

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

VERMIGLI AND FRENCH REFORM

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INTRODUCTION¹

As part of his eight book history of the birth, progress, and decadence of heresy in his century, Florimond de Raemond, the catholic apologist, had to take up the history of Peter ‘Vermilly’ known by his supporters as Peter ‘Martyr’.² In writing his history De Raemond had a clear apologetic goal—to discredit Protestant heresy in France. One of the figures he needed to discredit was this heretical monk who was actually no martyr at all. Rather, he was fickle and morally repugnant. De Raemond notes that Vermigli was never able to keep a steady job or theology. He continually ran into problems with his employers and changed his Eucharistic theology at will.³ Such was typical of a man who was too curious and full of uncertainty. Martyr did not respect the importance of true orthodoxy, and too easily found licence to change that which had always been received by the church. In any case, he showed his true colours by giving into the lusts of the flesh and marrying a former nun, twice!⁴ De Raemond speculates that these nuns were no doubt important to comfort him during his long nights of hard work.⁵

De Raemond was not alone in his critique of the legacy of Martyr. In fact, a number of French Catholic apologists found it necessary to critique Martyr specifically. Noel Talepiéd wrote with Jerome Bolsec (who wrote about the scandalous life of Calvin) a refutation of the work of the four major heretical theologians of their time—Luther, Karlstadt,

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² Florimond de Raemond, *l'histoire de la naissance, progresz et decadence de l'heresie de ce siecle*, vol. 1 (Rouen: Estienne Vereul, 1618), 296.

³ de Raemond, *l'Histoire*, 296.

⁴ de Raemond, *l'Histoire*, 296.

⁵ de Raemond, *l'Histoire*, 297.

Calvin, and Peter Martyr.⁶ Interestingly, his knowledge of Vermigli is based largely on the introduction to the French translation of the *Dialogue*—translated, he writes, by one of Vermigli’s ‘sect’.⁷ (Ironically, the translator, Claude de Kerquefinen, was probably by this time again a Catholic). Talepied argues that Vermigli’s pride in rejecting Catholic doctrine led to his nomadic life. ‘God,’ writes Talepied about Vermigli and his fellow heretic Ochino, ‘gives grace to the humble and brings down the proud.’⁸

A final example of Vermigli’s legacy is the late 17th century battle between Louis Maimbourg and Pierre Jurieu. In 1682 Louis Maimbourg, a disgraced Jesuit priest wanting to rebuild his reputation, wrote his pocket-sized *Histoire du Calvinisme* in which he traced the rise and proliferation of the Protestant sects in France and Europe.⁹ In his work he clearly criticised the work of Vermigli at the Colloquy of Poissy. Vermigli was well-educated, writes Maimbourg, but had a light and changeable spirit on anything dealing with religion—hence, his role at the Colloquy was a total failure.¹⁰

Maimbourg’s analysis is interesting, but more important for the present study is the way in which Vermigli’s memory was still alive among the French Protestant leaders. One year later, Pierre Jurieu took up his pen to defend point by point the criticisms of Maimbourg.¹¹ Martyr was not immoderate or an apostate, but rather a model to follow—

⁶ P.F. Noel Talepied and Hierosme Hermes Bolsec, *Histoire des Vies, Meurs, Actes, Doctrine, et Mord de Quatres, Principaux Heretiques de nostre Temps, à sçavoir Martin Luther, André Carlostad, Pierre Martyr, and Jean Calvin, Iadis ministre de Genève* (Paris: Jean Parant, 1577). See also Irena Backus, *Life Writing in Reformation Europe* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 65–78.

⁷ ‘Pierre Martyr Italien, natif de Florence (selon que j’ay trouvé en un liure intitulé, *Dialogue des deux natures de Christ*, translaté en François par un de sa secte)...’ Talepied, *Histoire*, 15.

⁸ Talepied, *Histoire*, 18.

⁹ Louis Maimbourg, *Histoire du Calvinisme*, dernière ed. suivant la Copie imprimé (Paris: Sebastien Mabre-Cramois Imprimeur du roy, rue Saint Jacques, aux Cicognes, 1682).

¹⁰ ‘homme docte à la verité, et grand Prédicateur, mais d’un esprit si peu arresté si leger et si changeant, sur tout en matiere de créance, qu’il estoit tantost Lutherin, tantost Calviniste, et puis Zuinglin, comme il l’estoit alors à Zurich où il enseignoit la Theologie à la Zuinglienne, et d’où la reine Catherine et le Roy de Navarre le firent venir, l’ayant obtenu des Magistrats de ce Canton, comme un homme d’un sçavoir extraordinaire pour assister à ce Colloque.’ Maimbourg, *Histoire du Calvinisme*, 216.

¹¹ Pierre Jurieu, *Histoire du Calvinisme et celle du Papisme mises en Parallele: ou Apologie pour les Reformateurs, pour la Reformation, et pour les Reforme; Divisée en Quatre Parties: Contre le Libelle intitulé l’Histoire du Calvinisme Par Mr. Maimbourg* (Rotterdam: Reinier Leers, 1683).