Rennie has written a fine book on a single papal legate that sheds much light on the Gregory VII's pontificate, his reform agenda, and the pope's use of legates to advance his program. If I had a further wish I would have liked it if Rennie had delved more deeply into Hugh's attempts to oppose the election of Pope Victor III (Abbot Desiderius of Montecassino). That period in Hugh's life had nothing to do with his legations and would have been a little off the main topic of the book. Although other scholars have treated Hugh's difficulties with the new pope, readers would have benefitted from a careful analysis of his letters to Matilda, countess of Tuscany and these events, which must have been an important moment in Hugh's career.

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Anchoritic Traditions of Medieval Europe. Edited by **Liz Herbert McAvoy**. Woodbridge, U.K.: Boydell & Brewer, Ltd., 2110. xiii + 241 pp. $90.00 cloth.

This volume consists of nine articles and an introduction to twentieth-century anchoritic studies. The book's focus is restricted to Western Europe—the lands that today are more or less coterminous with the Low Countries, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Ireland, and the United Kingdom. The articles summarize the state of knowledge and research on the subject of medieval anchorites and hermits, and frequently offer suggestions for future research.

Owing to careful planning and the firm hand of the editor, these nine articles manage to present a coherent description and analysis of the many roles played by anchorites and hermits in medieval spirituality, both reflecting and to some extent influencing its development. The authors contend that in Christianity's conquest of the European West, these solitaries were perhaps the most accessible representations of Christian spirituality. Seen as "the virtuosi of the ascetic life" (Gabriela Signori, "Anchorites in German-speaking Regions," 58), they were often considered by the populace to be living saints and paragons of perfection.

The authors stress the similarities and differences between hermits and anchorites. Both sought God and spiritual development in relative isolation while maintaining intermittent social contact with the communities on whose edges they lived; both performed ascetic and intercessory acts of penance for those who supported them. The hermit, however, was physically free and mobile while the anchorite was, theoretically at least, tied to a single geographical location—and that place was often a small cell in which he or she was physically walled-up until death (Mari Hughes-Edwards, “Anchoritism: the English Tradition,” 133).

Anchoritic Traditions focuses more on anchorites than on hermits. The anchorite played many socio-religious roles: “She could be teacher, counselor, advisor; she could be highly literate or completely unread; she could care for the sick and the marginalized; she could sometimes prophesy or ordain miracle cures; at other times she could confess others and adopt a quasi-priestly role; frequently she withdrew entirely and permanently; in other instances she withdrew only periodically in order to do penance” (Liz Herbert McAvoy, Introduction, 16). Whatever his or her apostolic focus, the spirituality of the anchorite was deeply rooted in the ascetic tradition of the Desert Fathers, a point fully articulated by P. L’Hermite-Leclercq who admirably covers theological, liturgical, symbolic, and affective elements of anchorite spirituality.

Though both hermits and anchorites sought withdrawal and an autonomous spiritual life, they were paradoxically seldom completely alone; in the early middle ages they almost always existed either connected to or separated from, but at the geographical edge of, monastic communities. Males often came to eremitic vocations after time spent in coenobitic environments, leaving the monastery in search of a fuller commitment to solitude, contemplation, and mortification. For men, there was a symbiosis between the eremitic life and monasteries. On the other hand, female anchorites were usually lay women with no experience in monastic life. They usually lived in close proximity to monasteries and urban churches, sometimes enclosed in the very shadow of their walls. Though they were in some places under diocesan jurisdiction, they were more often spiritually autonomous, untethered to either monastic communities or other “proper” Church supervision, a fact that increasingly distressed the male-dominated ecclesiastical hierarchy from the twelfth century onward.

While early medieval anchoritism was an overwhelmingly rural phenomenon, the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries brought dramatic changes. Anchoritism became increasingly female and urban, reflecting the growth of towns and depending on their wealth and patronage. It is estimated that female anchorites outnumbered males 5 to 1. In Italy these often walled-up women were loved and protected by municipal authorities on account of “the sacral service they performed for the community” (M. Sensi, “Anchorites in the Italian Tradition,” 90). Striving for relatively autonomous spiritual lives outside the jurisdiction of male monasteries, they sometimes precipitated what the editor calls an ecclesiastical “battle for control of the female body” (McAvoy, 8–9). Later medieval centuries ceased to welcome the creative individual's choice of anchoritism as an accepted vocation (P. L'Hermite-Leclercq, "Anchoritism in Medieval France," 130); there developed a "thin line, trodden by many anchoritic women between orthodoxy and heresy in the eyes of the authorities" (McAvoy, 19). The medieval church never succeeded, however, in achieving full control over anchoritic females.

There is inevitably a great deal of overlapping coverage in the nine articles as each provides a brief chronological history of anchoritic life in a specific region. Source materials vary widely and for some locations, most notably for Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, there is much less evidence available than for the other areas. The articles are similar in approach: each typically grounds anchoritism in early Christian ascetic traditions and surveys the surviving medieval literature that nourished the lifestyles of hermits and anchorites. Most of the articles commendably provide analytical summaries of surviving *vitae* of important regional saints whose lives and legends might be said to have constructed a written culture of anchoritism.

Among the most interesting aspects of the volume are discussions of how much historical credibility can be attached to the *vitae, rules,* and guidance books of anchoritic culture. Did their authors write to describe what actually existed or to foster a spiritual paradigm? Consensus seems to be that "the history of eremitism is . . . as much an *histoire des mentalités* as an *histoire des réalités*" (Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker, "Anchorites in the Low Countries," 24).

In sum, *Anchoritic Traditions of Medieval Europe* is a carefully executed, valuable, and needed gathering of research initiatives undertaken over the past fifty years by scholars whose work has been little absorbed into the academy's evolving vision of medieval religious culture.

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A Companion to Bernard of Clairvaux. Edited by **Brian Patrick McGuire**. Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2011. xviii + 405 pp. $205.00 cloth.

With *A Companion to Bernard of Clairvaux,* Brill continues its excellent series with a worthwhile collection of essays examining Bernard and his works from a variety of angles. Brian Patrick McGuire has assembled an impressive panel of