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Trois pommes pour un mariage: L'Église et les unions clandestines dans le diocèse de Sion, 1430–1550 (review)

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unbeneficed priests). Seven further ordination services took place within the next twelve months, all conducted by Fleming, with the numbers of ordinands in several cases approaching those of June 1—remarkable figures indeed for a diocese serving between 500,000 and 750,000 people.

An exhaustive “Index of Persons and Places” (pp. 129–203) mentioned in the second volume concludes this valuable work.

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Trois pommes pour un mariage: L'Église et les unions clandestines dans le diocèse de Sion, 1430–1550. By Valérie Lamon Zuchuat. [Cahiers lausannois d'histoire médiévale, Vol. 46.] (Lausanne: Université de Lausanne. 2008. Pp. iv, 304. €24,00 paperback. ISBN 978-2-940-11059-X.)

Clandestine marriage posed a perennial problem for the medieval Church. The difficulty became acute following the pontificate of Alexander III (1159–81), who authoritatively established the teaching that when a man and woman exchanged consent to marry one another, they were validly married from that moment forward, provided that they did so in the present tense and no impediments to their union stood in the way. This opened the floodgates to informal marriages that the parties often enough later came to regret. The Church managed to largely resolve the ensuing difficulties in 1563 through the matrimonial legislation of the Council of Trent.

Zuchuat's investigation of the treatment of these problematic unions by church courts in the Swiss diocese of Sion in the canton of Valais during the century before Trent offers valuable insights into the difficulties that confronted judges and couples alike prior to the Tridentine legislation. His book, which originated as a thesis for the licentiate's degree at Lausanne, is based on a corpus of 101 documents, mainly from the archives of the cathedral chapter of Sion, supplemented by a smaller number from the Archives de l'État du Valais, that contain records of judicial proceedings from the court of the bishop of Sion between 1430 and 1550 concerning alleged clandestine marriages, together with a scattering of private notarial documents that relate to litigated actions. Transcriptions of forty-four of those documents, accompanied by a French translation of them by Pierre Dubuis, who directed Zuchuat's thesis, make up roughly two-thirds of the book (pp. 88–285). Zuchuat's eighty-page analysis of those documents includes some interesting and important observations. The term *clandestine marriage* might suggest that these unions were secret, but as the author points out (and the printed documents confirm), they were almost always well known, even notorious, within the communities where the parties lived. He further notes that although these marriages were “clandestine” in the sense that they were not preceded by the publication of the banns as required by law and were not

accompanied by any public ceremony or priestly blessing, nearly all of them seem to have followed much the same sort of informal ritual. They almost always involved an offer, or occasionally an exchange, of gifts of small value, most often a coin or two; sometimes a few apples or pears; or even a pair of shoes, a goblet, or a cask of wine. The couple usually exchanged words that might at least imply marital consent. The bishop's judges were properly skeptical of self-serving declarations. Most cases in these documents involved a claim by the plaintiff (*actor*) that he or she was married to the defendant (*reus*). Plaintiffs lost thirty-four of the thirty-nine cases where the judge's final decision survives.

Zuchuat's book is not free of flaws. His command of the substantial literature on medieval church courts, their procedures, and their records, for example, is uneven, as is his knowledge of recent treatments of the history of clandestine marriage. It seems odd, too, that he fails to cite canonical texts dealing with marriage formation directly from the sources, but relies instead on accounts of them in secondary works, many of them seriously dated. He frequently abbreviates the texts of the records that he edits, while the translation compresses them even further. These blemishes, however, should not outweigh the genuine contribution that he has made by rescuing this body of texts from oblivion.

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JAMES A. BRUNDAGE

Savonarola's Women: Visions and Reform in Renaissance Italy. By Tamar Herzig. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2008. Pp. xx, 333. \$35.00. ISBN 978-0-226-32915-4.)

Cleverly riding on the crest of a wave of academic interest in nuns and convents, this very accomplished book both charts and analyzes the fortunes of various mystical women committed to the memorialization of Savonarola's teachings and beliefs, and the depiction of Savonarola as a divine prophet, in the years up to the 1540s. While some of the material is known, much of it is newly discovered and unpublished, and the list of archival sources (often gleaned from less visited archives) is extremely impressive. Equally impressive is the handling of a large corpus of texts and documentation in conjunction with a substantial and ever-growing body of secondary literature on these religious women. The author writes of Savonarola's women—a phrase that plays on ambiguity—but also talks persuasively of Savonarolan activists, and these new understandings of Savonarola's followers illuminate the attractions as well as the disadvantages of alliance with and allegiance to a celebrity martyr.

The book has six chapters, and clearly and authoritatively charts the networks of connection and succession between Savonarola and Savonarolan "holy women." It moves from a general discussion of Savonarola's relationship with his female followers in Florence while still alive, to case studies of a string of Dominican tertiaries who kept faith with his memory (and by so