Celeste McNamara

The Bishop's Burden: Reforming the Catholic Church in Early Modern Italy. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2020. Pp. 297 + xv. Hb, \$75.00.

If the goal of the Council of Trent was to create a Catholic Church that possessed a uniformity of belief and practice, then the council's decrees were moribund at best upon confirmation. The wide variety found across the early modern Catholic world—from Rome to Speyer to Lima to Goa—meant that Tridentine Catholicism was never going to be just one thing. In fact, even the idea of “the church” breaks down when we consider the great assortment of beliefs and wide range of cultural practices that fit under the umbrella of Catholicism. As we have seen in recent scholarship, however, the question of whether Trent was successful is perhaps beside the point. Rather, given that the ideals of Reform and the reality of reform could never be in concert, the more pointed question should be exactly what Catholicism after Trent looked like, not if it was “Tridentine,” whatever that term might mean.

Contributing to this ongoing debate about the nature of Catholicism in the two centuries after Trent is Celeste McNamara's thoroughly researched and engaging study of Gregorio Barbarigo (1625–97), bishop of Padua from 1664 until his death. A cardinal, papable twice, and canonized in 1960, Barbarigo is hardly an obscure figure. But he has yet to receive requisite scholarly treatment. Part of this is because Padua is not Venice. La Serenissima's second city lacks for some the cachet of the metropole or even the *Stato da mar*, both of which continue to be the focus of fruitful scholarly investigation. But this has long been a historiographical missed opportunity. Moreover, as McNamara points out—and this is why this book is so important—he was bishop in the late seventeenth century, a period many have erroneously considered far too late for consideration when we discuss Trent, reform, and early modern Catholicism.

Amending these oversights is important if we are to understand the true nature of what McNamara calls, simply but aptly, Catholic Reform. While studies on Rome, Venice, and other centers of power remain crucial, most Catholics lived in the rural dioceses and parishes of early modern Europe. Likewise, by emphasizing Trent, or Counter-Reformation, or even John O'Malley's “Early Modern Catholicism,” McNamara correctly posits that we miss a lot about how Catholicism was a lived experience, not just a set of doctrines and beliefs. Thus, the focus on the institutional and curial side of things or even how Catholicism stood apart from Protestantism has led us to some wrong conclusions: that Trent was always the driving force of reform; that, by the Peace of Westphalia

(1648), Catholic Reform was more or less wrapped up; that Catholicism in the hinterlands was indistinguishable from in the cities and loci of power.

To correct these misconceptions, McNamara's study is a systematic unpacking of all the ways that Barbarigo tackled reforming the diocese of Padua. What is most striking in this study, and what the reader should see as the whole point of Barbarigo's project, is the mind-numbingly quotidian nature of reform. McNamara argues that "Barbarigo's strategies, while particular to Padua and himself, are representative of the methods of many reforming bishops [...], bishops had to identify the most pressing problems and strategize ways to handle them, in order to create a well-organized Church with educated and moral clergy and devout, educated, and obedient laypeople" (24–25). Moving beyond the hagiography that surrounds reformers like Carlo and Federico Borromeo or theologians like Robert Bellarmine, McNamara explores how being a reforming bishop was a "Sisyphean task" (28) peppered with visitations, meetings, letters, interventions, the coordination of a bureaucracy, and the micromanagement of a team of vicars to do what no single human could. What comes through is not the heroic tale of a saintly bishop with seemingly otherworldly talents. Rather, as the title of the book suggests, he was an overworked and overburdened shepherd trying desperately to safeguard the souls in his care by staying one step ahead of whatever challenge came next.

Over the course of five chapters, structured thematically rather than chronologically, McNamara breaks down the various ways in which Barbarigo approached reform. This both gives us a sense of his various methods as well as shows how many pieces parts were in motion; this also underscores how much he had on his plate and how being a bishop was not about waving a magic wand or forcing reform on unsuspecting parishioners and priests, but hinged on cooperation, compromise, and sometimes recognizing his limitations. Readers of this journal should take particular note of how Barbarigo borrowed from the methods of the Jesuits, such as his reliance on the *Ratio studiorum* for his educational program as well as Ignatian spirituality in the form of the *Spiritual Exercises*. This is particularly noteworthy given the tumultuous relationship between Venice and the Society of Jesus, which had only recently returned after its expulsion in the wake of Pope Paul V's 1606 interdict of the Venetian Republic. Throughout, we also get a window into the psyche of a dedicated servant who chose this vocation. As the first son of a powerful Venetian nobleman, Barbarigo could have settled into a cushy life in the patriate. Instead, he wore the mantle of servant of servants, leant on the work of previous reformers, modeled his spirituality after Ignatius of Loyola and was a

student of the *Exercises*, navigated the various power players who could often obstruct his work, and yet never felt that he did enough. Sisyphean, indeed.

Sisyphean as well is the impeccable research across ten archives in Padua, Rome, and Venice. McNamara possesses a keen eye for both the anecdote—many of which are downright hilarious and scintillating—and the larger picture. The individual stories of drunken, illiterate priests with live-in girlfriends and parishioners just trying to save their souls (but not too hard) are well placed into the larger context of Catholic reform to remind us that Barbarigo's problems plagued many a bishop throughout rural Catholic Europe. The archival bounty McNamara has uncovered has given us a particularly rich insight into the typical bishop's burdens: a large diocese, never enough supplies or time, and Hydra-like political and religious forces that always seem to get in the way just as one problem ebbed. Barbarigo's ultimate lesson for us is that Trent gave bishops like him little guidance for how to tend to the flock; and in this sense Trent was a failure. But this also meant there was plenty of room for creativity and adaptation, allowing bishops like Barbarigo to borrow methods from the Venetian state, reformers like Carlo Borromeo, and orders like the Society of Jesus. Catholic Reform, McNamara tells us, was whatever it needed to be. In this sense, *The Bishop's Burden* sagaciously elucidates that if there is anything to learn from Tridentine Catholicism—if we should dare to use such a phrase—it is that such a concept means very little about the eponymous council's decrees and has everything to do with how bishops grappled with their silences.

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Hearing Faith: Music as Theology in the Spanish Empire. Leiden: Brill, 2020. Studies in the History of Christian Traditions, 194. Pp. xvi + 244. Hb, €107.00 / \$128.00.

If there are good reasons for supposing that the Spanish empire might provide fertile ground for an investigation into music as theology, there are also good reasons for venturing into it with caution. After all, the “Spanish empire” encompassed a huge geography with an astonishing array of cultures, languages, faith communities, and theologies. And the musical practices of these