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978-0-521-47222-7 - Voracious Idols and Violent Hands: Iconoclasm in Reformation
Zurich, Strasbourg, and Basel

Lee Palmer Wandel

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This book takes up iconoclasm, that mode by which hundreds of ordinary people entered into “Reformation,” in three important towns of the 1520s. It seeks to recover the agency of ordinary people in Reformation and to discern their theology in their acts. In part, its purpose is to suggest ways of excavating the meaning of the acts of those who did not have access to more protected and fixed forms of communication – that is, printed texts and images. In part, it illuminates the meaning of images for ordinary Christians in the sixteenth century.

Voracious Idols and Violent Hands posits a vision of “Reformation” as a dialogue in which different persons “spoke” through different forms, according to their education and social and political place. Each brought his or her vision of true Christianity to that dialogue, and articulated that vision in the cultural form he or she found most accessible: theologians in sermons and treatises, magistrates in laws and their enforcement, and ordinary people – the focus of this volume – in acts.

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Acknowledgments

Over a decade ago, over raspberries in Tübingen, Bob Scribner and I puzzled over the connection, so explicit in Zurich, between images and the poor. In 1986, he invited me to talk about the “sociology of iconoclasm” at the Wolfenbütteler Arbeitsgespräch, “Bilder und Bildersturm im Spätmittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit,” which he and Martin Warnke directed. As I listened more closely to the words, attended more carefully to the acts of Lorentz Meyger, Lorentz Hochrütiner, Claus Hottinger, Hans Ockenfuß, and other Zurich iconoclasts, I realized that these acts and words did not fit comfortably into the explanations that had been offered to date. Thus this book has its origin in two different sorts of conversations, one with a friend, in joyous moments of playful thinking, one with those long dead, who resisted conclusion, closure, and who continued to demand to be heard.

The generosity of institutions has enabled me to reconstruct the iconoclasts’ speaking. Libraries and archives gave me access to those documents that are the bedrock of this study: I am grateful to the staffs of the Stadtarchiv Zürich, in particular Thomas Schärli, and of the Staatsarchiv Basel for facilitating my research, conducted under the constraints of time American scholars know so well, curtailed by the impatience of an 18-month-old; one could not ask for greater help in the pursuit of fragments of stories, pieces of puzzles that had not yet taken shape. I join all the American scholars of Strasbourg in my special gratitude to Monsieur Fuchs of the Strasbourg Municipal Archives; I, too, benefited from his profound knowledge of the archives, his learn-

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ing, and his extraordinary hospitality. The staffs of Green Library at Stanford University and of the Sterling Memorial Library at Yale University tirelessly purchased or found books for me, no matter how obscure or minimal the reference. I am grateful to the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale University, and in particular Vincent Giroud, Curator of Modern Books and Manuscripts, for the reproductions of the maps of the three cities. So, too, various institutions have provided the funding that makes such research possible. Stanford University provided some of the funding for the research on iconoclasm in Zurich. At Yale University, a Morse Faculty Fellowship provided a year for writing, and a Griswold Research Fellowship enabled a summer's research. The book was published with the assistance of the Frederick W. Hilles Publications Fund of Yale University.

The answers posed by this book have been forged in dialogues with books and with many friends, colleagues, and students. The Herzog August Bibliothek, and in particular, Dr. Sabine Solf, graciously enabled a group of us to talk about images and iconoclasm intensively for four days in the lovely setting of the library and its town. There Margaret Aston, Eamon Duffy, and Ivan Gaskell shared with me the findings of their own research, some of which each has subsequently published. In Zurich and Wolfenbüttel, Peter Jezler and Christine Göttler generously shared their research on iconoclasm in Zürich and the meaning of images to sixteenth-century laypersons.

It is a particular pleasure to acknowledge those longer-standing conversations that one has with friends. Bob Scribner was also one of the readers for Cambridge University Press; his insights, criticisms, and encouragements have strengthened this book in many ways. One hopes for such a broad vision in a reader. I am also indebted to the anonymous second reader for Cambridge, whose careful reading disclosed opacities in my argument or in my prose, places where I was needlessly confusing, or even misleading, and who led me to give the discussion of theologians' positions on images greater prominence. The discerning reader will hear echoes of conversations with Hans-Christoph Rublack, whose work on idiosyncratic Lutheran pastors and laity of vari-

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ous confessions offers the sort of textured understanding of “Reformation” this book seeks to craft. Though this book is not empirical enough for her, Miriam Chrisman has read drafts of each of the chapters, challenging my “too symbolist” readings, recalling me to the grittiness of the past, and sharing with characteristic generosity her own findings and thoughts, enriching my understanding of Strasbourg and sharpening my arguments. Hans Guggisberg has been a gracious host in Basel and a generous scholar of its history. Among the many improvements he brought to the chapter on Basel, certainly none is more delightful than my education in Basler Fasnacht, with its moving and breathtaking Morgestraich: His and Grety Guggisberg’s was an extraordinary gift of friendship, to rise at 3 A.M. and escort an American then living in austere New England down to watch the predawn beginning of Fasnacht. On this side of the Atlantic, conversations with Virginia Reinburg have deepened my knowledge of late-medieval Christian practices and sharpened my sense of their relation to formal theology.

Most of this book has been talked and thought through within the community of friends, colleagues, and students I have found at Yale. George and Shelagh Hunter, Christine Kooi, Lawrence Manley, Gary Miller, and Claude Rawson have listened to and helped me to think about many of the issues this book addresses. While visitors here, Linda Seligman and Wayne te Brake shared with me the ways of approaching ordinary people they had developed in their own work. One venue deserves particular mention: the Colloquium on Agrarian Studies, directed by Jim Scott. There I have had the chance to read and listen to the research of scholars whose fields are removed from my own, but whose work offered ways of thinking I found enormously fruitful; and there, I had the chance to have the chapter on Basel read with a wonderful attentiveness, to talk about collective action with anthropologists, political theorists, historians, and sociologists. Bob Harms gave a sensitive and illuminating critique of it; it is clearer and more self-conscious in its analysis for his reading. I am very grateful to Jim Scott, whose generosity of mind and spirit make possible the best kind of dialogue.

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Four colleagues and friends read the manuscript closely in its entirety. All have contributed to the breadth of the frame for my own work. Though Scotland does not play as prominent a role in this narrative as he hoped, Geoffrey Parker led me both to a geographic breadth in my vision of iconoclasm and a greater conviction of the importance of local context for the meaning of iconoclastic acts. Conversations with Jary Pelikan have deepened my knowledge of theology and led me to a more nuanced understanding of theologians' discussions of images. David Underdown has encouraged my attention to the local, the "ordinary"; our discussions have confirmed the importance, as well as the pleasure, of studying each community closely, attentive to details of all sorts. This book owes a special debt to Skip Stout. The Introduction is an expression of a longer dialogue with him over the relation of theology to praxis and on the importance of laypersons in the formation of every church and its doctrine; its clarity and directness, such as it has, are the effect of his close reading, his questions, his curiosity, and his encouragement to speak forthrightly.

It is, as so many know, difficult to put a name to the sort of conversation that lies behind books, those conducted in private within the rhythms of daily life over years, in which one is encouraged to think more boldly, to trust more fully one's insights, and challenged to think through more rigorously the implications of those thoughts and insights. Lord Peter Wimsey named one such conversation "the great striding fugue." I think Larry Winnie would like the metaphor of the fugue; it intimates both the melody and the counterpoints of our dialogue.

It seems only appropriate, finally, to dedicate a book on iconoclasts to Matt.

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A note on orthography

The spelling of words in sixteenth-century Alemannisch is inconsistent, not only from one town to the next (leaving aside the great differences with modern conventions), but even within the usage practiced by each of the three towns. The texts quoted in the original, therefore, offer widely varying orthography. I have sought to provide the sixteenth-century names for various things in the texts: agencies, objects, offices, titles. In those cases where modern scholarship has already determined a conventional spelling, I have deferred to those conventions: the offices of *Ammeister* and *Stettmeister* in Strasbourg, *Oberzunftmeister* in Basel; the *grosser Rat* for the Senate in Strasbourg and *großer Rat* for the Senate in Basel. Although most modern scholars agree to various forms of anglicization, I have chosen to retain the German *Bürgermeister* to signal the particular configuration of authority, privilege, and obligation that each town attached to the office. For other words, I have chosen the spelling that predominates in the sources. In the case of the names of churches and chapels, I have given English names for almost all, which gets round, in the case of Strasbourg, the multiple names that the buildings had over the years in both Alsatian and French. Thus, for example, the Cathédral in Strasbourg and the Dom in Basel are both designated “Cathedral.” On the other hand, I have retained the Alemannisch and German name Grossmünster for the main church in Zurich, rather than anglicizing it to Great Minster; it, more than either Cathedral, was a local, if also major, church. In the case of various feast days, I have anglicized those that are cele-

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brated internationally, and retained the Alemannisch for those celebrated locally: Carnival, instead of Fasnacht/Fastnacht, but Kleine Fastnacht and Schmützigigen Donnerstag.

On gendered language: I have sought throughout to use terms that reflect the inclusion or exclusion of women as appropriate. For sixteenth-century Christians, God and Christ were considered “male”; I have used, therefore, the male pronoun, capitalized, in accord with their sensibilities.