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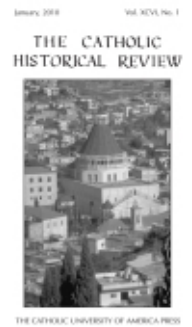
*Adhortatio ad concordiam* (review)

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Overell conducts her narrative expertly, tracing the interactions of numerous figures over several decades without confusion or repetitiousness. The book is readable and vivid; one wishes for illustrations, presumably impossible because of cost. Overell is entirely capable of analyzing theological distinctions when appropriate, as in her discussion of the *Beneficio di Cristo*. The style is racy at times but never out of control, and the absence of all but a very few (and very minor) typographical errors is refreshing.

Italian reform was, of course, only one of the lines of thought from mainland Europe that shaped the English Reformation. Torrance Kirby's *The Zurich Connection and Tudor Political Theology* (Boston, 2007) deals with another of these lines, in a very different way. We need more books that in one way or another "encourage Tudor historians never to neglect the view across the Channel," as Diarmaid MacCulloch comments on the back cover of Overell's book. She has done a superb and timely job, marshaling a complex body of material in an enlightening and stimulating work.

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*Adbortatio ad concordiam*. By Isidoro da Chiari. Edited, translated, and annotated by Marco Cavarzere. [Temi e testi, Vol. 63.] (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura. 2008. Pp. lii, 117. €25,00. ISBN 978-8-884-98489-0.)

In 1537 the papal commission led by Cardinal Gasparo Contarini produced the *Consilium de emendanda ecclesia*, in which the "serious ills" of the Church and the abuses of the Roman curia were outlined. Martin Luther's introduction to a pirated edition of the leaked report, which was supposed to prepare the way for a general council and the healing of religious divisions in Christendom, was gleeful and sarcastic: "The pope is trailing his poor council around like a cat with kittens . . . so now they have invented a new stratagem, and that is this booklet which so beguilingly proclaims the reformation of the whole Church. If this lie meets with belief, no council will henceforth be necessary." In spite of these comments, there were a number of men on the Catholic side during the 1530s who thought that some conciliation with Luther, Philip Melancthon, and the mainstream of German reformers was still possible. One of these men was the Benedictine Isidoro (Taddeo Cucchi) da Chiari who dedicated his *Adbortatio ad concordiam* to Contarini. Adriano Prosperi has described this work as "tra i più singolari della cultura del Cinquecento italiano" (p. vi), and it has been considered by Silvana Seidel Menchi as a notable Italian expression of Erasmian piety. In this first modern edition of the text, the editor and translator, Marco Cavarzere, has made available a text that embodies many of the hopes and contradictions of the "moderate" reformers led by Contarini, and that helps to throw light on the failure of the project of conciliation by c. 1542.

As Cavarzere suggests, Isidoro da Chiari's irenic and Erasmian humanist outlook, which is evident throughout the *Adbortatio*, was probably shaped

by his experience of the learned environment of the Cassinese congregation in Parma after 1517. However, the title page of the *editio princeps*, published in Milan in 1540, prominently asserts Isidoro's Brescian origins, and perhaps it is worth noting that there were Erasmian circles in Brescia during the first two decades of the sixteenth century; indeed, the first Italian vernacular translation of Erasmus's *Enchiridion* was published in that city in 1531. Moreover, in 1524 Pope Clement VII wrote to the nuncio in Venice condemning the spread of heresy in the Bresciano, and three years later, it was necessary for the local authorities to issue a proclamation against the "rebelli de la religion Christiana et del divino culto" who were blaspheming against God, the Virgin, and the saints during the night. However, the critical factor in the production of the *Adbortatio* was undoubtedly Isidoro's presence in Rome at the behest of Gregorio Cortese, a member of the reform commission and the Benedictine abbot of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice. Isidoro's work was as learned and conciliatory in tone as many of Cortese's works, and it was directed toward reformers like Melanchthon, whose *Loci communes* of 1535 seemed to offer grounds for hope of conciliation. Isidoro deplored the discussion of theology and the airing of doctrinal differences in public, and he argued that the vast majority of laypeople could not understand the finer points of difference. Although he attacked the Lutheran sense of justification and the denial of free will, he also followed an Erasmian strategy of taking some points of dispute as *adiaphora* and focused instead on a core belief in divine mercy. As Cavarzere remarks with some understatement: "L'adiaforismo alla fine non ottenne la palma della vittoria nell'agone dottrinale cinquecentesco" (p. xxix). More generally, Isidoro's views (based on the earliest texts of Luther rather than the banned later works) were recognized as hopelessly inadequate by German commentators like the embattled Johannes Cochlaeus, who was disappointed by Isidoro's desire to leave more uncomfortable points of difference to one side. Cochlaeus was much more realistic about the prospects for conciliation, and he argued that arms were needed to bring the German princes and the newly converted King Henry VIII of England into submission.

The *Adbortatio* therefore belongs to a moment in the history of Catholic reform reflected in the *Consilium*, with which it shares some characteristics, and in the irenic works of Contarini or Pier Paolo Vergerio. These works were produced when the hopes for the success of a council of conciliation under imperial patronage were high, and the *Adbortatio* may stand as the most complete statement of the "moderate" party. However, as Cavarzere recognizes, Contarini and his colleagues in the commission were in a minority in the college of cardinals; and in concentrating on humanist solutions of *adiaphora* and Nicodemism rather than institutional stumbling blocks, they ultimately failed to provide a bridge to reform.