

# The Baroque: Counter Reformation and Royal Absolutism (Outline of lecture)

- **Introduction:**
  - “Baroque” music as a part of our culture
    - Selections from
      - Handel
      - Vivaldi
      - Bach
  - The “baroque”—a term/concept that embraces many diverse cultural phenomena. Usual period reference: 1600-1750 (in Europe)
  - History and usages of the term/concept
    - Taste/bad taste
    - The strategy of this lecture: to present from the point of view that “baroque” is a useful and somewhat coherent label
- **Two principal socio-historical referents of “baroque”**
  - Royal Absolutism: “The Theatre of Monarchy”
    - Example: Versailles, the “Hall of Mirrors”
  - The locating/constructing of the observer
  - The Counter (or Catholic) Reformation
    - The Church Militant

- Art(ists) in service to the faith
  - Example: Rome/Gianlorenzo Bernini
    - The locating/constructing of the observer
  
- **This lecture** will follow out #2: The Counter (or Catholic) Reformation and the case(s) of Spain (Portugal)
  - Toledo, Spain, the cultural center of the Counter Reformation
    - An overview of Counter-Reformational Spain
      - The Inquisition
      - The auto sacramental
      - Mysticism
    - El Greco: exemplar, in painting, of the baroque but at the same time violator of some of the principal Counter-Reformational precepts
      - The locating/constructing of the observer
      - Contrast between El Greco and the Italian Caravaggio re. Counter-Reformational precepts in painting
      - Spanish “baroque” writers: mystics and conceptists
        - Góngora’s famous sonnet on El Greco’s death (d. 1614)

### **Inscription for the tomb of Domenico Greco**

This in graceful form, oh wanderer,  
solid key of jasper gleaming bright  
denies to all the world the softest brush  
that ever wood gave soul, or canvas life.

His name, deserving even greater breath □  
than Fame needs for her clarions to play, □  
this solemn marble surface amplifies: □  
revere it and pass along your way.

Here lies the Greek. To Nature he bequeathed □  
Art; to Art, skill. To rainbows, hues. □  
To Phoebus, lights (to Morpheus his darks).

May this great urn, despite its hard veneer, □  
drink tears and all the odors in the sweat □  
of the Arabian tree's funereal bark.

--Luis deArgote y Góngora

- The locating/constructing of the observer
- **The baroque as (self-)hypnosis**
- **The Prolongation of the baroque** in the Spanish and Portuguese New World:
  - The architecture and sculpture of António Francisco Lisboa, known as “O Aleijadinho (1738?-1814) in colonial Brazil
- The locating/constructing of the observer