

Giovanna Cordibella and Stefano Prandi (Eds.), Celio Secondo Curione, "*Pasquillus extaticus*" e "*Pasquino in estasi*." *Edizione storico-critica commentata*. Olschki, Florence 2018, 313 pp. ISBN 9788822264190. € 38.

The 'pasquinade' was a popular literary genre in the sixteenth century. It owed its origins to a mutilated Hellenistic-style statue discovered in Rome in 1501 and set up close to Piazza Navona. Below it would be attached anonymous satirical poems criticising the pope and his government. The statue, Pasquino, was regarded as a talking statue and was thus introduced as the main protagonist of dialogues in which he would instruct, and argue with, the guileless theologian Marphorius. The criticisms, first of individuals, then of the papacy and the entire Catholic Church, were made from the high moral ground of a man in search of a pure Christianity remote from the corruption and venality which were so evident in Rome. The pasquinade became an obvious vehicle for those Italians attracted by the Reformation and eager to propagate their views.

Celio Secondo Curione was one of a group of heterodox Italians in search of an ideal Church which was nowhere to be found. A humanist of distinction, he abandoned his chair at the university of Pavia, made first for Venice in 1539 and then, after obtaining the protection of Renée de France, the duchess of Ferrara whose Protestant sympathies were well known, he joined the evangelical circle in Lucca before fleeing north of the Alps in 1542. Befriended by some of the reformers in Zurich, notably Bullinger and Pellikan, he taught at the academy of Lausanne and then, as professor of rhetoric, at the university of Basel. He was at one point close to Calvin, but he fell under suspicion when he saw to the publication of the *Cento e dieci divine considerationi* by Juan de Valdés in 1550, opposed the execution of Servetus in 1553, and above all published his anti-predestinarian *De amplitudine beati Regni Dei* of 1554 with its implications of universal salvation. He broke with Calvin and, from then on, was seen as a heretic by the Reformed Church.

The *Pasquillus extaticus*, however, is an early work. The editors of this new volume, Giovanna Cordibella and Stefano Prandi, who have provided their edition with a thorough critical apparatus including excellent notes and introductions, argue convincingly that it was printed in Basel by Johannes Oporinus, probably in 1541 (and not, as some scholars have claimed, in 1544), when Curione was still in Italy. The Italian translation, *Pasquino in estasi*, on the other hand, presents a series of problems. Cordibella and Prandi assume that the translation is unlikely to have been by Curione himself. Various other names have been suggested—those of Curione's friend Bernardino Ochino, who also fled to the North in 1542, and of Francesco Maria Strozzi, implicated in the trial of Carnesecchi—but the question still remains open. The vernacular version

was widely circulated in manuscript and was almost certainly printed in Venice, possibly, but not certainly, by Venturino Ruffinelli, in 1542–1543.

The dialogue itself is of the greatest interest. Pasquino, after criticising the immorality of the Roman clergy, tells Marphorius of his ecstatic journey through the heavens. The work is a *Divina commedia* in reverse. Rather than rising to spheres of increasing virtue, Pasquino sees the saints, the popes, the prelates, the doctors of the Church, and the mendicant orders as all being responsible for the decline of the Church and the corruption on earth. The theological ideas reflect the influence of those who were to be Curione's friends and supporters in Zurich. He proposes a Zwinglian interpretation of the eucharist, argues against purgatory, condemns miracles, and deplores the cult of the saints and the imposition of clerical celibacy and virginity. His plea is for a greatly simplified form of Christianity, entirely divorced from any form of worldly ambition, its sole object the worship of God the Father and His Son.

One of the most curious features of the dialogue is the representation of Erasmus. In its form and in many of its anti-clerical ideas *Pasquillus extaticus* is clearly influenced by Erasmus, but in his ecstatic voyage Pasquino sees the man himself in the sphere of Mercury among the villains. While Erasmus is named outright in the Italian version, in the Latin the name is disguised, transparently enough, as Amantius Erythrodamus, probably, as the editors suggest, as a measure of caution in the city of Basel where Erasmus had lived, died, and was still widely revered. Erasmus is described as being tied by a rope attached to two poles. On his head he has the two horns of a stag and from his feet hangs a large purse bulging with coins. As the wind blows he is sometimes upside down and sometimes the right way up, sometimes looking to the papacy and sometimes looking to God, and nearly always in motion. The reason for this unflattering portrayal was, of course, Erasmus's ambivalent attitude to the Reformation, his refusal to commit himself, and what his enemies regarded as a venal streak which prevented him from renouncing his income and privileges as a member of the Catholic Church.

*Alastair Hamilton*

The Warburg Institute, London

*alastair.hamilton@sas.ac.uk*