



Smelyansky's case-by-case approach amply bears out his argument that a "city-centric world-view" prompted municipal authorities to intervene in the persecution of heretics, while highlighting the specificities of each episode in granular detail, thereby moving beyond the existing historiography of this topic. His findings will be of interest to scholars of late medieval heresy, urban history, and Central European history.

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Kardinal Cesare Baronio und das Kurienzeremoniell des posttridentinischen Papsttums: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der römischen Kurie während der zweiten Hälfte des Cinquecento. Filip Malešević.

Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022. xii + 582 pp. \$118.99. Open Access.

The early modern papacy remains an exciting subject of research. The mechanisms that separated the Roman Church from Protestantism and that paved the way from the Middle Ages to the modern era have by no means been comprehensively researched in the necessary depth. Therefore, Filip Malešević's doctoral thesis, which was supervised by two distinguished experts, Volker Reinhardt and Jörg Bölling, aims to make a substantial contribution.

The title of the book refers to the most important Roman historian of the early modern period and the ceremonial of the papacy, and thus to two of the most important construction sites of the epoch. Yet, Malešević does not write a straightforward history of Cesare Baronio's *Annales Ecclesiastici*; rather, his book presents prolegomena to them: it is about the theological preconditions (in the broadest sense) from which Baronio conducted his historiography, especially in the areas of ceremonial, liturgy, sacramental theology, and veneration of saints. As is well known, the Magdeburg centurions had attacked the papacy and Catholic theology in all these fields through their Protestant historiography, so the historiographical response from Rome had to come from these fields as well.

Malešević is quite convincingly able to work out the significance of the (sometimes highly complex) theological and canonical controversies for historiography. For this purpose, he circles Baronio's historiography to a certain extent by describing its preconditions. The fact that this does not yield a simple linear narrative, but rather a complex structure with a plethora of detailed information, makes for challenging reading. The author requires his readers to follow him through a labyrinth of the most diverse topics and methods: the origins and development of the Roman oratory; the role of confraternities in early modern Rome; the historiography of Onofrio Panvinio as Baronio's most important precursor; the various cardinals' congregations and their efforts to respond to the Magdeburg centurions; liturgy and ceremonial of the Holy Year 1575; theology and

liturgy of the sacraments and indulgences; the analysis and interpretation of altarpieces and paintings of chapels and halls; and the revisions of liturgical books and the veneration of saints in the urban space of Rome. Without a doubt, this synopsis of the most diverse perspectives is one of the strengths of the book; unfortunately, a clear argumentation is not always obvious. *Multum, non multa*, one might sometimes beseech the author.

This already has something to do with the title and the leading question about the preconditions of Baronio's historiography. In several chapters, the reference to Baronio seems rather superficial and artificial, although at the same time Malesevic establishes quite conclusive connections between (controversial) theology, liturgy, ceremonial, and art. The question arises whether the author would not have been better advised to place these connections not only quantitatively but also conceptually at the center of his study: asking first about the dependence of liturgy and ceremonial on controversial theological issues and presenting the corresponding effects on Baronio's historiography later might have made the argumentation easier to comprehend. At the very least, however, summaries of the individual chapters would have been advisable in order to make it easier to grasp the respective yield for the leading question.

Furthermore, there is a surprising carelessness with regard to language throughout the book: not only does the text teem with errors in spelling and grammar (in all languages used and cited), but there are also some hasty or overstretched conclusions, and above all a not negligible conceptual vagueness: Malesevic uses the terms *liturgy* and *ceremonial* almost synonymously, thus ignoring the crucial difference: liturgy refers to worship as an action in which people communicate with God, while the broader term *ceremonial* also includes actions without metaphysical reference.

All these points of criticism tarnish the impression of a book whose courageous formulation of the topic and multi-perspective approach certainly deserve all respect. The author has clearly invested an enormous amount of work in collecting his source base and has drawn an undoubtedly accurate picture of the preconditions for a Roman church history in the second half of the sixteenth century. It seems likely, however, that he wanted more with his project than could be packed into a single book.

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Nicholas of Cusa and the Aristotelean Tradition: A Philosophical and Theological Survey. Emmanuele Vimercati and Valentina Zaffino, eds.

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At least until the contributions made by Meredith Ziebart, especially in 2008, the influence of Neoplatonism on Cusanus's philosophy has been the main focus among scholars of his work, and the influence of Neoplatonism, as in the cases of Proclus,