

**Lucio Biasiori.** *L'eresia di un umanista: Celio Secondo Curione nell' Europa del Cinquecento.* Rome: Carocci, 2015. 133 pp. EUR 16.00, paper, ISBN 978-88-430-7860-8.

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To understand the Reformation in all its complexity, historians look not only to the champions of confessional orthodoxy and their followers for insight, but also to the age's "heretics"—figures such as the apostate Capuchin Bernardino Ochino and the doomed antitrinitarian Michael Servetus. In 2015, Lucio Biasiori reminded us of another of these noteworthy sixteenth-century heretics, Celio Secondo Curione (1503-69), in his *L'eresia di un umanista: Celio Secondo Curione nell'Europa del Cinquecento*. Beyond describing Curione's life and unorthodox opinions, Biasiori's goals in this short, eight-chapter biography are clear in the introduction: to shed light on Curione's intellectual development during his youth and to elucidate the political dimensions behind his career (usually neglected by scholars).

We learn that the Piedmontese Curione, an accomplished humanist and professor of rhetoric trained at the University of Turin, was a man constantly on the move in Italy due to his Protestant beliefs and to the threat of the seemingly omnipresent Inquisition. Turin, Milan, Pavia, Venice, Ferrara, Lucca, and Pisa were all locations where he took up residence before permanently relocating to the Swiss Confederation in the early 1540s, and ultimately to Basel. But, as Biasiori explains, Curione eventually became estranged from his Swiss Protestant colleagues too. He was, for exam-

ple, critical of the 1549 *Consensus Tigurinus*, with its teaching on the real presence in the Eucharist; adopted antitrinitarian and Anabaptist views; and denounced, together with Sébastien Castellion, John Calvin and Geneva's burning of Servetus, while arguing for toleration of heretics. For Curione, the religious fanaticism and tyranny of Calvin was no different from that of the papacy back in Italy.

Over the course of his career, Curione put his theological ideas into writing multiple times, as Biasiori makes abundantly clear. Chief among his works are the satirical *Pasquino in estasi* (published in both Italian and Latin during the 1540s) and the *De amplitudine beati regni Dei* (1554), the foci of, respectively, chapters 4 and 7. The former, penned during Curione's sojourn in Venice, served as his criticism of Roman Catholic belief and practice; the latter, composed in Basel, was his literary declaration of war on Calvinism, in which he argued for religious toleration. Also of note from his time among the Swiss are Curione's *Quattro lettere cristiane*, which reveal his continued concern for his fellow Protestant Italians and their spiritual struggles. Among them was the question of whether crypto-Protestants could participate in Catholic ceremonies, to which he responded, in Nicodemite fashion, that they could

do so in order to not disturb those who were still weak in their faith.

Regarding Curione's theological formation during his early years and his political connections, Biasiori clarifies these points early on in the book. First, how did Curione initially encounter Protestantism? Biasiori reminds us that in Turin he was in a relatively convenient position to come into contact with the new ideas generated in Protestant lands. There he was able to read the works of Luther, Zwingli, and Melancthon, and hear the sermons of those questioning traditional religious views. His stay in Milan was also influential, as Biasiori establishes. Some Augustinians there, stressing the importance of grace in salvation, provided the young Curione with a copy of the *Sommario della sacra scrittura*, literary fruit of the *Devotio moderna*, known for its rereading of the Gospel in light of justification by faith. In Milan he also became acquainted with and, curiously, adopted elements of the spirituality and mysticism of the Angelics. What of Curione and politics? It is clear, thanks to Biasiori's research, that while in Italy he consistently received the protection of French and pro-French rulers and dignitaries such as Galeotto II Pico, the count of Mirandola; Guillaume Pellicier, the French abassador to Venice; and Renée of France, the duchess of Ferrara and daughter of King Louis XII. The French crown believed it was useful to support pro-Protestant Italians like Curione as a way to thwart Charles V's designs in the peninsula.

Biasiori's *L'eresia di un umanista* is a successful and effective monograph. Based on Curione's own works, while also relying on archival sources preserved in places like Rome and Basel, it is an important contribution to our understanding of early modern heresy and its prosecution--placing it among the studies of other scholars such as Delio Cantimori, Massimo Firpo, and Roland Bainton (mistakenly identified as "Ronald" on p. 72). From it we gain valuable insight into how one early modern Italian repudiated Catholicism for Protes-

tantism, only to become gravely disappointed with and critical of the teachings and policies of some of the age's most prominent Protestant leaders. Moreover, we gain a greater sense of how the experience of Protestants in Italy colored their perspective of events related to religion elsewhere. *L'eresia di un umanista* belongs on the shelves of all scholars interested in the Reformation, early modern heresy, and the Italian exiles forced to live abroad due to their unorthodox beliefs.

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