

CORPUS REFORMATORUM ITALICORUM

More than a decade after a group of scholars conceived the plan of making available critical editions of the writings of Italian participants in the Reformation, the series Corpus Reformatorum Italicorum has been launched. General editors Luigi Firpo and Giorgio Spini, with the collaboration of Antonio Rotondò and John A. Tedeschi, have arranged for the joint publication of the series by G. C. Sansoni Editore of Florence and the Newberry Library of Chicago. The first two titles which have appeared are the Avvertenze ai Collaboratori (1969) and Camillo Renato: Opere, Documenti e Testimonianze, edited by Antonio Rotondò (1968).

As a manual of style for prospective contributors to the series, the Avvertenze provides not only detailed editorial guidelines but also a general view of the aims of the project. In the first place, the scope of the series reflects the conceptual framework sketched by the late Delio Cantimori in his Prospettive di storia ereticale italiana del Cinquecento (Bari, 1960). Italian reformers of all doctrinal persuasions, not just "heretics" defined as "rebels against any form of ecclesiastical communion" (Cantimori's famous earlier formulation), are to be included. The era to be covered runs from the first manifestations of reformed ideas in Italy to the death of Marcantonio De Dominis in 1624, after which time (Cantimori maintained) the religious element per se in the thought of Italian exiles disappeared.

Second, opera omnia in the fullest sense of that term will be made available in these editions. Since the Italian reformers are of historical importance for their role in transmitting Italian Renaissance culture to northern Europe as well as for their religious ideas, their writings on literary and historical subjects (including translations of classical and modern works and commentaries on the classics) will be presented in chronological order along with their religious treatises. When a work appeared in more than one edition or in translation, the variations will be noted; in the case of works which underwent major changes in successive editions, such as the radically different versions of Celio Secondo Curione's Pasquillus exstaticus, each edition will be treated as a separate text. Correspondence, relevant documents, and contemporary reference (testimonianze) will be assembled in order to give as complete as possible a picture of each reformer's life and works.

These volumes will be exclusively devoted to primary materials — that is, they are designed as "works" rather than "life and works." A complementary series, however, will include monographs (a number of which are now being evaluated for possible publication), bibliographies (for example, the comprehensive critical listing of Pietro Martire Vermigli's writings presently being prepared by Robert M. Kingdon), and collections of archival materials (such as important Inquisition records).

Finally, the directors insist that the volumes must be edited according to the most rigorous criteria of modern scholarship. At the foot of each page of text, two types of notes will provide (1) indications of variant readings and possible emendations, and (2) brief identifications of persons mentioned and the sources of quoted or paraphrased passages and phrases. More extensive critical notes at the end of each volume are to be devoted to a discussion of the forms in which each piece exists (manuscript, contemporaneous edition, and/or later edition); to a consideration of the temporal and ideological context of the work, letter, document, or testimonianza; and to a discussion of the present state of knowledge about the reformer.

Rotondò's edition of the writings of and documents pertaining to Camillo Renato (né Paolo Ricci, alias Lisia Fileno) sets a very high standard for the Corpus Reformatorum Italicorum. The works of Renato and supplementary materials which Rotondò has assembled are comparatively few in number: sixteen humanistic carmina (1538-1540); the Apologia, prepared in 1540 for presentation to the Inquisition tribunal at Ferrara; the Trattato del battesimo e della santa cena, composed while Renato was contending with Agostino Mainardi in 1547; the Certa in symbolum professio addressed in 1548 to Frederick von Salis, a potential protector; the Carmen in Ioannem Cálvinum, dealing with the case of Michael Servetus (1554); twelve letters by Renato to various people and one from Bullinger to him; and eighty documents (letters and passages from letters, fragments of the Inquisitorial judgment against Renato, the opinion of the Zürich pastors solicited by Mainardi in his effort to counteract the pervasive radical influence of Renato, Renato's abjuration made at Chiavenna in 1551, etc.). Of Renato's works, the carmina, the Apologia, and all but the first three pages of the Trattato del battesimo e della santa cena have been transcribed from the original manuscripts and published for the first time by Rotondò, who is a skilled paleographer. The majority of the letters, documents and testimonianze, as Rotondò notes, have appeared in print previously; but he has discovered and added to the Renato corpus sixteen new such pieces of information. Bringing all these writings together in an impeccable critical edition and providing an authoritative commentary on them is obviously a great service to scholarship. But beyond this, Rotondò, by his painstaking search in innumerable Italian and Swiss libraries and archives, has virtually eliminated the likelihood that further information about Renato's career as a radical reformer will come to light.

Camillo Renato provides, as all volumes of the Corpus Reformatorum Italicorum are designed to do, the basic source material for the study of Renato's role in Italian Reformation history. Neophytes who require a narrative account in English of Renato's career will do well to begin with George H. Williams' "Camillo Renato (c. 1500- ? 1575)" in Italian Reformation Studies in Honor of Laelius Socinus (Florence, 1965) and then move on to the important texts which Rotondò has made available.

Forthcoming volumes of the Corpus Reformatorum Italicorum will appear at the rate of approximately two per year, and several have been announced for future publication. Heading this list is Salvatore Caponetto's edition of the Beneficio di Cristo by Benedetto da Mantova, which had an incalculable effect on Italian religious attitudes. Rotondò is preparing a first volume of the works of Giorgio Biandrata, the Antitrinitarian Piedmontese physician. The Sienese Mino Celsi's treatise favoring religious toleration, In haereticis coercendis quatenus progredi, and other writings of Celsi are being edited by Peter Bietenholz. Albano Biondi will make available the philological writings of Celio Secondo Curione, who, after a distinguished academic career in Italy, became a professor at the University of Basel. Treatments similar in format to Camillo Renato will be given to other less prolific but equally important figures. Francesco Pucci, the Florentine Neoplatonic visionary, is being dealt with by Luigi Firpo. Leandro Perini will edit the writings of the Sicilian prophetic advocate of the freedom of the will, Giorgio Siculo. The extremely important traces of the life and work of Lelio Sozzini, the father of Unitarianism, are being assembled for publication by John A. Tedeschi.

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