



present in Vermigli's work reflect the human condition. This complex theological study is aimed at Reformation scholars, and it is an important contribution to the place of metaphysics in the Reformation.

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Sensing the Sacred in Medieval and Early Modern Culture. Robin Macdonald, Emilie K. M. Murphy, and Elizabeth L. Swann, eds.
Abingdon: Routledge, 2018. xiv + 256 pp. \$160.

Ten years have passed since the conference at the University of York that gave rise to this edited collection, yet many of the contributions feel quite fresh. Readers enticed by the collection's theme of "sensing the sacred" will be gratified especially by the contributions by Joe Moshenska and Elizabeth L. Swann. Moshenska's essay assesses the role of sensory experience in the autobiographical writings of Sir Kenelm Digby (1603–65), who renounced and then rejoined his natal Roman Catholicism in the space of five years. In Digby's writings, Moshenska identifies an "unstable dual impulse towards dismissing and retaining of the senses," whereby sensory experience is denigrated to some degree for its unreliability yet "remains necessary precisely so that it can be confounded"—that is, by miracles or by the bread and wine that conceal the real presence of Christ (86–87). Moshenska's claims about the "fundamental importance" of this dual impulse, and about the "overcoming" of the senses as "the basis of Roman Catholic piety" in the early modern period (87), could be used by other scholars to investigate other primary sources. Moshenska also adds a unique experience to the early modern sensorium: according to Digby, servants in Spain were wont to spew perfumed waters from their mouths, as what Moshenska calls "a sort of primitive air-freshener" (91).

Swann's essay on God's nostrils, another marvel in the essay collection, reverses the typical examination of how early modern Christians utilized or deprived the senses when accessing the divine and queries instead how God was understood to apprehend human beings. Of particular interest are God's "lower senses": "If God can see and hear humankind, might he also be able to smell, touch, and taste us?" (221). Swann's fascinating sources explore how Christ's atoning death "entailed a wholesale transformation of the notion of sacrifice, and a corresponding shift in divine olfaction" (225). These sources argue for or against the atoning nature of Christ's death on the basis of whether expiatory sacrifices—which included blood, not fragrant fat and organs—were ever sweet-smelling, as Christ's death was said to be (225–26). These and other examples evince "a strong emphasis on God's sensitivity" to smell, taste, and touch (229), and underscore the importance of being

richly and pleasurably sensed by God. Swann's last line also may elicit from readers a pleasant snort.

I highlight these two essays as most thoroughly related to the collection's theme and relatable to other primary source bases. However, all of the essays contain novel discoveries and analyses, and they collectively challenge simplistic accounts of medieval Christianity and Roman Catholicism appealing to the senses and Protestant Christianity disavowing or purely spiritualizing them, as well as accounts of the senses as primarily receptive and passive. Richard Newhauser's demonstration of "the importance to moral theologians of the moderation of sensory experience, not its ascetic denial" (40) effectively debunks stereotypes of medieval religious culture and also reviews important background information on the "paradigm of five external senses" (45). Abigail Shinn's close reading of seventeenth-century English conversion narratives discovers in the senses a "cross-confessional trope" (100) and a challenge to "the typical framing of Catholicism as the religion of the eye and Protestantism as the religion of the ear" (105). Erin Lambert's study of the "sound of psalm-singing" in churches for Dutch exiles, and Robin Macdonald's study of birch-bark letters, are among the essays more tentatively connected to the theme, yet quite illuminating in their own right.

Despite the title's balanced reference to "medieval and early modern culture" and its self-description as "trac[ing] transformations in attitudes to, ideas about, and experiences of the senses from eleventh-century debates about the real presence in continental Europe to late seventeenth-century missionaries proselytising in North America" (2), more than half of the contributions focus more precisely on early modern England or the English in exile. However, insofar as the sources incorporated by the book's various essays "include drama, poetry, and imaginative prose, as well as religious polemic and homily, psychological, medical, and didactic texts, personal and public epistles, and music" (5), the book's appeal should extend to an interdisciplinary range of scholars.

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Stripping the Veil: Convent Reform, Protestant Nuns, and Female Devotional Life in Sixteenth-Century Germany. Marjorie Elizabeth Plummer.

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. xxii + 349 + b/w pls. \$100.

In the protocol from a 1534 visitation of the convent in Cronschwitz, rather than providing transcripts of responses given by the nuns, visitors opted simply to list whether the nuns wore their habits to the interview or not. A nun's choice to retain her traditional garb or to strip the veil in favor of secular clothing had come to be read as an indication of her general receptiveness to the reform movement. Yet, as Plummer convincingly argues in her close study of female monasticism in sixteenth-century