

# H-Net Reviews

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**Matteo Al Kalak.** *Il riformatore dimenticato: Egidio Foscarari tra Inquisizione, concilio e governo pastorale (1512-1564)*. Bologna: il Mulino, 2016. 270 pp. EUR 24.00 (paper), ISBN 978-88-15-26092-5.

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Scholars of early modern Catholicism are used to hearing a great deal about the Tridentine Church's model ecclesiastics and exemplars of piety, figures such as Pius V, Teresa of Avila, and Carlo Borromeo. More research is needed on those who worked toward the reform and renewal of the Roman Church, but whose methods and teachings were ultimately rejected as unorthodox. Matteo Al Kalak reminds us of one such person, the Dominican theologian and bishop of Modena Egidio Foscarari, in *Il riformatore dimenticato: Egidio Foscarari tra Inquisizione, concilio e governo pastorale (1512-1564)*. While Foscarari was unquestionably in harmony with Catholic doctrine, it was, as Al Kalak demonstrates, his conciliatory attitude toward Italy's heretics that eventually led to his falling out of favor with the church. This biography, which consists of a brief historiographical introduction and five chapters, treats at length three main themes: Foscarari's relationship with the Inquisition, his involvement in the Council of Trent, and his activities as the reforming bishop of Modena (1550-64).

The first chapter is, appropriately, foundational. It explains both Foscarari's entrance, as an adolescent, into the Dominican Order at the friary of San Domenico in Bologna, and the context of his spiritual and intellectual formation there during the first half of the Cinquecento. Of particular importance, Al Kalak establishes how significant churchmen present in the city, such as the irenic Gasparo Contarini and the theologically suspect Giovanni Morone, likely influenced him. Al Kalak addresses the monograph's foci over the course of the three substantial chapters that follow. He explains how, curiously, Foscarari played a leading role in safeguard-

ing Catholic orthodoxy, all the while himself becoming a target of the Roman Inquisition. We learn in chapter 2 that during his term as master of the Sacred Palace (1547-50), he assisted in the development of the first Index of Prohibited Books, reviewed with alacrity Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* (1548), and participated in investigations about other notable Italians whose orthodoxy was in question. Al Kalak examines in the fourth chapter the Dominican's multiple contributions during the final phase of Trent. Foscarari's work on behalf of Roman orthodoxy continued there too as he helped judge three heresy cases and assisted in the posthumous theological rehabilitation of Contarini and Reginald Pole through the editing of their writings. He was one of the council fathers selected to revise the Index and also to form the Breviary, Catechism, and Missal.

Yet, as bishop of Modena, Foscarari craved above all reconciliation with heretics, which led to his adoption of a policy of leniency with the city's heterodox, including offering them private absolutions apart from the intervention of the Inquisition. Al Kalak describes in the third chapter how he occasionally protected some heretics, even preventing the extradition of one to Rome. Such an approach definitely alarmed some of the hard-line Catholics in Modena. But it was the assistance Foscarari gave to his predecessor there, Morone, that led to his own run-in with the Inquisition (1558-59), during which he was investigated and imprisoned, but ultimately released and judged innocent of any wrongdoing.

Foscarari was one of sixteenth-century Italy's champions of episcopal residency, which he argued (at Trent,

unsuccessfully) was *ius divinum*. It was as a resident bishop that the Dominican performed his pastoral duties and promoted ecclesiastical reform in Modena, as Al Kalak makes clear in chapter 3. Sent to Modena to improve its spiritual condition after Morone, he threw himself into alleviating the situation of the poor, correcting the clergy, promoting devotional practices, and conducting the episcopal visitation. It was he who secured the Jesuits a stable base in Modena. As bishop, he also promoted conciliation between the city's feuding families.

Where did all of this leave Foscarari in the judgement of fellow Catholics after his death? How was this man who had been simultaneously trusted and treated with suspicion by his church ultimately viewed? Al Kalak cogently answers these questions in the final chapter, entitled "Memoria." Despite Foscarari's zeal for reform, the reality was that efforts in Modena did not engender the desired results. And despite the fact that he was held in high esteem as a bishop by some contemporary ecclesiastics, including Borromeo, in the end his soft and accommodating approach to heresy caused him to become a posthumous anti-model of the Tridentine bishop—resulting in his subsequent historical obscurity, as is reflected, appropriately, in the book's title. Presumably,

Foscarari would have made regular appearances in our surveys of early modern Catholicism had he been more intransigent—more "Tridentine"—in his methodology.

As a whole, *Il riformatore dimenticato* is a lucid and convincing study that relies extensively, and impressively, on archival sources preserved throughout Italy, principally in Modena and Rome. Besides providing historians with valuable insight into the checkered career of a noteworthy Italian prelate of the sixteenth century, it also serves as a useful reminder of the diversity and fluidity of Catholic reform prior to the conclusion of the Council of Trent. Moreover, it sheds much-needed light on the early modern activities of one of Roman Catholicism's older religious orders, which have so often been neglected historiographically. Indeed, this and other monographs, like Piotr Stolarski's *Friars on the Frontier: Catholic Renewal and the Dominican Order in Southeastern Poland, 1594-1648* (2010), contribute significantly to our knowledge of the Dominicans's reform and missionary endeavors during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. *Il riformatore dimenticato* is a successful study that belongs on the shelves of all historians of early modern Italy, early modern Catholicism, the Reformation, and the Dominican Order.

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