborators in a thorough and scholarly survey of Asper’s paintings. In their catalogue to an exhibit of art in Zurich after the Reformation held in 1981, the iconography of the Vermigli portrait proves to be decisive in establishing authorship.³ In

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¹ In the judgement of Walter Hugelshofer “ohne jeden Zweifel ist Asper der Urheber.” See *Zwingliana*, vol. 3 no. 1 (1930), 128. See also Hugelshofer, *Die Zürcher Malerei der Spätgotik: Mitteilungen der Antiquarischen Gesellschaft in Zürich* 30, Heft 5 (Zürich: Leemann, 1928/29), 102.

² *Tudor and Jacobean Portraits* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1969), NPG 195 (Pl. 635), 319, 320. Strong notes that the portrait of Vermigli was purchased for the NPG in 1865 from one John L. Rutley and that its previous history is unknown. A copy of the portrait hangs in the current lodgings of the Regius Professor of Divinity in Tom Quad, Christ Church, Oxford.

³ Marianne Naegeli, Urs Hobi, with the collaboration of Bernhard Anderes, Hans Christoph von Tavel and Katherina Vatsella, *Zürcher Kunst nach der Reformation: Hans*

the course of his career as *Stadtmaler* of Zurich Asper painted as many as thirty known portraits of leading personalities of the city. Perhaps the most famous is his small portrait of Huldrych Zwingli, painted shortly before the reformer's death on the field at Kappel in 1531.⁴ It has often been observed that Asper's portraits show a marked similarity of style to those of Hans Holbein the younger.⁵ The portrait of Vermigli resembles the others in this respect as well. Dated 1560, the painting exhibits a remarkable iconographical resemblance to a series of portraits painted by Asper during the previous decade. In a letter to Rudolph Gualter dated 4 March 1550, a young Englishman named Christopher Hales commissioned six portraits of prominent Zurich reformers: "I request you, my dear Rodolph, to procure your Apelles to paint for me the following portraits, those namely of Zuinglius, [Konrad] Pellican, Theodore [Bibliander], master [Heinrich] Bullinger, and yourself ... And if the artist can paint a good likeness of Oecolampadius, I would have it in addition to the other five."⁶ Hales does not mention Asper by name in his correspondence but refers to the artist once as "your Apelles" and again as "your Zeuxis," references to notable Greek painters of the 4th century BCE.⁷ Between September 1549 and

Asper und seine Zeit: Katalog zur Ausstellung im Helmhaus, Zürich, 9. Mai bis 28. Juni 1981 (Zürich: Schweizerisches Institut für Kunstwissenschaft, 1981). The exhibition was organised by the Präsidialabteilung der Stadt Zürich and the Schweizerisches Institut für Kunstwissenschaft. The portrait of Vermigli is reproduced in "Katalog" nr. 31, 68, 69.

⁴ This painting hangs in the Kunstmuseum, Winterthur, Inv.-Nr. 133. See "Katalog," *Zürcher Kunst nach der Reformation*, nr. 3, 46. For an account of Hans Asper's career as *Stadtmaler* of Zurich, see "Katalog," 45, 46.

⁵ Concerning the probable influence of Holbein on Asper see Hugelshofer, *Die Zürcher Malerei der Spätgotik*, 90. According to Lucas Wüthrick in "Die Zürcher Malerei im 16. Jahrhundert," *Zürcher Kunst nach der Reformation*, 10: "Daß Asper Zugang zu Porträts von Holbein hatte, muß als sicher angenommen werden, denn seine Abhängigkeit von solchen ist offensichtlich." Whether Asper actually studied the art of portraiture with Holbein is not known with any certainty. It is supposed that he was apprenticed to Hans Leu the younger (1490–1531) in Zurich.

⁶ Hastings Robinson, editor, *Original Letters Relative to the English Reformation Written during the Reigns of King Henry VIII, King Edward VI, and Queen Mary: Chiefly from the Archives of Zurich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the Parker Society, 1846), 184–186; cited hereafter as *OL*. See also *Zürcher Kunst nach der Reformation*, 13, 64 and Paul Boesch, *Die Wiler Glasmaler und ihr Werk. Reihe: Neujahrsblatt / Historischer Verein des Kantons St. Gallen*; 89 (Wil: Gegenbauer, 1949), 21. Oecolampadius died on 18 December 1531.

⁷ Pliny dates Apelles of Colophon at c. 332 BCE on account of his famous portrait of Alexander the Great with the thunderbolt. Ernst Pfuhl, *Malerei und Zeichnung der Griechen* (München: F. Bruckmann a. g., 1923), 801; see T.B.L. Webster's entry in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 79. See also *OL*,