

Adam Patrick Robinson. *The Career of Cardinal Giovanni Morone (1509–1580): Between Council and Inquisition.*

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In this volume, Adam Patrick Robinson reconsiders the career of Giovanni Morone, the subject of many hundreds of pages of erudition composed by scholars exemplified by Massimo Firpo and Dario Marcatto. For them, and for many other Italian scholars who have studied Morone, he is best understood as a victim, like fellow church leaders viewed as part of the contemporary group known as *spirituali*. He was, in their view, seduced into theological positions too radical for the times, and ended up subjected to an outrageous Inquisitorial investigation championed by the *zelanti* (or *intransigenti*), who seized control of the Roman church in the mid-1540s, ushering in the Counter Reformation. Robinson sees the picture quite differently.

To begin with, Robinson asserts that to think of Morone even primarily — let alone exclusively — as a victim leads to serious misunderstanding. Although imprisoned and interrogated as a suspected heretic, Morone's conditions as a reforming bishop, as a papal diplomat, and as a presiding legate at the final sessions of the Council of Trent in 1562/63, Robinson demonstrated, were just as interesting. The image of a prelate behind bars in Castel Sant'Angelo at the express command of his implacable enemy — who also happened to be the reigning pope — may be infinitely more titillating than the picture of a bishop directing clerical activities via long-distance correspondence, or than a sketch of a diplomatic legate playing confidence games with an emperor and powerful cardinals about interminable meetings of prelates. The first image would surely make a better movie, but the human Morone was more complex. He was a reformer who studied in Padua and made an administrative career in Rome and Modena, in contact with the usual constellation of humanists that inhabited those places in the early 1500s. Despite his common interest with those humanists in reform ideas, his willingness to discuss clerical marriage, his support for granting the chalice to the laity, and his general inclination toward practical, conciliar solutions for contemporary religious problems, he expressed suspicion of Lutheran ideology and mistrust of papal enemies. The brilliant diplomat that pacified aggravated heads of state and found ground for compromise among prelates with radically different ecclesiologies was a reluctant legate, one who often pleaded for release from his employers. In the end, Robinson considers Morone most comparable to Desiderius Erasmus. Morone was a pragmatist, Robinson insists, steering a middle path between conciliarism and

papalism and exhibiting flexibility of thought plus considerable independence of Rome, even while proving staunchly loyal to Pope Pius IV.

Still greater complexity can be found, according to Robinson, when examining how Morone fit among peers, the members of the *spirituali* and *zelanti*. Like contemporary churchmen studied by others, Morone was someone who worked comfortably with persons identified on both sides of this presumed divide. And the vicissitudes of Morone's career — both before and after the 1542 date allegedly marking commencement of war between the factions — illustrate, again, the absurdity of such a simplistic view. Agents of the Roman Inquisition who began clandestine action against him and others faced an angry Pope Julius III when their operation was revealed. The charges, retractions, and rescinded retractions that followed leave an unresolved mess. When considering the obsessively regular juridical methods of contemporary Inquisitors, one might draw the same conclusion Morone apparently did. Gian Pietro Carafa and Michele Ghislieri orchestrated the action out of a personal definition of orthodoxy, one in no way representative of the real nature of the papal office that each of them later filled. Without such a conclusion, Morone's acceptance of the legation to Trent and his extraordinary effort — even in the face of illness — helping achieve a conclusion that respected both the spirit of collective governance and of papal authority, are inexplicable.

Robinson draws cautious, properly qualified conclusions on what this more nuanced, complex description of Morone suggests about standard images of Reformation and Counter Reformation. Perhaps most interestingly, he revives an old historical category, apparently long deceased after attacks by proponents of the victimized portrait of Morone: Robinson insists his career corroborates existence of "Catholic Reform." Robinson's work is an important contribution to early modern Italian religious history.

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