



**Finucane, Ronald C. Contested Canonizations. The Last  
Medieval Saints, 1482–1523**

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une douzaine de pages, notamment en matière de glossaire : p. 39, un *si* dans *toutesfois si* est « traduit » en note par « tellement », alors que, relayé ensuite par un *tant*, il annonce plutôt la consécutive qui suit ; ce cas se répète ailleurs ; on relève p. 43 une confusion de *si* avec « aussi », alors qu'il s'agit sans doute de la conjonction de subordination ; p. 42, *religions* signifie évidemment « ordres religieux », p. 43, *gentz*, « nations », p. 48, *vertueux* « efficace » et non « digne », p. 48, *apoincter* = « réconcilier » et non « apaiser », etc. ; p. 51, *imposition* reste à interpréter ; p. 52, *presser* = « opprimer » ; p. 52, s'il faut rétablir, avec 1545, à la place de *ostant de nos freres* « ostant de ce monde aucuns de nos freres », pourquoi faire figurer cette correction en note, alors que le texte est non seulement fautif, mais incompréhensible ? P. 54, un *qui* figure pour « qu'il », comme souvent à l'époque, sans que cela soit signalé, phénomène qui se répète *infra*, etc. P. 54, *desistans* = « cessant ». Plus loin, p. 63, le sens de *nous vendroient et nous et noz femmes et noz enfans et tout pour l'avoir* nous échappe (comprendre « nous vendrions... » ?).

Dans l'ensemble, on admire en tout cas l'acribie et la cohérence des éditeurs, et l'on se félicite de disposer enfin d'une édition savante et abondamment commentée de ces textes oubliés, qui font ressurgir un pan entier de la propagande et de la spiritualité protestantes de ces années-là. L'entreprise qui commence avec ce volume était nécessaire, elle est déjà passionnante.

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### **Finucane, Ronald C.**

#### ***Contested Canonizations. The Last Medieval Saints, 1482–1523.***

Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011. Pp. x, 276. ISBN 978-0-8132-1875-5 (hardcover) \$64.95.

This volume begins with a simple question: if not all holy people deserve to become saints, “who made the cut, and why them?” Finucane has placed this question on the cusp of change in the early sixteenth century suggesting that saints, canonizers, and the process of canonization itself changed dramatically following the emergence of Protestantism. This question initiates a complex discussion that gathers secular and ecclesiastical politics, elite and popular

enthusiasm and criticism, combined with theological details and bureaucratic processes that together Finucane has made impressively clear and interesting. Although the book is not long and the title suggests a focus of only 41 years, the perspective extends from the twelfth into the seventeenth century in an effort to contextualize the last five saints (Bonaventure, Leopold of Austria, Francis of Paola, Antoninus of Florence, and Benno of Meissen) elevated before the Council of Trent.

At the heart of this volume are the long processes that led to these five canonizations, which Finucane describes in detail in order to illuminate the goals, strategies, and distractions that together explain “why them?” For readers who are new to the papal court as a bureaucratic body, this volume provides a clear explanation of the complex institutional and ecclesiastical/judicial process that could lead to canonization. By introducing the personalities, he establishes links between the authors of *relazioni*, the proctors/sponsors and their causes, and the cardinals and popes who judged them to be saints, as well as showing the importance of recent precedents in canonization ritual. Moreover, Finucane establishes a chronology of distractions that plagued the canonization campaigns from 1482 to 1523. Although torturous for their proctors, this chronology is useful for a student of the early modern papacy who can see clearly the important issues that preoccupied Italian rulers, diplomats, and curialists almost month to month through this period, and that sidelined the bureaucratic process.

The plethora of perspectives and ambitions that incorporated the saints is clear from the outset. The chapters bring together the diverse lobbying groups that existed — local lay witnesses to sanctity, local ecclesiastical promoters, elite royal supporters, curial judges and promoters, and finally papal arbiters who could lead or stall the canonization. While the action of canonization occurs in Rome, there is a great deal of information about the initial *processi*, the collection of information from witnesses, and the local experience of sanctity. To further explore this side of the process *extra Romam*, Finucane utilizes little known published sources alongside manuscript records, allowing English-language readers a better understanding of the canonization campaigns and conflicts in Austria, Saxony, France, and Italy. This clearly bounded study rests on a deep foundation of research looking in impressively diverse directions.

Finally, Finucane’s study closes with a window into the anticlerical activity that Luther’s writings encouraged. Interestingly, the translation of Benno’s

remains in Meissen (June 1524) prompted a satirical mimicry of the translation in Buchholz (likely June/July 1524). This discussion returns the reader's focus to the book's beginning in which Finucane explored the modern debate over the pause in canonizations (1524–88) and the influence of Protestant rhetoric and the Catholic fear of criticism. The conclusion establishes a neat linear development that draws together the strands of Catholic criticism (of the saints, of curialists, of the popes) on various levels and introduces the effects of local and popular criticism that was often more physically destructive of shrines and relics. However, in the face of such violence, Finucane argues that Peter Burke's reliance on the 'failure of papal nerve' is insufficient to explain the passing of 65 years without a canonization. Only further investigation into the canonization campaigns that continued through the sixteenth century can answer that question. Sadly, the death of the author Ronald Finucane in 2009 has taken away the most likely respondent. The only other disappointment in this study is the casual copyediting of the text that sometimes distracts the reader from the excellence of the research and argument. While the errors are small (grammar, bibliographic absences, and periodic errors in the spelling of names), they could lead a novice reader temporarily in the wrong direction (i.e., Barbara Wisch not Barbara Walsh).

In sum, this is a fascinating and deeply researched study that expands our understanding of the role that saints and the process of canonization played in the pre-Tridentine early modern Catholic Church. Thanks go to Professor Simon Ditchfield for supervising this volume's publication in the absence of its author. Hopefully, this volume will prompt further studies that focus on the mechanics of the papal court and its work, and illuminate in concrete ways the origin of the resulting conflicts and criticism.

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