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FRANCESCO DEGLI ALLEGRI. *Tractato nobilissimo della Prudentia et Justicia*
Venice, [Bernardino de Vitalis], [probably c. 1501? perhaps after 1508?]

Small in-4°, 20 ff., preceded and followed by a single paper flyleaf [signatures: a-e4], last folio e4 reproduced in fac-simile (from the copy in Milan, Bibl. Trivulziana)], text in Italian, printed in Roman type, device on last folio (for device identification, see P. O. Kristeller, 1893, pp. 132-133, no. 334), engraved ornamental and historiated initials throughout, 10 SMALL WOODCUTS (some repeated), 6 LARGE WOODCUTS. Modern quarter binding with back and corners in vellum, boards covered in paper, smooth spine with title inscribed in ink. Dimensions 215 x 153 mm.

Post incunabula of an extremely rare imprint, apparently one of only two known copies (a second copy is in Milan), of a work on the Cardinal Virtues of Prudence (Wisdom) and Justice—on which humane living hinges--by a little-known but important humanist author, who wrote mostly in the vernacular. This one is likely the first printing, a second revised edition appearing in 1508.

PROVENANCE

1. Published in Venice, as confirmed in colophon, but without specified printer or date. Colophon reads: "Finito el nobel tractato de la sacra Iusticia, compilato et composto per el notable homo Francesco di Aliegri ne l'alma et inclyta cittade di Venetia. Cum gratia et privilegio concesso per anni dieci con la pena constituta ut patet in ea dalla illustrissima Signoria di Venezia." Printer is inferred from device on recto of last folio, used by Bernardino de Vitalis (see Kristeller, 1893, pp. 132-133, no. 334; confirmed by G. Zappella, *Le marche dei tipografi e degli editori italiani del Cinquecento*, 1986, vol. II, no. 112).

TEXT

f. a1 recto, [Title-page], TRACTATO NOBILISSIMO DELLA PRUDENTIA ET JUSTICIA / laqual debbe havere chadauno justo signore, re, principi, duci, potestati, judici, pretori / consuli, visconti, rectori e altri justi ministratori della sacra Justicia et come se debbeno reger / e governare negli loro regimenti in administratione della sacra Justicia per agrandere il suo / honore, fama e reputatione etc. Cum gratia et privilegio;

f. a1 verso, [Incipit], Incipit tratatus Francisci de Alegrisi clarissimi Pelegrini laureate poetae etc. De regimine judicum potestatum et praetorum totius mundi ubicunque justitia minister ut vulgariter videbit. Ad magnificum et generosum virtutibus decorato dominum Petrum Marcello. Q. illustris equitis domini Jacobi Antonii etc. capitaneum et provisorum dignissimum Pergomi illustrissimi Du. D. V. &c.;

ff. a1 verso-a2 recto, [Dedicatory Epistle to Petrus Marcellus of Bergamo], Epistola in laudem magnifici domini Petri Marcelli &c. / In questo terrestre mondo que huomo veramente risplende come spechio de chiara et Mirabel luce (...);

ff. a2 recto-c2 recto, Tractatus primus, incipit prologue, "Tempo era quando il flamigero sole menando il suo velocissimo corto sotto l'oblico cerchio del zodiaco..."; explicit, "Explicit tractatus primus Francisci de Alegris: De prudentia hominum administranda. Et incipit tractatus secundus eiusdem Francisci De administratione sacrae Iustitiae & gubernatione Reipublice statuum & populorum omnium civitatum. Ad magnificum & generosum virtutibus ornato dominum Petrum Marcello provisorum dignissimum & capitaneum Bergomi";

ff. c2 verso-e4 recto, Tractatus secundus, incipit, "Risponsione facta a l'auctore per Madonna Iusticia in responsione della epistola mandata per la celeberrima matre Madonna Prudentia" [Justice's answer in reply to epistle sent by Prudence]; explicit and sonnet by Francesco degli Allegri, "[...] in questo modo vi farete immortalissimi di la ioconda fama & iusticia vistra &c. / Acompagnato chadauno pretore / esser non debbbe con queste virtute [...] / Beati chi ben rege / che del nome di Idio si fanno acquisto / come raconta il summo Iesu Christo";

f. e4 recto, [Colophon], "Finito el nobel tractato de la sacra Iusticia, compilato et composto per el notable homo Francesco di Aleagri ne l'alma et inclyta cittade di Venetia. Cum gratia et privilegio concesso per anni dieci con la pena constituta ut patet in ea dalla illustrissima Signoria di Venezia".

Very little is known about the author of this rare imprint. Francesco degli Allegri is said to have been born in Verona in 1495 (which seems unlikely since he publishes his *Sonetti* in 1495 and the present treatise on Prudence and Justice in 1501/1508). Whatever his birth date, Francesco degli Allegri is known to have composed a number of works, all in the vernacular, such as *Sonetti. Che cosa e de Christo la fede. Che cosa el corpo de Christo ne laltar consecrato...* (Bologna, 1495); and the *Tratato di Astrologia: prima di vno iudicio vero approbato...* (Venice, B. de Vitalibus, 1501). He is said to have dedicated verses to Ercole d'Este (for a complete list of works, see Mazzuchelli, 1753, pp. 507-508). The present work is dedicated to Petrus Marcellus, provisor of Bergamo.

Divided into two parts, this work contains epistles, lamentations, and solicitations addressed by the author to Lady Prudence and to Lady Justice, accompanied by their replies relayed by the author. Towards the end of the work in part two (tractatus secundus), the author provides insights into Justice ("Qui si dichiara tutto el proficto & fructo el quale nasce dalla sacra Iustitia secondo dice il grande Philosopho Aristotele") as well as advice to princes and monarchs about how to administer earthly goods ("Come debbeno essere gli Re over signori: Contra gli mali ministratori della sacra Iustitia & mali gubernatori di populi..."). The work concentrates on two major Cardinal Virtues, Prudence and Justice, of the four Cardinal Virtues, called "cardinal" because they upon them all moral virtues depend (see Thomas Aquinas: The word cardinal comes from hinge [Latin "cardo," meaning "hinge"], that on which a door opens . . . so the cardinal virtues are those on which the entrance to humane living turns." (Thomas Aquinas, *Disputed Questions on the Cardinal Virtues*, I). First explored by Plato, then Aristotle, the four Cardinal Virtues are quoted in the Old Testament: "And if a man love justice: her labours have great virtues: for she teacheth temperance, and prudence, and

justice, and fortitude, which are such things as men can have nothing more profitable in life" (Wisdom, 8:7).

The present work is recorded in the *Index Aureliensis* (1965), no. 103.717, although only mentioning the 1508 edition. Indeed, a number of catalogues believe the present imprint to be none other than a reedition of the work that bears the same title: Allegri, Francesco degli. *Tractato nobilissimo della prudentia et iusticia laqual debbe havere chadauno justo signore...*, Impresso nella inclyta città di Venetia por Melchior Sessa, 1508. Essling reproduces four woodcuts from this edition and believed it was a reedition of the Venice, 1508 edition (Essling, 1909, no. 1610; later confirmed by Sander, 1942, p. 234). However, the 1508 edition presents very different engraved initials (although indeed the large woodcuts are rigorously the same) as well as a different printer's device--that of Melchior Sessa--and colophon: "Finito el nobel tractato della sacra iusticia. Impresso nella inclyta citta di Venetia per Melchior Sessa del MCCCCVIII ad yii novembrio" (see E. Vaccaro, *Le marche dei tipografi...*, 1983, fig. 473; see also G. Zappella, *Le marche dei tipografi e degli editori italiani del Cinquecento*, 1986, vol. II, no. 599).

The present imprint is not dated, and so the question remains as to whether this edition precedes or follows the M. Sessa, 1508 edition. According to Kristeller, the printer's device found in the present edition is one of the devices used by Bernardino de Vitalis, a printer also active in Venice, used only in editions all dated 1501 (P. O. Kristeller, 1893, pp. 132-133, no. 334). Bernardinus Venetus de Vitalibus first printed in Venice in 1495, and as of 1498, often in partnership with his brother Mattheus. It is interesting to note that Bernadinus de Vitalibus printed another work by F. degli Allegri, *Tratato de astrologia...*, Venetiis, 1501 (see London, BL, 8610. bbb. 2; see *Index Aureliensis* (1965), no. 103.716).

WOODCUTS

The work is illustrated with 6 large and 10 small woodcuts. According to Sander, these woodcuts are likely carved by the same engraver responsible for the woodcuts that illustrate A. Cornazzano, *Vita de la Madonna* (Venice, J. Sessa, 1502) by the same dynasty that printed the 1508 edition of Allegri's *Tractato nobilissimo della Prudentia et Iusticia* (see Sander, 1942, vol. I, no. 2201; see also Essling, 1909, no. 1609).

Among the full-page woodcuts, particularly noteworthy are the title-cut showing a judge flanked by two allegorical figures of Prudence and Justice (with their attributes, respectively compass and mirror for Prudence; sword and balance for Justice) and with suitors and pleaders kneeling and standing before them; a woodcut illustrating an eight-pointed star with Justice as its center and figures between the points, representing the medieval ideal of the division of labor (recto e); and large representations of allegorical figures of Prudence (recto b; repeated recto c) and of Justice (verso c2; repeated recto d).

The small woodcuts include illustrations of Justice (small seated figure), Triple-faced allegory of Prudence (also seated), representation of the author walking through a forest (verso a2); Mucius Scaevola burning his hand in front of Porsenna (verso c4), Torture of Regulus (verso d2), and the suicide of a Roman consul, as told in Valerius Maximus (recto e3) etc.

LITERATURE

Allegri, Francesco degli. *Tractato nobilissimo della prudentia et justicia laqual debbe havere chadauno justo signore...*, Impresso nella inclyta città di Venetia por Melchior Sessa, 1508 [Paris, BnF, Res E-303].

Essling (Duc de Rivoli) V. M. d'. *Bibliographie des livres à figures vénitiens de la fin du XVe siècle et du commencement du XVIe siècle. Première partie, Ouvrages imprimés de 1501 à 1525*, Florence, L. S. Olschki, 1909.

Index Aureliensis: catalogus librorum sedecimo saeculo impressorum, Geneva and Baden-Baden, 1965, tomus I.

Kristeller, P. O. *Die italienischen Buchdrucker- und Verlegerzeichen*, Strasbourg, 1893.

Mazzuchelli, G.M. *Gli Scrittori d'Italia, cioè Notizie storiche e critiche intorno alle vite e agli scritti dei letterati italiani...*, Brescia, G. B. Bossini, 1753-1763.

Sander, M. *Le livre à figures italien depuis 1467 jusqu'en 1530...*, vol. I, Milan, 1942.

ONLINE RESOURCES

On the Cardinal Virtues:

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03343a.htm>