

The death of Antonio Rotondò in 2007 was a major loss for the world of scholarship. His contribution to ecclesiastical and intellectual history was immense. In addition to his own achievements as a historian he was an inspiring teacher, and the two series which he founded with Olschki in Florence, ‘Studi e testi per la storia religiosa del Cinquecento’ and ‘Studi e testi per la storia della tolleranza in Europa nei secoli XVI–XVIII,’ are enduring testimonies to the uniformly high standard observed by many of his pupils. It is consequently most appropriate that these two posthumous publications, *Studi di storia ereticale del Cinquecento* and *Riforme e utopie nel pensiero politico toscano del Settecento*, the first largely prepared, and the second entirely edited, by his widow, Miriam Michelini Rotondò, should have appeared respectively in the two series.

The two volumes of *Studi di storia ereticale del Cinquecento* contain thirteen articles, eight of which appeared in Rotondò’s *Studi e ricerche di storia ereticale italiana del Cinquecento* (1974) and the others in various journals and collections. They are preceded by his ‘Contributo alla storia dei miei studi: note non solo autobiografiche,’ in which he reconstructs his own intellectual itinerary. He writes about early influences, such as that of the classicist Gior-gio Pasquali, who, combining philology with history, determined the direction Rotondò’s own work would take. And he dwells on his long association with the University of Florence, where he benefited not only from the teaching of Pasquali, but also from the lectures on humanism of Eugenio Garin and those on ecclesiastical history of Delio Cantimori. As a professor at the university himself, he carried on the same tradition sustained to this day by his younger colleagues.

The first of the articles in *Studi di storia ereticale del Cinquecento* is an extensive review of G.H. Williams’s *Radical Reformation*. Despite his respect for Williams, as well as their friendship, Rotondò tempers his praise of the book with certain criticisms. He regrets, in particular, Williams’s schematic and inadequate treatment of the Italian dissidents, his oversimplification of the phenomenon of Nicodemism, and his overestimation of the importance of the Waldensian tradition in Italy. And it is on these very points that Rotondò
concentrates in the rest of his book, carefully avoiding the somewhat brutal categorisation foisted on the ‘radical reformers’ by Williams, studying them case by case with an exceptional sensitivity to their peculiarities, the subtle differences in their outlooks, their complex relations not only with one another but also with the leaders of the various Protestant Churches, and, when it comes to Nicodemism, the numerous options with which they were faced and the many different ways in which they coped with them.

The longest article in the collection, ‘Anticristo e chiesa romana: diffusione e metamorfosi d’un libello antiromano del Cinquecento,’ opens with a discussion of the fluctuating attitudes to Antichrist to be found in Protestant circles, from Luther’s gradual acceptance that Antichrist was the pope, to Bibliander’s association of Antichrist with the Turk or the Holy Roman Emperor. The ‘libello antiromano’ is the anonymous Liber generationis desolatoris Antichristi, enthusiastically propagated by Celio Secondo Curione in his Pasquino in estasi written in the early 1540s. Rotondò devotes particular attention to the circulation of the Liber generationis among the dissident communities in Modena and Bologna, and it was in his ‘Per la storia dell’eresia a Bologna nel secolo XV,’ the third chapter of Studi di storia ereticale del Cinquecento, first published in 1962, that Rotondò made an early and fundamental contribution to the study of Protestantism in Italy.

Many of the Italian ‘heretics’ studied by Rotondò in the course of his career were forced into exile. Three of the pieces in Studi di storia ereticale del Cinquecento are devoted to the Antitrinitarians—to Calvin’s growing resentment of them after the execution of Servetus, their consequent diaspora, the circulation of the writings of Lelio Sozzini (which Rotondò edited), and the ‘crisis of Italian Antitrinitarianism’ in the 1570s after Biandrata’s debate with Johann Sommer. And then there is the role of Basel in the hospitable reception of dissidents in exile. Rotondò has an essay on Francesco Pucci in Basel (as well as one on Pucci in England), a fascinating piece on Pietro Perna, the Italian printer in Basel whose editions of the writings of Castellion, magical texts, and works by Paracelsus, had a major impact at the time, and an article on Telesio’s disciple Agostino Doni, who arrived in Basel in 1579. But Rotondò does not limit himself to Italians. Another visitor in Basel whom he deals with is Guillaume Postel. Rotondò examines the initially favourable reactions of such men as Bibliander and Pellikan, who had looked forward to an intellectual collaboration with him, and their ultimate disappointment when, after reading Postel’s notes to the Zohar, they grew aware of his own messianic claims and his syncretistic ideas of a reformed Church which they could not possibly share.