

Nicodemus Frischlin. *Phasma*.

Vol. 3, Part 2 of *Sämtliche Werke*. Ed. and Trans. David Hotchkiss Price. Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 2007. 422 pp. append. €275. ISBN: 978-3-7728-2154-7.

The Latin prologue to the *Phasma*, “Apparition,” explains that the title is taken from Menander’s comedy in which a girl appears to a young man through a wall-breach between their houses and wins his love. In this new *Phasma*, the devil has already appeared and won sectarians, whom he blinded to the Gospel’s truth that Martin Luther had only just revealed. When the devil saw that the pope (his ally) could not stop Luther, he himself stirred up new interest in old heresies of Berengar, Nestorius, Eutyches, and Arius. Out of the confusion streamed the splinter-groups of the later Reformation: Anabaptists, Schwenckfelders, Zwinglians, Carlstadtians, Calvinists, Papists. In the play the leaders of those movements and Luther variously meet and debate, loosely paralleling events of the next forty years. Eventually, Jesus, Mary, Peter, and Paul appear and refute both Papists and Protestants alike who rejected Luther. A subplot presents rustics who go to perdition for following misguided leaders. Comedy has not thereby become tragedy, Saint Paul explains, for those who do follow the light gain entry into heaven.

David Price has based his new edition on one of the four first printings of the *Phasma* from 1592. The dialogues, scene summaries, and marginal notes are in

Latin, but uniquely among Frischlin's plays, a few speeches are in German, including two final choruses by Christ and Satan, respectively, and an epilogue. Price gives textual variants from the other 1592 printings and includes German translations of *Phasma* 3.3 from 1593, 1603, and 1671.

From his PhD dissertation (1985) and monograph (1990), Price has extensively studied the political dramaturgy of Philipp Nicodemus Frischlin (1547–90), the volatile Tübingen professor who died in exile. Price has called the *Phasma* both Frischlin's "most important theological work," noting the inevitable relation between the theology of its subject matter and the political and social tensions of post-Reformation Germany, as well as "extremely aggressive and bigoted" (*The Political Dramaturgy of Nicholas Frischlin*, 1990). The *Phasma* defends a Lutheran orthodoxy that developed in response to the fears of violent revolution. The debates feature characters speaking biblical proof-texts against others, or self-incriminating ones, or making caricaturish charges of middlebrow theological astuteness. There is some vitriol and crudeness, as when Jesus and the Apostles Peter and Paul encounter Pope Pius IV, who after stating that papal supremacy is upheld by all *Catholici*, Jesus names them *Caco-lyci*. The dialogue becomes increasingly parodic and mocking but stops short of the violent language that would signal the brutality of the Thirty Years' War that was soon to come.

In his own *Nachwort* to the new edition, Price notes that *Phasma* mentions uncertainties about the play's authorship, place of publication, and the order of the first printings, basic problems that Frischlin's other dramas do not share. Price now suggests that the work may not even be by Frischlin, or by him alone, but may even be a product of his students. Students did perform this play before the duke and citizens of Tübingen during Carnival of 1580. The play's correct, even lucid, but textbookish Latin is reminiscent of the university classroom and suggests student participation, as when Thestylis, the wife of the Anabaptist peasant Meliboeus, laments, "*O tempora! O mores!, Ubinam est fides?*, etc." (20).

There are light elements, like the character of the peasant Menalcas, who pitifully laments the confusing multiplicity of teachings; or when Zwingli banters with the nun Brigitta: B. "You are mad to consider [*censeas*] me a harlot." Z. "For my part I don't consider [*censeo*] you such." B. "Then you were falsely accusing me only." Z. "No, by Jove; I declare [*affirmo*] you such" (102).

This authoritative, spacious edition in the series of Frischlin's complete works presents an accurate text with few printing errors, save *natare* for *notare* (line 129), and *adesse* for *adesset* (l. 1009). The necessarily modernized punctuation is an aid to clarity, but the retained colon in line 1599 interrupts the conditional sentence's syntax, and line 2060b should be marked as a question. The modern German translation is literal and accurate, and its range of vocabulary closely matches the Latin, although *Ketzer*, used extensively for *haereticus*, also translates *sectarius* at line 870.

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