

and painting in *De Visione Dei*, Cusanus's highly original multimedia work. Thomas Izbicki provides a comprehensive analysis of indulgences granted by Cusanus during his legation in Germany, foreshadowing grievances that would give shape to Luther's agenda. Noting the lack of evidence that Luther was influenced by Cusanus, Knut Alfsvåg nevertheless identifies important parallels in the theological and philosophical issues they engaged with, as well as the Neoplatonic thinking they expressed in strikingly similar passages.

Not all essays are about Cusanus. Christopher Bellitto, for example, considers the transition from reform to Reformation in his examination of the 1513 reform treatise *Libellus ad Leonem Decimum*. Michiel Decaluwé proposes that church councils can be fruitfully studied as cultural—not just political—phenomena, drawing attention to the human aspect of delegates interacting in a concentrated space, in and outside of formal meetings.

To write about Cusanus or about the councils of the fifteenth century without quoting a work edited or written by Gerald Christianson has become no easy task. This festschrift is, therefore, a fitting tribute to Christianson, a former president of the American Cusanus Society and a continuing driving force behind its activities. The essays are no introduction to Cusanus, or an overview of his life and work; they assume a familiarity with the person and his times. Cusanus scholars will acquire new insights throughout these chapters, which, in total, discuss some fifteen major works along with a number of his sermons. In addition, students of church councils, church reform, the Reformation, and Neoplatonism will find papers of value here.

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Mystiker, Mittler, Mensch: 600 Jahre Niklaus von Flüe. Roland Gröbli, Heidi Kronenberg, Markus Ries, and Thomas Wallimann-Sasaki, eds. Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 2017. 388 pp. €24.80.

Niklaus von Flüe is a controversial figure. At the age of fifty, the Swiss farmer, husband, and father of five children traded the domesticity of a farmstead for the frugality of a hermitage. But, while choosing the life of a hermit, he was far from being an anchorite. Inhabiting a cell a stone's throw away from his family home, he served as a spiritual advisor for a great number of people visiting him daily (Roland Gröbli, 31). He engaged in the social and political debates of his time, functioning as a policy advisor. Niklaus was of great interest for both confessions during the Reformation and served as an icon against modernism and liberalism during the *Kulturkampf* of the nineteenth century. Right-wing politicians also used him against the accession of Switzerland to the League of Nations in 1920 (Hannes Steiner, 323); at the same time he was a symbol

of peace and reconciliation (Urs Altermatt). To do justice to this highly complex figure, *Mystiker, Mittler, Mensch* gathers a number of essays by diverse authors—political scientists, historians, Catholic, Protestant, and Islamic theologians, and artists and writers. The book is thus of interest for a broad audience. Rather than pursuing a single line of argument, it enables its readers to gain an awareness of the interconnectedness of historical, cultural, and political developments, and to engage in a critical dialogue with the Swiss patron saint.

Roland Gröbli succeeds in providing a detailed yet concise introduction followed by a number of essays investigating and scrutinizing the political and diplomatic (Thomas Wallimann-Sasaki, Cornelio Sommaruga) and the theological and ethical (Klara Obermüller, Pirmin Meier) heritage of Niklaus. Subsequently, the book tackles the influence of the saint in historic and current debates on music and art. Angelo Garovi explores the fascinating interconfessional history of Switzerland by highlighting the artistic demarcation and mutual influences of a chorale attributed to Niklaus von Flüe that was rediscovered in Bologna in 1932. Silvia Henke Dean offers an interesting insight into the work of the video artist Judith Albert, who managed to grasp the controversial saint by using rosaries and medallions for her video installation, provoking a debate on religious utility art (“religiöse Gebrauchskunst,” 265) and Christian devotional practices.

In addition, the book challenges the reader’s view of medieval society regarding the role of women and the notion of gender. Thus, the life of Dorothee Wyss, Niklaus’s wife, plays an important role in a number of essays (Klara Obermüller, Christian Petit, Christina Sasaki). The authors stress that she released Niklaus from his duties as a father and husband, and that it was also Dorothee who wove the cloth for his habit (Gabriela Lischer), both key elements on his path to becoming a hermit and, eventually, a saint. Nicolaj van der Meulen and Jörg Wiesel see the garb as an act of communal work between Klaus and Dorothee that exceeds traditional gender patterns (268). Most interesting in this respect is the interview by Gröbli with Maria-Baptista Kloetzli, the only female hermit in Tschütschi of the parish Schwyz. Furthermore, the anthology gives an informative insight into church politics, institutional power structures (Josef Mayer), and canonization practices (Daniel Sidler). The book also tackles the debate on celibacy (Stefan Hartmann), an issue widely discussed outside and within the Catholic Church recently, and a subject of great interest for the Amazon Synod in the fall of 2019.

The large number of short articles (more than sixty) is the volume’s strength, but it is also its weakness. Due to the brevity of the papers, the reader will not find detailed analyses of topics that deserve more elaborate thought—e.g., the interconfessional approach to an *Abecedarium* (Cod. 277, Stiftsbibliothek Einsiedeln) by Urban Federer. The essay by Markus Ries, which provides the reader with a deeper understanding of the fifteenth-century policy of peace that was essential to the diplomatic work of Brother Klaus, deserves more attention as well. However, the authors’ reflections on Niklaus von Flüe, his life, spirituality, and his diplomatic influence prepare the ground for further

research. The book is a much-needed and timely intervention that sets an example for interdisciplinary approaches to history and religion in an increasingly diverse society.

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Saintly Women: Medieval Saints, Modern Women, and Intimate Partner Violence.
Nancy E. Nienhuis and Beverly Mayne Kienzle.

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xvi + 198 pp. \$155.

Social movements, most notably Me Too and Black Lives Matter, have fought to draw attention to the pervasive violence of systemic inequalities. These forms of resistance have coincided with a rise in the blatant visibility and political support of misogyny, racism, and religious intolerance across the world. In response to the state of our domestic and global scenes, scholarly communities have challenged each other to engage a public audience and to use our research for social change. *Saintly Women* is a crucial contribution to that effort.

Nancy E. Nienhuis and Beverly Mayne Kienzle confront the complicity of religious traditions in providing theological justifications for intimate partner violence (IPV). While the authors recognize current efforts of religious leaders and practitioners from diverse faith traditions to end abuse, they also reveal that historical studies rarely accompany such critical work. Their book thus focuses on archival narratives of violence to challenge the continued “misuse and misapplication of religious and cultural beliefs” to excuse batterers and work against survivors’ attempts to find safety (2). *Saintly Women* analyzes hagiographies of medieval and early modern Christian saints and martyrs that cultivated theologies of suffering, subordination, and ownership through the sanctification of domestic abuse victims. The staying power of these oppressive theologies, in fact, derives precisely from turning the records of victims into sacred texts to be emulated by survivors from our past and in our present.

The strength of the book lies in its accessibility, which makes it a teachable text for students, non-academic audiences, and especially for groups who offer resources, guidance, and support to survivors of IPV. The first chapter defines IPV and gives an overview of its ubiquity, affecting people of all religious backgrounds, genders, races, and sexual orientations. A detailed justification for their methodologies follows with an explanation of the important perspectives gained through literary analyses guided by feminist criticism and ethics to dismantle rather than uphold kyriarchal systems. *Saintly Women* contextualizes hagiographic accounts, uncovers the patterns and attitudes that enable violence, reads for silences and gaps in narratives, and underscores that oppressive systems of power have authorized certain voices to be heard, remembered, and extolled over others.