Book Reviews

Jessica M. Dalton

Between Popes, Inquisitors and Princes: How the First Jesuits Negotiated Religious Crisis in Early Modern Italy. St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History. Leiden: Brill, 2020. Pp. xii + 218. Hb, € 121,00 / \$146.00.

This is a study of the papal privilege granted to Jesuit priests in the sixteenth century empowering them to absolve penitent heretics in the confessional and to lift the automatic excommunication that heresy incurred without the penitent needing to go to the inquisition. Without this privilege a priest could grant God's forgiveness to the penitent, but he could not lift the excommunication. This forced the penitent to go to an ecclesiastical authority, normally the inquisitor, to be received back into the Catholic Church. Indeed, penitent heretics preferred to avoid the inquisition that they feared. The book examines how Jesuits acquired and used this privilege in Italy, and how they reacted when a pope revoked the privilege.

Dalton argues that the Jesuits used the privilege to save souls, which was more important to them than following canon law. The privilege enabled them to operate largely independently of papal authority in the struggle to vanquish heresy. Moreover, using the privilege enabled the Jesuits to work with secular princes to combat heresy, and these princes then supported other Jesuit ministries. Dalton politely differs with historians who argue that the Jesuits were agents of the papacy and that confession was a means of controlling the laity.

The story began in Bologna in 1547 when a Jesuit absolved eight or ten heretics in the confessional, followed by a few more cases, including one in Corsica, at that time ruled by Piedmont-Savoy. This persuaded Pope Julius III to confer the privilege on the Jesuits in 1552, which remained in effect for many years. The papacy and the Jesuits generally cooperated, and

the Jesuits distanced themselves from the Inquisition, with a possible exception. In 1567, Pope Pius V sent Cristóbal Rodríguez (1521–81) into the papal state to deal with alleged heretics, whom Rodríguez absolved in the confessional.

But the pope overturned the absolutions and ordered the penitent heretics to Rome where they were imprisoned by the Roman Inquisition. While sixteenth-century Jesuit accounts state that the pope tricked Rodríguez, Dalton raises the possibility that he worked willingly with Pius V as a “papal spy” to entrap penitent heretics.

As heresy declined in Italy, Pope Sixtus V withdrew the privilege in 1587. The Jesuits could now absolve heretics privately only with explicit papal permission. Nevertheless, Dalton argues that the Jesuits, driven by their desire to save souls, continued to absolve heretics in the confessional in defiance of papal commands into the seventeenth century. This leads to a question that needs study: did Jesuit missionaries possess some other authority to forgive and reconcile? Throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries the Society of Jesus sent many Jesuits as missionaries to “our Indies,” which were rural and remote areas of Catholic Italy and Europe that allegedly sheltered pockets of heretics, the superstitious, and those so ignorant of the basic tenets of Christianity that the Jesuits considered them to be pagans. The Jesuits preached and heard confessions in these missions. Did they reconcile heretics, pagans, and the superstitious in the confessional? If so, were they doing so lawfully on the basis of papal or episcopal authorization?

Dalton is to be congratulated for addressing her topic and mining numerous archival sources, some not previously used. At the same time, the book would have been more useful to scholars if the documentation had been expanded. The author seldom provides extracts from the documents on which important assertions are based. She sometimes offers English translations in the text but does not provide the original Italian or Latin in the notes. Nor does she provide the dates and places of letters and other documents cited. If this additional information were provided, the book would be more useful to other historians. Moreover, an extreme reluctance to use dates sometimes makes it difficult to determine in which Jesuit generalate or pontificate an event occurred. In similar fashion, Dalton does not provide additional information, not even life dates, for key figures such as Rodríguez, who was Spanish, not Portuguese as Dalton states. He practically made a career of converting heretics and accompanying military expeditions (Lepanto, Corfù, and Tunis) against Muslims.

Unfortunately, the bibliography and the index are woeful. The bibliography often transforms editors into authors; it lists incomplete and extraneous names; and it omits a few works cited in the notes. At least one entry is listed twice under the names of different editors. There are inconsistencies between footnote citations and bibliographical entries; some entries are garbled; and capitalizations of Italian titles are often inaccurate. In the index, all individual names, whether Jesuits, cardinals, or twentieth-century scholars, are listed

under their first names rather than family names, for example, “Mario Scaduto,” instead of “Scaduto, Mario.” Whether author, copy editor, press, or all three are responsible is unknown.

In summary, this book provides some good and original scholarship. It would have been a more useful book if the author had provided more detail and done a better job of presenting the research.

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Maurits Ebben and Louis Sicking, eds.

Beyond Ambassadors: Consuls, Missionaries, and Spies in Premodern Diplomacy.

Leiden: Brill, 2021. Pp. x + 223. Hb, \$119.00.

The result of a 2016 conference, this volume of essays focuses on the role of non-state actors in diplomacy during the medieval and early modern periods. What emerges is a complex story of consuls, missionaries, and spies contributing to the diplomatic efforts of states even as they pursued other often unrelated and sometimes contradictory purposes. In the spirit of the New Diplomatic History that has taken root in recent decades, the contributions to this volume focus on the process of diplomacy as much as its outcomes and defines diplomacy much more broadly than the official acts of states and their resident ambassadors. States were one type of actor among many—cities, merchant groups, missionary orders, military entrepreneurs, and many others—that carried on their own forms of diplomacy and information gathering. Who constituted an official state actor was often unclear or disputed and various forms of representation also straddled the porous and ill-defined line between official and unofficial diplomacy.

The volume is organized into four parts. Part one problematizes the study of premodern diplomacy both in the context of the New Diplomatic History and premodern legal thinking on the official status of various diplomatic actors. The other three parts then focus in turn on consuls, missionaries, and spies pairing in each part a medieval and an early modern case study. A useful introduction situates the volume in current scholarship and explains its organization.

The two contributions in Part One: Theoretical Foundations provide the reader with broader perspectives through which to consider the case studies