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(Review) Catholic Reform: From Cardinal Ximenes to the Council of Trent, 1495-1563

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Catholic Reform. From Cardinal Ximenes to the Council of Trent, 1494-1563. by John C. Olin

Review by: Marc R. Forster

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on female monarchs appearing in the drama of Giraldi Cinzio are two cases in point. Others are short and thinly supported, with the result that the reader is either left unconvinced or aching for greater development because of inadequate summary of some complex topic. This is evident in Helge Gamrath's study of Ferrara's contribution to the history of urban planning, in Jørn Moestrup's review of recent studies of Ariosto, and in Neils Martin Jensen's article on music in Ferrara during the reigns of two of its later dukes, Ercole II and Alfonso II.

Still, the book will be interesting and useful to many, based upon the theses and content of several of the studies. Marianne Pade provided an excellent examination of Guarino's reading and use of Caesar, in a manner that challenges some recent work on the humanist educator, like that of Grafton and Jardine. Two studies, Cesare Vasoli's article on Francesco Patrizi and the "end of Italian leadership in humanist philosophy and poetics," and Lene Waage Petersen's structural analysis of the use of irony in *Orlando Furioso*, in all probability generated some lively discussion at the conference. Adriano Prosperi contributed what is, from my perspective, the most interesting of the articles, on definitions of heresy circulating at Ferrara in the context of the marriage of Ercole II and Renata of France in 1528, and the considerable hospitality she offered during her life to persons of questionable orthodoxy. The most interesting cocktail and dinner conversations at the conference undoubtedly focused around two topics, each of which was the subject of a separate study. Iain Fenlon and Thomas Walker examined the importance of musical patronage and production at Ferrara, with Walker urging a shift of attention to this court, rather than to the Medici in Florence, when investigating the origins and early development of opera. Kristen Lippincott and Hannemarie Ragn Jensen reconsidered the interpretation of the Palazzo Schifanoia frescoes, and specifically who, motivated by what interest, might have been the moving force behind the project.

Part of the purpose of the conference, and of this volume, is to encourage additional research. This point is nicely and succinctly put by Werner Gundersheimer in the final contribution. With the city's new Institute for Renaissance Studies already in place, and scholarly work like that presented here as a precedent, pursuit of the ecclesiastical and later cinquecento topics Gundersheimer urges, should bear substantial fruit and contribute considerably to the understanding of Ferrara in the Renaissance.

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Catholic Reform. From Cardinal Ximenes to the Council of Trent, 1494-1563. John C. Olin. New York: Fordham University Press, 1990. 152 pp. \$35.00.

Historians of the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century have struggled to rescue Catholic reform from the shadow of the Protestant Reformation. This volume, which includes a long essay on Catholic reform, a collection of illustrative documents, and a short essay on Ignatius Loyola, is another contribution to this endeavor. Olin, however, goes beyond arguing that efforts to reform the Catholic Church were more than a reaction to the Protestant challenge. According to Olin,

Catholic reform, "Despite its diversity . . . , had an inner unity and coherence, and despite the difficulties that beset it, it may be said to have followed an identifiable and progressive course." (35)

Olin's opening essay guides the reader through this process. He identifies the various strands within the movement to reform the Church. These included the efforts of humanists like Ximenes and Erasmus, who sought to reform society and the Church by a return to scripture. A more individualistic and activist spirituality, especially as promoted by the Oratories of Divine Love, the Theatines, and the Capuchins, developed in Italy already before the Reformation. Olin's focus, however, is on the efforts of reformers at the highest levels of the Church, like Gian Matteo Giberti (Bishop of Verona), Cardinal Gasparo Contarini, Gian Pietro Carafa (the organizer of the Roman Inquisition and later Pope Paul IV), and Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits.

This diverse group (Contarini took a conciliatory tone toward the Protestants but Carafa was fanatically anti-Protestant), which produced the *Concilium de emendanda ecclesia* in 1537, a document that attacked the whole range of clerical abuses that plagued the pre-Tridentine Church. Indeed, Olin sees this report as the beginning of a "constructive movement" (21) that led eventually to the decrees of the Council of Trent. From the late 1530s, the papacy moved, albeit slowly, to reform the Church. Unlike some historians, who see the papacy favoring hierarchy and centralism over spontaneous reform, Olin views the papal leadership as essential for the success of Catholic reform.

Catholic reform coalesced at the Council of Trent. In a sense this follows logically from Olin's emphasis on "reform from above." While he downplays the extent to which the theological decrees of the Council were a defensive reaction to Protestant "innovation," Olin correctly emphasizes the significance of the Council's reform decrees. These decrees went a long way toward reestablishing the centrality of the pastoral work of the clergy and, in the long-run, transformed the Church. Trent, then, was the culmination of the long process of Catholic reform, a process which Olin characterizes as having "a marked personal and pastoral orientation." (35).

Olin effectively and accurately illustrates the vitality and variety of Catholic reform in the sixteenth century. Furthermore, he dispels, if that is any longer necessary, the myth of the rigid, defensive, and unresponsive Catholic Church. Olin is less persuasive in showing that Catholic reform was unified and coherent. A reform "program" of a kind did develop in Rome in the 1540s, but the long and often bitter conflicts that marred the Council of Trent, point up the continued divisions within the Catholic ranks. National and regional varieties of Catholicism, and stubborn resistance to reform by traditionalist populations and entrenched Church institutions, all remained important both before and after Trent. As Olin himself recognizes, the coherence of Tridentine reform came not so much from a consensus within the Church as from the victory of a group of reformers based in Italy and receiving papal support.

Despite these reservations, this volume is both stimulating and useful. The collection of documents allows the nonspecialist and the student to examine the sources of Olin's argument. The reader may find that the documents, which range

from Cardinal Ximenes' Dedicatory Prologue to the Complutensian Polygot Bible (1517) to the Reform Decrees of Trent (1563), convince him of the importance and variety of Catholic reform, rather than of its coherence and unity.

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Roman Canon Law in Reformation England. R. H. Helmholz. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990. 209 pp. \$44.50.

Professor Richard Helmholz is a leading member of a distinguished company of North American scholars who have made an especially noteworthy contribution to the study of English canon law. His latest book traces the changing fortunes of that law under the Tudors and early Stuarts. He is by no means the first to enter this domain. The distinctive strength of Helmholz' achievement lies in his confident ability to set the events of that epoch in a long perspective and his exceptionally wide knowledge of relevant sources of law. With an expert eye for essential developments, he has summed up the results of complex changes in a remarkably small compass. His exposition is a model of elegant lucidity and conciseness. Eminently readable, it will give pleasure to those familiar with any aspect of his subject, while serving as an admirable introduction for those new to it.

Recent years have seen a steadily growing appreciation of the continuing importance of the canon law in post-Reformation England, though on this score Helmholz' conclusions are especially sanguine and robust. High levels of litigation and correctional business point, in his view, to the recovered health of the church courts. He believes that their procedures, particularly on the *ex officio* side, were significantly improved during this period. A learned and judicious final chapter convincingly argues that relations between the civilians and the common lawyers have previously been painted in excessively somber colors. But his most fascinating findings concern canon law scholarship and its sources. He shows that the well-known works of Swinburne and Clerke were but the high peaks of a whole range of mostly unprinted literature of civilian practice. Furthermore, he demonstrates that the authors of this literature remained in close touch with European legal developments. Save for the twelfth century, the years between about 1575 and the civil war were the ones in which English canonical and civilian scholarship flourished most vigorously. Civilians could not ignore the growing body of parliamentary statutes bearing on their jurisdiction. But they interpreted them in the light of the canonical *ius commune*.

"Let us, as far as may be, stick to our legal last." Professor Helmholz has followed Maitland's advice. He has not allowed his attention to be distracted from the legal issues by the political and social context or by time-consuming endeavors to quantify the fluctuating volume of litigation. This single-minded approach has made for cogency and coherence, but has also left his account open to some caveats. There was almost certainly more official encouragement of *praemunire* actions against early Tudor church courts than he suggests. (30) The post-Reformation increase in litigation began well before 1570. (cf. 43) A clearer distinction between different types of "clandestine marriage" would have been helpful on pp. 69-73.