

Andrea Barbieri (Ed.), *La Lettera di San Paolo ai Romani*. Tradotta ed esposta da Ludovico Castelvetro [Piccola Biblioteca Umanistica 7]. Olschki, Florence 2021, xii + 158 pp. ISBN 9788822268044. € 20.

Ludovico Castelvetro is an intriguing albeit somewhat elusive figure. He was born in Modena in 1505. There, after studying in Bologna, Ferrara, and Padua and taking a degree in Siena, he lectured in law from 1532 to 1557, and established his reputation as a man of letters. He was known for his commentaries on Dante, Petrarch, and Bembo, and for his attack on Annibal Caro which led to his decision to leave Modena, but, as Annibal Caro reminded the authorities, he was also the translator of Melanchthon's *Loci communes* and held notoriously heterodox views. He was consequently arrested by the Inquisition in 1560, declared a heretic and had his property confiscated. Nevertheless he managed to escape from the inquisitors and, despite his plan to justify himself at the Council of Trent, spent the rest of his life in exile, first in Chiavenna, then in Geneva, Lyons, and Vienna (where he dedicated his translation of Aristotle's *Poetics* to the emperor, Maximilian II). Leaving Vienna on account of the plague, he returned to Chiavenna, where he died in 1571.

Much of Castelvetro's literary output has been lost since the removal of his possessions in Modena. We are thus less informed than we might be about his religious views. There has been considerable speculation as to what he actually produced and never published. Some 25 years ago, however, Andrea Barbieri discovered an autograph list of the books which Castelvetro lent out. In 1546 he lent his bookseller in Modena, Antonio Gadaldino, a manuscript of the Gospels "per me volgarizzati." This vernacular translation seemed to have disappeared for good, but also to have indicated Castelvetro's involvement in a translation of the New Testament into Italian. A few years later, in 1551, there appeared, printed in Lyons by Jean Frellon and published by Pietro Perna, *Il Nuovo ed eterno Testamento di Giesù Christo nuovamente da l'original fonte greca con ogni diligenza in toscano tradotto per Massimo Teofilo fiorentino*. Perna, who had received the manuscript in Venice, had first tried to have it printed in Zürich. Failing to do so, he turned to Lyons. Although the only name of a translator actually given on the title-page was that of the Tuscan Benedictine from the monastery of San Giovanni Evangelista in Parma, Massimo Teofilo (whose original name was Leonardo Masi), a number of Italian 'evangelicals' had a hand in the translation—Cornelio Donzellini, Zuane de Honestis, and possibly Lucio Paolo Roselli. Castelvetro's name was not mentioned. His only link with the project appeared to have been a letter from the doctor Agostino Gadaldino (the son of the bookseller Antonio), whom Andrea Barbieri describes as the link between the Venetian evangelicals and the like-minded group in Modena.

This led Barbieri to suspect that Castelvetro too participated in the translation.

When the *Nuovo ed eterno Testamento di Giesù Christo* was examined by the Roman Inquisition six years after it came out, it was thought by the inquisitors to have been based entirely on the Latin Bible published by Froschauer in Zürich in 1539. While the Italian version did indeed include translations of parts of the Zürich Froschauer Bible, it also contained translations of Erasmus and revealed the influence of Luther and Melanchthon. In addition to certain stylistic characteristics which emerge from Castelvetro's other writings, the similarities between the translation of the Epistle to the Romans and Erasmus's New Testament (to which Castelvetro added abundant marginalia), Melanchthon's *Loci communes* (which he translated), and Luther's preface to the same text allowed Barbieri to identify Castelvetro as the translator of the Epistle.

For his edition of the translation Barbieri has used two sources. The first, containing the preface, the summary of each chapter, and the actual translation, is the *Nuovo ed eterno Testamento di Giesù Christo*. The second, containing the paraphrases, is *Le dotte e pie parafrasi sopra l'Epistola di Paolo a' Romani, Galati ed Ebrei non mai vedute in luce. Di m. Giovan Francesco Virgino bresciano*, published in Geneva in 1555. The result is a text of the utmost elegance, written in an engaging style which could lead readers to prefer it to any of the subsequent vernacular versions. The more general reader of Barbieri's book, however, might also have welcomed some more general information about Castelvetro's life and his achievements.

But what became of the so-called 'Lyons Bible,' the *Nuovo ed eterno Testamento di Giesù Christo*? It was reissued in 1556 and 1565, and was investigated by the Inquisition in Italy. Massimo Teofilo, who was judged within the Benedictine Order, was ultimately absolved of heresy and got off with an admonition not to meddle any further with the Scriptures. Barbieri, in his introduction, also refers to an important point made by Silvana Seidel Menchi in her "Traduzioni italiane di Lutero nella prima metà del Cinquecento" published in *Rinascimento* in 1977. The Italian (or at any rate the Venetian) inquisitors, she wrote, did not judge heresy according to the emphasis on justification by faith but according to the tendency to translate the Scriptural texts. Their true concern was with vernacular translations of the Bible which threatened to undermine the authority of the Church.

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