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Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin

Catholic Europe, 1592–1648: Centre and Peripheries. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. 272. Hb, \$100.

In 1619, a missionary report from the Balkans noted that inhabitants of the village of Zenta were reluctant to take part in a Mass being celebrated by Jesuits who had recently arrived in the area. The Catholic villagers feared it was an attempt to convert them to Protestantism. Encapsulated within this brief but striking case are the themes at the heart of this book: the local Catholicism of those living on the “peripheries” of Europe, the Tridentine Catholicism of the “center” in Rome, and the encounter between the two.

Recent studies have revealed the peculiar traits of numerous “local” religious cultures in the period after Trent. Local varieties of early modern Catholicism were dependent on different social, political, and geographical contexts. The cumulative result of such research is a mass of valuable, but often disconnected case studies. Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin builds on the strengths of this field both by emphasizing the plurality of Catholicism and by focusing on the period after Trent. In particular, Ó hAnnracháin draws attention to the active generation of reform post-Trent, showing that it constantly adapted to contemporary events in 1592 to 1648. His use of the center and peripheries framework advances our understanding even further by re-connecting the plural Catholicisms of the margins to the central orthodoxies of Rome. Ó hAnnracháin uses two approaches to re-situate these isolated peripheries.

The first approach is a comparative analysis of Catholicism across seven localities. Ó hAnnracháin examines the evolution of Catholic renewal in the peripheries and elucidates the distinctive characteristics of each territory. In contrasting the English experience with Ireland, for example, the critical factor of ethnicity is brought to the fore. In Ireland, religion and ethnicity often overlapped to form a “deadly cocktail,” whereas English recusants were partially protected from persecution by a shared English identity with the Protestant majority. Ó hAnnracháin splits the territories surveyed into two: the “Western margins” (chapter two) of Britain, Ireland, and the Netherlands, which are characterized as harboring Catholicism in the context of “a hostile confessional state”; and “East Central Europe” (chapter three) consisting of Poland/Lithuania, Austria and Bohemia, the Czech Crown Lands and Hungary, where indigenous Protestant communities were recatholicized. Ó hAnnracháin exchanges Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia’s more familiar general categories of “militant,” “triumphant,” or “martyred” Catholicism (R. Po-Chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540–1770* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998]) for nuanced descriptions of Catholicism in each region.

He emphasizes the diverse experiences of Catholicism, for example, as a proscribed religion, or as a product of coercion; as a faith practiced under a Catholic monarch, or as a minority belief.

The second approach explicitly examines two elements of the papacy's relationship with the margins through case studies focusing on the northern Balkan peninsula and Hungary. This original research is based primarily on missionary and nuncio correspondence with central Rome from the archives of Hungary and Italy. The first case study (chapter four) explores papal patronage of war with the Ottoman Empire in 1593–1606. The research reveals how papal diplomats attempted to maneuver European states to counter Turkish power in the region, but ultimately failed to bring rival Catholic powers together for the cause. Ó hAnnracháin powerfully argues that, like the Edict of Nantes in 1598 and the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, the long Habsburg-Turkish war concluded in 1606 similarly needs to be considered as an important settlement that established the religious boundaries of Europe.

The second case study (chapter five) examines missionary activity in the region involved in papal attempts to convert civilians and bring Catholicism into line with Tridentine practices. Ó hAnnracháin emphasizes not only Jesuit and Franciscan activity, but also the role of the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* and its system of *nunziature* after 1622. Nuncios had direct contact with the authorities in Catholic states, and organized payments, assistance and accommodation for missionaries. The congregation also collected information from those in the field, such as the archbishop of Esztergom, Péter Pázmány, and Apostolic Visitor Pietro Massarecchi, who sent assessments of Catholicism in the territories and instigated missionary activity accordingly. Substantial hindrances to missionary activities included a lack of priests (especially of those with appropriate linguistic skills), the absence of Hungarian bishops from Turkish-ruled territory, the interception of communication within the territory, and “competing structures” of Catholicism (unreformed varieties and the existence of local orders). Overall, Ó hAnnracháin underlines that Rome still spent far more of its resources backing military solutions to the Islamic threat to Catholicism than investing in missions for the region, concluding that missionary activity was of “secondary importance” among papal strategies in these years.

Ó hAnnracháin's study is innovative in directly illuminating the disparity between plural Catholicism across Europe and an orthodox form of religion that emanated from the “center” in this period. The papacy attempted to maintain a semblance of universality by upholding a Tridentine interpretation of Catholicism whilst coming to terms with the different forms of Catholicism that were in part a product of the post-Reformation world. Ó hAnnracháin's research essentially reveals the weakness of the papacy to hold this fragmented

Catholicism together in Europe. Rome became increasingly reliant on monarchs to help instigate Catholicism throughout their lands and could do little to force indigenous orders such as the Bosnian Franciscans or Polish Dominicans to concede authority to the Jesuits and abandon their own pre-Tridentine Catholic identities.

For the study of Catholic Europe, Ó hAnnracháin's work reveals not only the need to resituate local studies and use comparative methodology, but also to understand the negotiation and encounter between "central" and "peripheral" forms of Catholicism. The source base for this research predisposes it towards a centrist point of view of the center-periphery relationship and further work needs to be done to uncover a lay perspective. One of Ó hAnnracháin's most valuable contributions, however, is to show that the "peripheries" are of critical importance for advancing our understanding of early modern Catholic Europe.

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