

Mario Rosa and Matteo Al Kalak (Eds.), *Lodovico Antonio Muratori. Religione e politica nel Settecento*. Olschki, Florence 2018, xi + 137 pp. ISBN 9788822265456. €20.

Like so many other Catholic thinkers who navigated between the requirements of orthodoxy and the ideas of the Enlightenment in the early eighteenth century Lodovico Antonio Muratori is difficult to classify. Audacity is almost invariably tempered by caution, but in the case of Muratori there is one feature which cannot be doubted: his deep piety. Coveted by Protestants and Jansenists, suspected of yielding to them by the ultra-orthodox, he remained steadfast in his own beliefs which were profoundly Catholic. The eight essays edited by Mario Rosa and Matteo Al Kalak in this new volume examine some of the studied, as well as some of the less studied, sides of a writer who has attracted generations of scholars.

Muratori is best known as a historian and an antiquarian. After five years working at the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan, he returned to Modena, where he had studied, and was appointed archivist and librarian of the ducal library. He remained there until his death in 1750. Much of his work was aimed at the production of a history of Italy, political, religious, and literary. But he also wrote about philosophy, law, and theology. The first articles in *Lodovico Antonio Muratori. Religione e politica nel Settecento* are on Muratori's religious views which underwent certain changes particularly evident in his approach to the mass studied by Anna Burlini Calapaj. To begin with Muratori seems to have had doubts about the participation of the laity in a ceremony held in a language which hardly any of them could understand. He considered mass to be simply an expression of the personal devotion of the priest. But his attitude changed after his encounter with the younger Paolo Segneri, a Jesuit (like his better known uncle) whom Muratori encountered in 1712 when he was preaching near Modena. Deeply moved by Segneri's way of preaching and organising religious services, Muratori became increasingly aware of the need to involve the congregation, and when he had a parish of his own, after 1716, he suggested methods by which the mass should be made comprehensible to those ignorant of Latin. His ideas were also affected by his research into the early Church, the means it had adopted to involve the laity, such as communion in both kinds, *sub utraque specie*, and its practice of charity which Muratori came to regard as an essential feature of religious practice. Yet when it came to an outright judgement of the liturgical innovations of the late Middle Ages strongly criticised by the Protestants, Muratori was cautious. He treated them superficially, arguing from a traditionally conservative position, and declaring them perfectly acceptable as long as they were not carried to superstitious excesses.

Matteo Al Kalak examines Muratori's treatment of the Bible, a subject which is difficult to broach and which has consequently been avoided by scholars in the past since Muratori never devoted a single work to the subject. On the whole, Al Kalak shows, Muratori favoured a literal approach to the Scriptures, and tended to avoid the more obscure anagogical, allegorical, and tropological interpretations. Again, however, he was cautious. The primacy of reason which had been advocated by recent interpreters should not, he believed, be carried too far, and a due respect should be retained for traditional authority. A distinction, however, should be made between passages concerning faith and passages touching on scientific or historical fact. He recommended the use of the Vulgate sanctioned at the Council of Trent, especially for pastoral purposes, but also admitted that it was not always a perfect translation. He was particularly sceptical about any free examination of the sacred texts since, as Socinianism and Protestantism had shown, it threatened the unity of the Church and accorded an excessive power to the use of human reason.

One of the most interesting aspects of Muratori was his attitude to the Jesuit attempt to marshal the natives of Paraguay into an ideal Catholic society. Muratori's views are studied here by Girolamo Imbruglia and Fabio Marri. Muratori tackled the subject in his *Il cristianesimo felice nelle missioni dei padri della Compagnia di Gesù nel Paraguai* of 1743. With a complete disregard for the brutal and sometimes violent process of evangelisation which preceded the formation of the Reductions or settlements, Muratori hailed the Jesuit experiment as an admirable attempt to resuscitate the primitive Church and, as Marri shows, referred to their example to castigate the Protestants and their failure to launch a true and effective missionary movement. His sources were the Jesuit *Lettere edificantes et curieuses*, and he accepted the utopic description of the situation in Paraguay at its face value. He also rejected the accommodating attempts by Acosta to adapt his evangelising sermons to the heathen customs of the natives. But, as Imbruglia demonstrates, Muratori's idealisation of the Reductions was demolished by Diderot who emphasised the oppression exerted by the fathers of the Society and the utter misery to which this led.

We see from the study by Corrado Viola of an early, and unpublished, panegyric of Louis XIV, that Muratori was once strongly in favour of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, associating the Huguenots with civil unrest and believing the revocation to be an important step in the fight against heresy. But it emerges from the study by Manuela Bragagnolo that Muratori also remained subtly critical of the Catholic Church in his attempts to reassess and revive the Italian literature of the sixteenth century. Here he had little hesitation in rehabilitating writers such as Lodovico Castelvetro, and churchmen such as Pier Paolo Vergerio senior and junior, who had been regarded as heterodox. He

was also prepared to adopt unpopular positions. In his correspondence with Cardinal Angelo Maria Querini, bishop of Brescia, studied by Ennio Ferraglio, Muratori bravely expressed his disapproval of the excessive number of feasts of the Church and refused to accompany the cardinal on a missionary expedition to the German Protestants. But, with the support of the pope, Benedict XIV, Muratori could allow himself the occasional opposition to a powerful prelate.

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