
Lu Ann Homza's study of the nature of religious authority in the Spanish Renaissance is arranged in two sections of three chapters each. The first part examines texts and events that yield insights on “explicit statements on hermeneutics” (p. xxiii), while the second group investigates “pastoral materials” (*ibid.*) that tend to complement the more theoretical findings argued in the first section. Altogether, she suggests that religious authority in the Spanish Renaissance is more complex than previous studies allow, and that its unique blending of scholastic and humanistic concerns is considerably different from what one would expect to find, given the putative polarization of these two modes elsewhere in Europe. Homza structures the two sections into sequences of case studies, moving from the relatively straightforward to the more complex in each section.

The first group opens with a discussion of the trial before the Spanish Inquisition of the well-known scholar and ecclesiastic Juan de Vergara in the 1530s, moves on to an excellent reading of the 1527 Valladolid conference on the implications of various Erasmian positions, and concludes with a study of the Biblical translation of a Spanish *converso* Pedro Ciruelo. All three cases reveal Homza's close familiarity with her sources and illustrate why such sources deserve a wider audience than they have received to date. Readers might take exception to her assertion that the Spanish Inquisition was a “relatively benign institution” (p. 6), and indeed her own study shows that it did convict Vergara on trumped-up charges, but she substantiates her claim that highly placed ecclesiastics like Vergara felt entitled to preferential treatment from the disciplinary organs of the Church, even though they often failed to receive it. Vergara's writings reveal him as “a humanist who invoked Aquinas and an Erasmian who cherished his own rank” (p. 45), in apparent contradiction to sixteenth-century stereotypes.

The second case study, concerning the 1527 Valladolid conference, details the debate of some thirty-three Spanish theologians over the orthodoxy of various excerpts taken from Erasmus's writing. Homza presents their debate as alternating
between humanistic and scholastic methods, and although the scholars focussed primarily on doctrinal and devotional issues, while ignoring the specific problems presented by scriptural translation that may have engendered Erasmus's views, they did grapple with Erasmus's textual emendations. This naturally brought them into the field of textual criticism, and although several participants were more or less amenable to Erasmus's annotations and emendations, and most were supportive of his reverence for the early church, they were less sanguine regarding his criticisms of Jerome (whose authority they upheld) and various other saints. In the end, Homza concludes that the conference opted to favor “ecclesiastical tradition” rather than the “textual inconsistencies” (p. 71) which had prompted Erasmus's attention in the first place. Homza notes that, since the conference was held at the behest of the Inquisitor General, who requested that its proceedings be written down and submitted to him, several participants seemed to shape their responses accordingly, although she tends to dismiss this caveat by noting that other participants expressed their support of Erasmus with zeal.

The third case concerns the biblical translations of a Spanish converso who “applied humanistic techniques in his translations, and thereby reveals the potential flexibility of Spanish intellectual culture” (p. 78). Ciruelo's translation, made after the Complutensian Polyglot, departs from it in several key ways; although he supported the “traditional authority of Jerome” (p. 106), Ciruelo nonetheless felt that the latter's translation of the Old Testament was in fact a paraphrase. Here Homza's analysis is both informative and compelling.

In the second section of the work, Homza presents case studies dealing with pastoral concerns: contemporary treatises discussing the relationship between a priest's responsibility for his flock and his own status before God; the nature of a priest's control over his flock through the sacrament of penance; and the vexed issue of the competing system of belief and manipulation seen in witchcraft.

Homza's case studies in this part are decidedly intriguing, but her overall perspective lacks theological sophistication and persuasive argumentation, despite her confident use of both sources and secondary material. Chief among the difficulties is the frequent suggestion that religious authority is unambiguously analogous to the exercise of power conceived in overtly secular terms. Notable, too, are instances where her argument assumes a common perspective among readers, which may, in fact, be absent. When Homza flatly states that our “modern antipathy toward organized religious and secular bureaucracy” (p. 135) makes difficult a nuanced approach to ecclesiastical discipline, one wonders what her data are. When she claims that we are put off by some churchmen's ability to combine elements (such as discipline and love) that “strike us as distinct” (p. 136), she may not be speaking for as many readers as she imagines.

Other, more concrete, problems surface here. For example, when Homza claims that because a particular clerical treatise mentions the importance of using the correct verbal formula when midwives baptize infants, the author thereby “deputizes midwives to act in the clergy's place” (p. 139), the implication is that this is, in some way, counter to custom. In fact, this has little to do with the “priests'
monopoly on the sacraments” (ibid.), since a priest cannot deputize. The fact that for centuries lay persons were routinely expected to baptize infants in mortal jeopardy detracts from Homza’s suggestion that the author of this particular treatise was effectively deputizing his lay readers. At times Homza labors too hard for her point: for example, her conclusion that certain sixteenth-century Spanish authors lacked “contextual and historical sensitivity” because they used the actions of exemplary Biblical shepherds (e.g., Moses and Jesus) in their analogies “despite the profound differences between one era and the next” (p. 146) seems unreasonably forced. Elsewhere her assertions lack both evidence and specificity, something which is particularly troubling, given her attention to social and cultural issues.

These difficulties compromise what are often important analyses, and while their cumulative weight is not overwhelming, they detract from the force of Homza’s presentations. Yet her book is certainly provocative, and it succeeds in stimulating our interest in what is certainly a neglected aspect of early modern Iberian studies.

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Antonio Guevara, né dans la province de Santander, au nord de l'Espagne, entre 1480 et 1490, dans une branche cadette de famille noble, doit, à son oncle, le privilège de pouvoir se rendre à la cour dès l'âge de douze ans. Il reçoit ainsi, très tôt, une formation et une initiation à la vie courtisane. En 1506 ou 1507, après la mort de son oncle, il entre chez les Franciscains et devient prêtre vers 1513. Au cours de sa formation à la vie monastique il acquiert une solide connaissance de l'antiquité.

Sa carrière va être transformée par des opportunités politiques. À l'occasion de la révolte des Comunidades, alors que la grande majorité des moines prennent le parti des révoltés, Antonio Guevara choisit la cause de Charles Quint. Sa fidélité au souverain lui vaut d'être choisi comme prédicateur royal. La confiance du monarque est telle qu'il le nomme commissaire de l'Inquisition à Valence pour servir de médiateur dans l'affaire des Germanias, mouvement insurrectionnel contemporain des Comunidades. Son ascension politique continue puisqu'en 1526, il devient historiographe impérial. De 1526 à 1529, il vit en permanence à la cour où il cumule les charges d'historiographe, de prédicateur royal et de consulteur du Saint Office. Outre ses fonctions prestigieuses, il est renommé et même célèbre pour avoir publié un livre sur Marc Aurèle en 1528. En 1529, il est évêque de Guadix et en 1536 de Mondonedo. Il meurt en 1545.