

## Three Polemical Sermons Against The Carnival

### Summary

The copious instructive writings by Croatian Kajkavian author Hilarion Gašparoti (1714-1768), *Cvet sveteh* (*Flower of the Devout*) in four volumes, with over three thousand eight hundred pages, were intended for religious and moral instruction of the most widespread reading public. At the end of the first volume there are three fiery polemical sermons against the carnival, with popular, instructive moral tales that the writer borrowed freely from various sources. The moral is aimed at the drastic punishment awaiting those who take part in carnival madness. The thrust of the polemical tales focuses on the question of whether man, made in God's image and countenance, is permitted to use masks. He states and refutes the arguments of enlightened carnival supporters, yet also grapples with the attitudes of the average churchgoers. The carnival festivities are closely related to man's expulsion from paradise, with the devil who "took the guise" of a snake and seduced Eve. Women are accused of being the main culprits for the introduction of carnival festivities, while men are attributed a passive role, coerced by women to join the fun. The peak of carnival madness is proclaimed the fact that women don costumes. Gašparoti describes the carnival days with biting words as the most degenerate level of man's existence: he insists on hypertrophied physiological functions that serve as a literary and instructive contradiction to the spiritual elevation that man should be aiming at. The most weighty condemnation is of dance and dancing as a source of debauchery and direct connection to Satan. The most terrible of all deaths will afflict the dancer. The writer threatens those in costume with the likelihood that their mask will merge with their features; they will never be able to remove it, rip it off or cut it off again! The instructive examples, morals, serve the function of warning and frightening the listeners and readers so that they will not submit to the carnival revelry.

(Translated by Ellen Elias-Bursać)