

Basel: Curione, Castellio and the printers

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Basel offered something that neither Zurich nor Geneva could match: a university and a printing industry with a European market. Curione, after a period as head of a school in Lausanne obtained for him by Bullinger, was appointed professor of eloquence at the University of Basel in 1547 and remained there until his death on 24 December 1569.¹ In 1554 he published *De amplitudine beati regni Dei*, which argued that the number of the saved was much larger than most theologians supposed, and which appeared under the imprint of the press at Poschiavo in the Grisons. With Sebastian Castellio he contributed to the anthology on the persecution of heretics that the Basel humanists issued in 1554 in response to the execution of Servetus in Geneva. Curione's views brought him into conflict with Vermigli, Zanchi and Bullinger, but he kept his chair in Basel.²

Basel's tolerance had limits, and Curione's position depended on the protection of the university and the city council. It was nevertheless broader than that of Zurich or Geneva. Basel thus became the place where the more independent minds of the Italian diaspora could publish. For the Locarnese, Basel was the city where Taddeo Duno had studied medicine in the 1540s and where Ochino was living when the Locarnese called him in 1555.³ Some Locarnese families or members settled there after 1555.

1 The Grisons: Chiavenna, Poschiavo and the Valtellina

The closest refuge for Italian Protestants, and the one with the most direct link to Locarno, lay in the Italian-speaking valleys of the Grisons and in the Grisons' subject lands of Chiavenna, Bormio and the Valtellina, which the Three Leagues had occupied in 1512.⁴ Under the Ilanz articles, the communes of the Grisons chose their own pastors. By 1550 Reformed congregations existed in Poschiavo, Mesocco, the Bregaglia and the Upper Engadin.⁵ Vergerio served as pastor at Vicosoprano in the Bregaglia from 1550 to 1553. A printing press was established at Poschiavo in 1549, which

Campi attributes to the printer Dolfino Landolfi.⁶ Schaff, following the older literature, counts about 200 Italian refugees in the Grisons in 1550 and 800 before 1559, a quarter or a fifth of them educated men.

In the subject lands the Grisons faced the same problem as the Confederates in Locarno: a Catholic population, a Reformed minority and a sovereign divided by confession. They chose a different solution. A decree of 1557 introduced confessional coexistence with protection for the minority in the subject territories, which allowed communes with both confessions.⁷ Chiavenna became the main Italian Reformed centre south of the Alps. Girolamo Zanchi, born at Alzano near Bergamo in 1516, a former Augustinian canon who had heard Vermigli lecture in Lucca and who had taught at Strasbourg, was pastor of the Reformed church of Chiavenna from 1563 until he accepted a chair at Heidelberg in 1568.⁸ The Italian Reformed of the Valtellina also debated catechisms and doctrine among themselves, as the dispute of 1553 between Vergerio and Agostino Mainardi over a catechism for the Valtellina shows.⁹

The Grisons model of coexistence did not survive the confessional wars of the seventeenth century. Between 19 and 23 July 1620, armed Catholic bands supported by Spain killed hundreds of Protestants in the Valtellina between Tirano and Morbegno, in the massacre known as the *Sacro Macello*.¹⁰ The *Capitolato* of Milan of 1639, which Chapter A.IV discusses as a commercial treaty, confirmed the exclusion of Protestant worship from the Valtellina while permitting a continued Protestant presence in the county of Chiavenna.¹¹ Many of the Valtellina refugees went to the Grisons and to Zurich, where their descendants joined the Locarnese families in the silk trade.

2 Notes

1. Hughes, "Celio Secondo Curione" (above) (Lausanne post obtained by Bullinger; professor of eloquence at Basel from 1547; died 24 December 1569; contribution with Castellio to *Should Heretics be Persecuted?*, 1554); Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. VIII, § 130, "Caelius Secundus Curio", <https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/hcc8.iv.xv.xiii.html> (De amplitudine beati regni Dei dialogi II, Poschiavo, 1554). ↩
2. Schaff, § 130 (above). ↩
3. Crivelli, "Duno, Taddeo" (above); Gotor, "Ochino, Bernardino" (above). ↩
4. Chapter A.II; HLS, "Veltlin"; "Chiavenna (Grafschaft)". ↩
5. Atlas Graubünden, "Konfessionen" (above). ↩

6. Schaff, § 38 (above) (Vergerio at Vicosoprano 1550–1553; "a printing-press in Poschiavo in 1549"); Campi, "Lutero e la Riforma a Sud delle Alpi" (above) ("Lo stampatore Dolfen Landolfi decise di aprire nel 1549 una tipografia in Val Poschiavo"). ↩
7. Atlas Graubünden, "Konfessionen" (above). ↩
8. "Girolamo Zanchi", Wikipedia (English), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Girolamo_Zanchi (born 2 February 1516; Lucca and Vermigli; Strasbourg; Chiavenna 1563–1568; Heidelberg 1568; died 19 November 1590). Schaff, § 130 (above), records that Curione was Zanchi's father-in-law. ↩
9. Federico Zuliani, "I contrasti tra Vergerio e Mainardo circa un catechismo riformato per la Valtellina (1553)", *Rivista di storia della Chiesa in Italia* (Vita e Pensiero, 2015), catalogue entry at <https://storiadellachiesainitalia.vitaepensiero.it/> Content of the article. ↩
10. Radiotelevisione svizzera (RSI), "Sacro Macello, una strage annunciata", 19 September 2020, <https://www.rsi.ch/archivi/Sacro-Macello-una-strage-annunciata--2096637.html>. ↩
11. Atlas Graubünden, "Konfessionen" (above). The movement of Valtellina refugees to Zurich and their role in the silk trade are developed in Chapter B.II. ↩

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