
Profiling Saints is a fine collection of research articles whose shared purpose is investigating the intersection of sanctity and globalization in the early modern period. Though the subtitle refers to “modern sanctity,” the thrust of the volume is on materials from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. Many chapters will be of interest to readers of this journal since so many Jesuits stand at that intersection and appear in some form in many of the volume’s fourteen Einzelstudien.

The coherence of the volume is generated out of three framing chapters: a preface authored by the co-editors, which explains the emergence of the volume out of an online conference held in 2021 and offers an outline of the book; an introduction by F. Motta, a historian at the University of Turin; and a conclusion by S. Pavone, a historian at the University of Macerata.

Key to the framework is the argument that early modern sainthood and sanctity are different from their medieval antecedents. In the preface, the co-editors assert that post-medieval saints are “not at all fantastic” (13). Motta takes the Council of Trent as his point of reference, and leeward of it can be found a “true ‘system of sanctity,’” consisting of a reinvigorated cult of saints whose power was affirmed, who were drawn from the near past and linked to the hierarchical church, and whose historical reality and supernatural gifts were demonstrable in distinctively early modern ways (26). Other historians of sainthood might highlight as much continuity as change across the sixteenth century in each of Motta’s component parts, note that Trent itself pronounced on the cult only late and briefly before its adjournment in 1563 and not at all on the new European age of discovery, and find Roman aspirations to and progress toward “cultural and moral hegemony over believers” (26) well antecedent to Trent. Still, Motta is quite right that the sustained, explicit critique of the cult by sixteenth-century reformers numbers among the more important forces indirectly shaping the cult as it developed bureaucratically under Sixtus v and Urban VIII and underwent renewed scholarly evaluation in the works of, e.g., Luigi Lippomini and Heribert Rosweyde.

An overarching reflection on the “global” dimension of early modern sainthood is left to Pavone in her concluding chapter. Pavone draws together the contributions of the earlier chapters to an understanding of how the global (non-European regional and transregional) shaped the cult, to which she adds several illuminating cases of her own. Pavone draws attention to the relationship of colonization and evangelization with thoughtful reference
to particular canonization processes, e.g., those of the criolla third-order Dominican Rose of Lima, the Spanish patron saint of enslaved people Peter Claver, and the as-yet-still uncanonized Jesuit martyr Anthony Criminali. While Pavone refrains from developing general criteria that could be applied universally, her reflections on multiple cases of “modern sanctity in a global world” certainly show the importance of the volume’s research questions and signal the promise of continued study.

The research chapters themselves are divided into five sections. The one dedicated to Jesuit hagiography, comprising two chapters, is the briefest of these; but, in point of fact, Jesuits lurk throughout this volume, no one more than Francis Xavier: J. Greenwood introduces us to the emergence of the Jesuit missionary’s Asian iconography around the time of his canonization in his contribution to the multi-authored chapter “Promoting Sanctity by the Means of Artworks”. R. Miller takes Xavier’s Quito imagery as a case study for an evaluation of hagiography in the colonies, “Imagining the World through St. Francis Xavier Imagery.” And C. Pelliccia analyzes a panegyric to Xavier composed by Eripando Maria Giulia during the Suppression.

The sustained attention to early modern sanctity in Catholic Asia goes beyond just Xavier and the Jesuits. C. Tronu Montané’s contribution “From ‘Martyrs of Japan’ to ‘Japanese Martyrs’” examines the performative aspect of sanctity through the lens of “emotional practice.” In “Profiling the Japanese Martyrs,” H. Omata Rappo evaluates the implications for evangelization of the rivalrous notions of holy martyrdom held by friars and Jesuits in her examination of the canonization process of the early seventeenth-century Nagasaki martyrs.

Jesuits appear in the volume not only as early modern saints but as hagiographers as well. Straddling this distinction is the especially stimulating contribution of S. Roelofs: In “Robert Bellarmine, the Louvain Lectures and Economic Thought,” she examines how the economic thought of Robert Bellarmine was (and was not) incorporated into his saintly biography and its relevance to his standing as a Thomist. Under her analysis fall Bellarmine’s own reminiscences on a set of his early, topically relevant lectures at Leuven in the 1570s, the Jesuits’ own strategy in pursuing (and hesitating to pursue) his canonization, and Pius XI’s declaration of Bellarmine as a doctor of the church in 1931. P. Ryczkowski, “Like a Phoenix into the Ashes” takes the image of a phoenix as developed in Jesuit emblem work and evaluates its application by the hagiographer Andrzej Młodzianowski to the eastern Christian martyr Josaphat Kuntsevych.

An additional seven chapters complement these in subject, approach, and discipline, providing specialists in both Jesuit studies and the history of
sainthood with much to consider. The quality of the individual chapters is consistently good, and the expository style of every chapter, to say nothing of the generous footnotes, gives evidence of the work invested in the contributions between their delivery at a conference and their publication.

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Le père du siècle is a highly erudite and comprehensive exploration of Jean Gerson's legacy in early modern Europe. Its remarkable longevity is confirmed through Mazour-Matusevich's extensive research, which covers France, the Holy Roman Empire, the Italian Peninsula, Spain, England, the Low Countries, and Sweden. The book uses an impressive number of case studies to illustrate how theological, pastoral, ethical, and legal concepts were derived from Gerson's oeuvre and how his authority was employed in confessional propaganda.

The book is structured into four chapters. The first provides a useful background on Gerson's fifteenth-century reception, emphasizing topics that remained important in subsequent centuries. Mazour-Matusevich convincingly demonstrates how Gerson's pastoral legacy and mystical theology, understood as affective spirituality, continually interested both clergy and laypeople who saw in it a means to balance the active and contemplative aspects of life. Works like Opus tripartitum (Work in three parts) and Monotessaron (A harmony of the four Gospels) established archetypes for new genres in religious writing, while La Montagne de contemplation (The mountain of contemplation) provided a reader-friendly discourse on affective mystical theology. Gerson's legacy was embraced throughout Europe, particularly among clergy and laypeople advocating ecclesiastical reform. However, his reception in the Holy Roman Empire was exceptional, resulting in numerous translations and editions. In the empire, Gerson was mythologized as one who found true