



Abstract from Article

REBELLION, RESISTANCE, AND A SWISS BRUTUS?

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Abstract

Early sixteenth-century Germany and Switzerland witnessed, amongst their peasants, a growing dissatisfaction with economic exploitation and the increasing power of political rulers. The Protestant Reformation at the time had a profound influence on the moulding of this dissatisfaction into a right to demand the enforcement of divine justice. The Swiss reformer, Huldrych Zwingli, provided parallels for the demands of the peasants, while the German reformers, Luther and Melanchthon, criticized the rebellious methods of the peasantry. Against this background the young Swiss reformer, Heinrich Bullinger, responded more positively towards the claims of the peasants by opposing the views of the Lutheran reformers in his play 'Lucretia and Brutus'. In this drama, Bullinger propounds the first steps towards the development of his federal theory of politics by advancing the idea of oath-taking as the mechanism for transforming the monarchy into a Christian republic. The idea of oath-taking was destined to become a most important device in early modern politics, used to combat tyranny and to promote the idea of republicanism.

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