



Abstract from Article

HEINRICH BULLINGER AND THE MARIAN EXILES: THE POLITICAL FOUNDATIONS OF PURITANISM

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Abstract

The issues involved in the St. Bartholomew's Night massacre of August 1572 went much deeper than the religious differences between the Roman Church and Protestant beliefs only. The real issue was a matter of political ideology and political theory. Political systems in Europe were taking on the new form which Machiavelli had prognosticated. Political power was becoming centralized and it was this tendency in political development which was substantially opposed for the first time in Reformed circles by the Huguenot political theorists from a historical perspective and the views of natural and divine rights. In short, the struggle at a political level pertained to the form the new nation states should take; therefore, a struggle between secular absolutism and Reformed political pluralism evolved. In the seven years that followed the St. Bartolomew's Night massacre, the Reformed view of political pluralism was expounded in at least three most influential works: Francois Hotman's *Franco-Gallia* (1573); Theodore Beza's *De Jura Magistratum* (1575) and the *Vidiciae Contra Tyrannos* (1579), most probably written by Duplessis - Mornay. These Huguenot authors developed two main lines of argument in opposition to absolute royal power: Firstly, the constitutional argument based on Biblical and secular history, proving that the law is above the king, that the king stands under contract with the people for their welfare, and that each people is subject to its own laws - a theory based on sovereignty of law and political pluralism; secondly, an argument based on the philosophical foundations of political power - they sought to show that absolute monarchy is contrary to universal rules of right supposedly underlying all government. These two lines of argument were closely connected and both were formulated in opposition to the upsurge of secular sovereignty and the rise of nation states based on absolute authority. In this paper two fundamental issues related to the Reformed views on politics from the sixteenth century will be considered: Firstly, what the theoretical origin of these Reformed views were, and secondly, identifying the political basis for the views of the Huguenot theorists. It is contended that the theoretical origin of the Reformed views on these matters can be traced to Heinrich Bullinger's theological - political federalism and the work of the Marian exiles who had close contact with Bullinger in Zurich from 1545 to 1560.