John W. O'Malley

Trent: What Happened at the Council. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013. Pp. 335. Hb, \$27.95.

O'Malley's book does a great service by restoring the actual history of the council to the larger phenomenon of *Trent and All That* (to quote the title of O'Malley's 2002 book on the culture of Tridentinism), successfully detaching the myths from the history of the most consequential council of early modern Catholicism. *Trent: What Happened at the Council* opens with a chapter on "the fifteenth-century prelude," which is followed by a chapter on the struggle to convoke the council and a chapter on the its three macro-periods—the opening session of 1545–1547, the middle years of 1547–1562, and the last and most productive period of 1562–1563. The conclusion and the epilogue paint a masterful picture of the achievements of Trent within the framework of both the pre-Tridentine period and the Tridentine era and beyond, until Vatican II.

The Jesuits appear in the book less prominently than one might expect, but their superior general, Diego Laínez, is mentioned in connection with three key issues. The first is the most important institutional "invention" of Trent, seminaries for the formation of priests. We are familiar with the impact of the seminaries on the history of the post-Tridentine clergy, but O'Malley points out that the council intended to create them only for candidates who were too poor to afford an education. In particular, the author emphasizes the role of Laínez during the debate of May 1563, in which the general offered the example of the formation of Jesuits as a solution to the problems affecting the clergy. The second matter is the discussion of clerical celibacy, during which Laínez connected the issue to problems regarding the formation of the clergy, arguing that one gives youth a good education so they will respect the clergy's celibacy. The third subject, addressed in the conclusion of the book, is that of the consequences of Trent for the portion of the church that was far from Rome and Europe, especially the Jesuit missions in Asia. In these areas, the author suggests that "the impact of Trent varied considerably. For Jesuits working in distant Lima or even in Manila it was still palpable, but how palpable, for instance, for those working in Nagasaki or Beijing?" (274).

In this conclusion we find one of the key ways in which Trent is vital to our understanding of Catholicism. In contrast to Vatican II, Trent was still the council of an almost exclusively European Catholicism; yet it opened a new chapter for a church that was becoming increasingly global, thanks to the missionary efforts of the religious orders—whose role in the revival of Catholicism at Trent O'Malley often underscores. It is also striking to note the differences—but also the similarities—between Trent and Vatican II, especially in regard to

such matters as the importance of the political context of the sixteenth century for the council; the positional dynamics among the pope in Rome, the council fathers, and the external interested observers of the council proceedings; the difficulty in dealing with the reform of the Roman Curia; and the necessity of postponing until the post-conciliar period key decisions the council could not make (such as the decision regarding the catechism).

O'Malley humbly states that "with this small book [he] make[s] no big claims" (11). But the impact of this small book will be considerable in light of the recently (within the last few years) renewed nostalgia for a "council of Trent" that has been used by advocates of a restorationist, anti-Vatican II agenda. O'Malley tells the story of Trent as a highly complicated moment in church history, in which were adopted a clear pastoral agenda (which included the rediscovery of the pastoral ministry of church positions) and a nuanced approach to the controversial theological issues opened up by the Reformation (Trent did not condemn persons). In this, O'Malley vindicates and liberates Trent from its "black legend"—much of which is still very much alive even among Catholic historians. The title of this book evokes O'Malley's other magisterial work, *What Happened at Vatican II*, which was published in 2008. That volume reopened a debate on the Second Vatican Council that, at the time, was considered dead or irrelevant to the future of Catholicism. This book on Trent is the perfect companion to that on Vatican II for anyone interested in rediscovering the fascinating history of these two capital moments in the Catholic theological tradition.

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DOI 10.1163/22141332-00203005-04