

*Francesco Panigarola: Predicazione, filosofia e teologia nel secondo Cinquecento.*

Francesco Ghia and Fabrizio Meroi, eds.

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Francesco Panigarola (1548–94), Observant Franciscan and bishop of Asti (1587–94), was acknowledged by contemporaries and is regarded today by scholars of post-Tridentine Italy as the foremost preacher of his time. To many he is the great protagonist of the Counter-Reformation: an uncompromising opponent of Calvinism in Savoy and France, proponent of the Council of Trent’s reforms, promoter of the Roman papacy, and collaborator with Charles Borromeo in reforming Milanese society. He was, in addition, a poet, historian, exegete, lecturer in theology, and author of a widely circulated treatise on sacred oratory, a small handbook on the art of memory, an autobiography, and collections of sermons, arguably the most famous of which is his *Calviniche*, a book of eighteen lectures given at Turin during Lent in 1582 against John Calvin’s teachings. Most essays in the present volume acknowledge Panigarola as a standard-bearer of the Counter-Reformation, but they also take us beyond this stereotype by critically examining his thinking, activities, and responses to events about him. The essays originated at a conference, “Francesco Panigarola vescovo di Asti. Un protagonista del Cinquecento,” held at Asti in 2012.

These essays are of a high quality — illuminating, mostly complementary, and built upon the already extensive scholarship on Panigarola. Samuele Giombi situates his preaching in the forefront of Catholic homiletics and sees his sermons in a developing art form between orality and literature that would have a lasting impact on the development of the Italian language. Fabio Giunta follows with illustrative passages from Panigarola’s sermons, noting in them many of the stylistic characteristics that Panigarola explicates in his *Il Predicatore* (1609), a commentary on Demetrius of Phaleron’s *On Style*. Gregorio Piaia identifies part of Panigarola’s star quality as preacher in his vast command of ancient philosophers on morality; he also astutely identifies one hallmark of Panigarola’s thinking

in its disdain for these philosophers — indeed, for all past human achievements — because worldly wisdom could not lead to Christ and eternal life, to which the Roman Church in its theology, traditions, and institutions uniquely offers access. Filippo Mignini provides an edition of Panigarola's *trattatelo* on the art of memory and places him in the vanguard of a culture, employing the memory to dominate a multiplicity of items. Illuminating, though less related to the other essays, is Guido Ghia's study of the parallel lives of Panigarola and the German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814), two “priests of the truth,” although of different traditions.

Vittorio Croce analyzes Panigarola's *Calviniche* as a model of Tridentine apologetic (sarcasm and all), while Michele Nicoletti surveys his political theology, which sees earthly rulers as serving the Church by enforcing morality and extirpating heresy. Panigarola's political intransigence becomes clear in his utter rejection of the French *politiques'* proposals for a peace maintained by the king that would allow the coexistence of different religions in the kingdom. Francesco Ghia examines Panigarola's theology of God's justice (theodicy) to explain why a good God allows evil, like the plague of 1577 at Bologna, where Panigarola preached emphatically that scourges are given by God in punishment for our sins. Ilario Manfredini finds Panigarola anticipating Giovanni Botero's idea of the perfect prince (contrary to Erasmus and Machiavelli), whom he sees in Emanuele I, Duke of Savoy, who in 1594, at Panigarola's request, removed Burgundian soldiers from the duchy for spreading heretical ideas. Ezio Claudio Pia provides a brief but helpful history of Savoy from the Middle Ages to the Risorgimento. Debora Ferro surveys the important holdings of the bishop's seminary at Asti that relate to Panigarola. And Fabrizio Meroi's “Francesco Panigarola between Myth and History” neatly sums up the state of scholarship on Panigarola today and warns against seeing Panigarola merely as the great protagonist of the Counter-Reformation. He invites us rather to look into the deeper motivations of this complex individual, some of which are suggested in his autobiography. He sees much work yet to be done to understand the man — his obscure personality, ambivalences, and the bundled energies that drove him. Much we do not know, but it is here precisely where work must continue to dispel myths and interpret him historically. These essays offer much thoughtful guidance in this direction.

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