Mankind Justified by Faith: Tragicomedy (Tragiqve comedie francoise de l'homme iustifié par Foy)

RECHERCHE

by Henri de Barran (1554)

Introduction et traduction de Richard Hillman
by F.

by Henry

Translated, with an Introduction, by Richard
Although published in Protestant Geneva and disparaging the Roman Catholic church on the grounds of both doctrine and practice, this moral allegory privileges instruction over polemic. It employs the traditional morality-play device of a figure representing Mankind, who, however, finds himself torn less between virtue and vice (the usual situation) than between alternative solutions to his inevitably sinful
state. A representative of the Old Law ("Rabbi"), who at first prevails, advocates outward conformity and
good works; he is opposed by Paul, who preaches the New Law’s (and Luther’s) message of salvation
through faith alone. This proves the means of redeeming Mankind from Satan and his allies.

Barran’s self-styled “tragicomedy” is as obscure as its author, about whom almost nothing is known, and
there is no evidence that it was ever performed, although it possesses highly theatrical qualities. In any
case, the work survives in at least five copies (a relatively high number), while links with several Tudor
morality plays — and arguably, indeed, with the late Elizabethan public theatre — make probable its
circulation within English ecclesiastic and theatrical milieux.

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