Messer Bernardo Cungi dal Borgo San Sepolcro

Rappresentazione d’un miracolo del Sagramento

This text with translation of *The Play of a Miracle of the Sacrament* was prepared for the late Lynette R. Muir, scholar of medieval French drama, repository of a wealth of information about the dramas of medieval Europe, and generous hostess in her home in Leeds.

This desecration of the Host play, with emblematic characters of the Jew and the Christian, is quite different from the *Rappresentazione di un Miracolo del Corpo di Cristo*, which may date as early as 1473. Here a Christian sells a host to a Jew, gambles away the six ducats he receives, and becomes a bandit in the forest where the Capuchins are founding a hermitage. As the Christian laments that there have been no wayfarers, he is eaten by a lion. The Jew takes the host into the same forest to see if Christ is inside. He tries to throw the host into the spring, but it sticks to his hand then flies on to a rock. He tries to stab it on the rock but his hand then adheres to the rock and is crushed by it. He is converted, and then saved by the prayers of the Capuchins. I have not identified the source of this legend: it is notable for the fact that the Christian, who dies in sin and despair, is punished, while the Jew is quite exceptionally allowed to convert and enjoy the triumph of salvation.

Since the Capuchins were founded only in 1520, that year must constitute an *ante quam non*, but in the absence of other information about Messer Bernardo Cungi, I cannot suggest a date or a purpose for this very short and whimsical play.

This edition and translation have been prepared from: RAPPRESENTATIONE D’VN MIRACOLO DEL / SAGRAMENTO. / Composto da M. Bernardo Cungi dal / Borgo San Sepolcro, which was included as a single folio (cc. 2) in the third volume of the three-volume collection published by the Heirs of Bernardo Giunti (printer unknown), *Il terzo libro di feste, rappresentationi, et commedie spirituali, di diuersi santi, e sante, del Testamento vecchio & nuovo, composte da diuersi autori. Nuouamente poste insieme, e parte non piu stampate. Aggiuntoui nel fine vna scelta di laude spirituali* (1578). The copy used is in Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, E.6.5.1.

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2 The outcome was usually physical violence against the Jews; see Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).
Personaggi
THE CHRISTIAN
JEW
TORQUATO, SERVANT OF THE JEW
PRIOR OF THE CAPUCHINS
RINIERI, a Capuchin
OTHER CAPUCHINS who do not speak
GAMBLERS who do not speak
A MAN-EATING LION

Properties
A “DOOR”
A FOREST WITH TREES
A SPRING or WELL
A RIVER with water and rocks
A HOST
A DAGGER
**RAPPRESENTAZIONE D’UN MIRACOLO DEL SAGRAMENTO.**

**COMPOSTO DA MESSER BERNARDO CUNGI DAL BORGO SAN SEPOLCRO.**

**[WOODCUT: ANGEL WITH NO FRAME]**

**IN FIRENZE**

**MIRACOLO DEL SAGRAMENTO**

**UN CRISTIANO, avendo venduto l’ostia al Giudeo, partendosi da lui dice:**

E sempre accinto a far quel che ti piace.

**GIUDEO:**

Anch’io son per servirti.

**CRISTIANO.**

Adio!

**GIUDEO:**

Va in pace.

**CRISTIANO:**

Chi non s’aita è pazzo, e che m’importa, se venduto ho al Giudeo Cristo o Maria? Questa mia borsa or piena è buona scorta tra quanto gira il Sol per ogni via. Si che taci, Coscienza, che già sorta mi sei nel petto a pormi in frenesia.

**GIUDEO:**

Pur venne il giorno in cui veder mi lice s’entro qui sta quel Cristo che si dice.

Ma per fuggir l’error come si deve, però che de’ Cristian questo è ricetto, lontanarmi di qui non mi sia greve, s’io vo’ vederne il fin senza sospetto Torquato, porta giù quel capò el breve, e mia spada a pugnal.

**TORQUATO:**

Ecco l’effetto.

Padron, vuoi ch’ancor’io ti segua a lato.

**GIUDEO:**

No, torna in casa, il mio fidel Torquato.

**〈Adesso CRISTIANO si mette a giocare e perde tutto〉**

**CRISTIANO, partito da: gioco, disperato:**

Ben’è lo mio destin malvagio e rio e i cieli incontro a me son congiurati.

**THE PLAY OF A MIRACLE OF THE SACRAMENT**

**COMPOSED BY MESSER BERNARDO CUNGI FROM BORGO SAN SEPOLCRO**

**A1r**

A CHRISTIAN, having sold the host to the Jew, takes his leave from him saying:

And I’m always ready to oblige you.

**JEW:**

And I’m at your service.

**THE CHRISTIAN:**

Farewell!

**THE JEW:**

Go in peace.

**A2r**

A CHRISTIAN, having sold the host to the Jew, leaves the game, desperate:

My fate is indeed cruel and bitter and the heavens have conspired against me.

**THE CHRISTIAN:**

Only a fool doesn’t help himself, and what do I care if I’ve sold Christ or Mary to the Jew? My full purse will keep me now in good supply for the next day anyway. So Conscience, be quiet: you’ve already stirred enough in my breast to disconcert me.

**THE JEW:**

So the day has finally come when I can see whether the Christ they say is inside is really here.

**TORQUATO:**

Here you are.

Master, do you want me to come along with you too?

**THE JEW:**

No, go back inside, faithful Torquato.

**〈Now the Christian starts gambling and loses everything〉**

My fate is indeed cruel and bitter and the heavens have conspired against me.
Ecco, molto non ha dianzi fu ch’io
mi partij dal Giudeo con sei ducati,
e da me, come suol l’acqua dal rio,
son repente fuggiti e dileguati.
Tanto non puonno i dadi e carti ladre,
che vi si adopra Cristo con la madre.

26

E pensar che nel bosco ci siam messi
per far cose che Dio l’abbia aver grate,
con pacienza, e sopportar gli affanni,
cauti a le tentation, cauti a gl’inganni.

34

Ah, quanto quel che suol dettarsi è vero:
chi sventurata nasce miser vive,
ne gli giova cangiar loco o pensiero,
ché ’l Ciel la vita troppo salda scrive.

50

E nissun mai vi fu, da ch’io vi fui:
questa è pur una espressa crudeltate!
Ma Cristo n’è cagion, piacer di cui
fu sempre mai tenermi in povertate.

58

And nobody has passed since I’ve been here:
this is indeed deliberate cruelty!
But Christ is the cause, and it was always
his pleasure to keep me in poverty.
So now let the hordes of damned souls come
forth from the dark realms of the infernal reagions
and confound heaven, earth and sea,
and whatever is hidden and whatever can be seen.

66

The Christian is devoured by a lion, and then FRIAR RINIERI says:
Mercy, o God! A marvel,
father! Jesus, Jesus! Look, father,
I think a lion is eating a man here!
As the Capuchins pray, the Jew arrives in the forest and says:

This is the place for me, the shadows and the stream suit me. Now I’ll see clearly
if that Christ is in here, that Christians wrongly believe is the true God.
Now Christ, all true, just and pious,
are you thirsty? Yes. because the way was steep!
Drink up! Here’s a nice stream, calling you.
What’s this? Do I have birdlime on my fingers?

He tries to throw the Host into the spring but it escapes from his hand, and he continues:

It can’t do it! O God, alas! Alas, my hand!
My hand is being crushed, alas, woe, I’m dying.

Father, I can hear someone calling over here ‘my hand!’; and saying ‘alas, alas, woe, I’m dying!’.

What’s going on now, good sir?

A man is present and he says:

If you care about me, pray to your Christ, true and mighty Lord,
to restore my hand, because then in truth
I shall be baptised in him.
Ah yes, you are his servants:
do not ask whether I was too wicked,
for filled of sorrow I shall lament the full extent of
quanto grave stato è il commesso errore. 106 the sin that was committed.

Orando (i frati inginocchioni, il)
GUARDIANO dice:
Signor, quella pietà ch’al tuo bel regno
ne tornò, allor che ’l mondo vivo e morto
t’ebbe, il mio priego degno
faccia, perché il Giudeo si tragga al porto. 110

IL FINE

As the friars kneel and pray, THE PRIOR says:

Lord, may that pity which brought us back to your fair kingdom when the world had you living and dead, make my prayer worthy, so that the Jew is brought home.

THE END

Apparato: 14 vuo’ 24 fugiti 30 did. Capuccini and elsewhere 110 tragga