

Libro segundo del Espejo del perfecto príncipe cristiano. Francisco de Monzón.
Ed. Carlota Fernández Travieso. A Caruña: Sielae, 2012. 384 pp. €32.

In their developed form, treatises concerning the rule of princes — or mirrors of princes — set the pivotal figure of the ruler in three main perspectives: God's will and purposes, his family and personal moral life, and his conduct of government. Francisco de Monzón (ca. 1500–75) addresses the first two in his *First Book of the Mirror of the Christian Prince* (1544) and the third in his *Second Book of the Mirror of the Perfect Christian Prince*, its manuscript only recently discovered and published now for the first time. Both, the editor argues, were written in the late 1530s.

Monzón's account of the prince's role follows in the analogically expressed tradition established by John of Salisbury in the twelfth century. He begins with the prince himself, charged with functioning as "head over the members of [this] human body" (63). He moves on to the prince's need for good counselors and close associates

(*privados*), and expounds their requisite attributes. Next comes the essential role of justice in society, with its need for lawyers worthy of their profession in both learning and virtue. Chapters on the social category of the nobility, valued here as contributing to social stability, lead on to the prince's court and those who people it — Monzón arrives at a strongly positive view, in particular of the Portuguese court and reigning monarch, King John III, whom he repeatedly praises. Finally he comes to the medical profession, urging a proper respect for medical practitioners, and so to the various trades and rural labors necessary, he holds, for the sustaining and adornment of society and its members.

Although himself an academic and cleric who came from Alcalá to Lisbon University in the mid-1530s, Monzón was confidently prescriptive in handling matters of government. For most topics he provides sets of numbered “rules” or recommendations (*avisos*) for his “perfect Prince.” But this does not exclude debate. He repeatedly sets out contrasting views concerning classes of people and their worth, presenting the contra before the pro. While this recognizably rhetorical procedure leaves some sense of paired set pieces rather than conclusive argument, the contra chapters have an aspect of serious social observation and engagement. Monzón's mental parameters are conservative, both politically and religiously. He several times refers to Henry Cornelius Agrippa's *De Incertitudine et Vanitate Omnium Scientiarum et Artium* (1526) in order to rebut him, and praises “Christian princes who with holy zeal destroyed heresies.” Not a lawyer himself, he reveals a strong interest in the intellectual traditions of the Roman law and some familiarity with the works of Italian jurists (though regretting the size of their treatises). He draws often on the jurist Barthélemy de Chasseneuz's more approachable *Catalogus Gloriarum Mundi*.

He has a strong interest too in Spanish history and writes forthrightly of the harm done within contemporary Spanish society by its obsessive preoccupation with the Jewish conversos in its midst — this view contrasting strongly with the “purity of blood” statutes soon to prevail in Spain. His admiration for the family pieties of classical antiquity leads him to express comparable admiration for so significant a Renaissance figure as Leonardo Bruni, inspired by a likeness of Petrarch to labor to rival him in his learning. He refers several times to Flavio Biondo's *Roma Triumphans*, of the mid-1400s, and to Bartolomeo Sacchi Platina, whose *De Honesta Voluptate et Valetudine* he esteems for its appreciative treatment of Epicurean philosophy.

This edition does not — mostly — identify Monzón's sources in detail. Legal ones especially seem out of reach. The many footnote references to texts and authors, despite the editor's efforts, often remain imprecise and discouraging in their abbreviated format. Larger intellectual perspectives are not far explored, and to describe this *Libro segundo* as “[un] texto humanista” (15) requires closer analysis. But the introductory account of Monzón's professional career as university professor and royal chaplain is helpful, as is the survey of major points of interest as regards both this *Libro segundo* in itself and significant differences between the 1544 and 1571 editions of the *Libro primero*. In publishing this work the editor gives us a major contribution

to the study not only of Francisco de Monzón and his oeuvre, but also of Portuguese intellectual history (including Spanish-Portuguese intellectual relations) in that century.

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