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DeSilva, Jennifer Mara (ed.). *Episcopal Reform and Politics in Early Modern Europe*

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DeSilva, Jennifer Mara (ed.).

Episcopal Reform and Politics in Early Modern Europe.

Early Modern Studies 10. Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2012. Pp. xiv, 226. ISBN 978-1-61248-072-5 (paperback) \$56.25.

This welcome collection of articles by emerging scholars highlights the myriad impediments to the full realization of the Tridentine ideal of episcopally-driven Catholic reform in early modern Europe. Invoking “Tip” O’Neill’s famous adage that “All politics is local” (ix), William V. Hudon in his foreword (ix–xiv) articulates the contributors’ aim to move beyond old polemics about Counter-Reformation/Catholic Reform and even more recent models of “confessionalization” and “social disciplining.” Rather, they develop Hubert Jedin’s insights into the “compromises” (and contradictions) of Trent and, particularly, Giuseppe Alberigo’s view of how local conditions and interests shaped (and limited) episcopal reform efforts. Jennifer Mara DeSilva’s introduction (1–25) briskly surveys the conflation of spiritual and temporal powers that characterized the episcopacy’s evolution over the Middle Ages down to Trent, and provides a handy inventory of sources and sites for local episcopal studies (11–15). The nine chapters that follow focus on Italy (four), France and Switzerland (three), the Netherlands (one) and England (one), highlighting a variety of legal, political, and social constraints that conditioned local episcopal reforms in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Raymond A. Powell opens a first section on “Episcopal Authority” with a meticulous analysis of episcopal promotions under Mary Tudor (26–45). Noting that all but one bishop refused to submit to the Elizabethan settlement of 1559, he challenges Eamon Duffy’s view that such resistance was owing to a “dramatic stiffening of spine . . . among the upper clergy” during the Restoration and credits it more to a “packed” episcopacy (40–41) that Mary chose herself. With little coaching from Cardinal Pole, she favoured candidates who had demonstrated loyalty to herself and her mother and a willingness to suffer prison, exile, or confiscation for the sake of traditional Catholicism under her father and Edward. Turning to the Low Countries, Hans Cools follows the histories of the six dioceses of the Netherlands from Charles V’s ascent in 1515 to Pope Paul IV’s complete redrawing of the region’s ecclesiastical map in 1559 (46–62). Because three of them lay in French and Burgundian territory, the Hapsburgs focused on their political importance and relied heavily

on a coterie of aristocratic families to secure election of their favourites. After the reorganization, Phillip II turned from the aristocracy to appoint reform-minded bishops, provoking aristocratic and popular resentment that fed into the Dutch Revolt of 1566. Antonella Perin and John Alexander recount the poignant case of the hapless bishop of Tortona, Cesare Gambara (1548–91; pp. 63–87). A pragmatic reformer, his modest but sensible efforts to rebuild the Tortona cathedral were overtaken by a more grandiose project supported by his own canons, civic authorities, wealthy patrons, and numerous ecclesiastical superiors including Archbishop Borromeo of Milan. Gambara was reduced to fighting a rear-guard action against the reconstruction of his own cathedral.

Jennifer Mara DeSilva leads the second section on “Pastoral Practice” with a study of Paris de’ Grassi, the papal master of ceremonies (1504–28) and absentee bishop of Pesaro (1513–28; pp. 88–109). In contrast to the ideal set forth by reformers like Giustiniani and Quirini of the resident bishop as “attentive observer,” de’ Grassi provided a “more flexible yet equally giving custodial model” (105). Visiting his diocese only three times for a few months, he conveyed his solicitude through “a whirlwind of organized activities” (95) that included repairing buildings, establishing dowry funds, reviewing constitutions, touring the diocese, joining religious processions and meeting with confraternities. His record nevertheless compared favourably to those of contemporary reformers (103–06). John Christopoulos offers a finely calibrated analysis of the paradoxes of Sixtus V’s 1588 condemnation of abortion as murder and reservation of such cases to the papacy (110–27). This effectively undercut the authority of bishops just as they had reserved such cases from their confessors to themselves. Meant to discourage abortion by underscoring its gravity, such measures actually heightened the penitent’s social visibility and thus discouraged confession and the pursuit of absolution. In 1591 Gregory XIV revoked Sixtus’s bull, restoring the power of absolution not to the bishops, however, but to local confessors. Jill Fehleison provides a close analysis of François de Sales’s early preaching mission to Chablais in the 1590s that preceded his episcopate at Geneva (1602–22; pp. 128–46). Acknowledging textual problems (135) and the importance of Savoyard political support (144), Fehleison underscores de Sales’s defence of Catholic doctrines such as the real presence in the Eucharist, his promotion of material devotions such as the veneration of the cross, and his skill in attacking Protestant leaders without offending their followers (potential converts) in the “dialogue” (144) between Catholics and Protestants.

Linda Lierheimer begins the third section on “Clerical Reform” with a skillfully framed analysis of the Tridentine, Gallican, aristocratic, and other influences that frustrated efforts by Bishop Sébastien Zamet of Langres (1615–54) to reform his diocese’s nunneries (147–72). Determined to impose uniformity and enforce enclosure, he was countered by nuns who by various legal maneuvers made claustration itself the basis of their claims to autonomy and right to resist. Laymen and secular clergy were likewise adept at manipulating the law to evade episcopal supervision, as Celeste McNamara demonstrates in her lively analysis of the visitation records of Cardinal Bishop Gregorio Barbarigo of Padua (1664–97; pp. 173–93). Even a fleet of 41 (often incompetent) vicars did not fully enable Barbarigo to overcome distance and Venetian interference in monitoring the 327 parishes of his huge diocese. Self-aggrandizing priests like Don Pietro Zanone turned convents into harems (184), and clandestine marriages were questioned only after spousal abuse (190). Finally, Jean-Pascal Gay provides a taut survey of the Inquisition’s influence on negotiations between the papacy, the French crown, and an episcopacy sensitive to its Gallican liberties over how to try rebellious or heretical bishops, particularly after the rise of Jansenism (194–214). More attuned to doctrinal than jurisdictional issues, it pushed popes toward rigid positions that actually impeded the practical (negotiated) implementation of their authority, in the end abetting the bishops’ freedom of action.

All of these contributions are fluently written, amply documented, and contain rich bibliographies. They do much to qualify conventional notions of the effectiveness of Catholic reform or the thoroughness of “confessionalization.”

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Du Gardin, Louis.

Les Premières Adresses du chemin du Parnasse.

Éd. Emmanuel Buron et Guillaume Peureux. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2012. 328 p. ISBN 978-2-8124-0390-3 (broché) 38 €.

Médecin qui vécut dans le Nord de la France, à Douai en particulier où il fut professeur (il est l’auteur de plusieurs traités de médecine parus chez l’éditeur