

bodies of women and men that are transformed in time, both already and not yet, as the outer body conforms to the inner and becomes the living manifestation of Christ. This work of historical theology will be essential for libraries, graduate students, and scholars of medieval theology in general and of women's mysticism in particular, along with all those interested in the question of embodiment and the relationship between theology and poetics.

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The Sensuous in the Counter-Reformation Church. Edited by Marcia B. Hall and Tracy E. Cooper. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013. vii + 339 pages. \$99.00.

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"The good Lord is in the details." This old saying (sometimes attributed to Flaubert) might serve as the motto for this collection of thirteen essays on Catholic sacred art in the period immediately following the Council of Trent. It is well known that the council responded to Reformation iconoclasm by affirming the legitimacy and usefulness of sacred images, while at the same time calling for their purification from any lasciviousness or impropriety. But the council left to others the details of the implementation of its brief and vague decree. Catholic bishops, theologians, and artists were faced with the problem of defining a kind of visual art that was "sensuous" in the meaning of this volume's title (appealing to the senses) while not being sensual, and that at the same time presented its subject with decorum, exemplified morality, and taught the faith.

As this volume shows, the concrete implementation of Trent's program was very uneven. John O'Malley gives a fine overview of the doctrinal and philosophical context of the council and its decrees, but at the same time warns against thinking in terms of a strict correlation between church teaching and the practice of the arts. For example, O'Malley stresses the importance of the Aristotelian view of the unity of matter and form, soul and body, as the background for a positive stance toward images. But how influential was this theory in practice? Other essays show how the extent of episcopal involvement in implementing Trent's decree on art varied from vigorous censorship (Carlo Borromeo) to virtual indifference. A number of essays deal with the formulation of more concrete norms by commentators on the council, especially Gabriele Paleotti, and concentrate on cases that illustrate how these norms were communicated to artists and what effects they had. Other essays seek precision about terminology, chronology, and attitudes. What is the meaning of the word (*h*)onestà, so often used as a criterion for good sacred art? Exactly when were Michelangelo's

offensive nudes in the Sistine Chapel covered? How did artists use allegory? Answers to such questions depend on careful scholarship, sometimes combined with plausible conjecture based on extrapolation from documents. In the latter case, the authors are appropriately tentative. (In one essay, however, an *a priori* schema of interpretation leads the author to partially misread an artwork, and even to overlook some plainly visible features.)

The attention to detail in the volume corrects and identifies nuances in the generalizations about the period that are encountered in historical studies of art and the church. As Bette Talvacchia notes, “Although the culture was more homogeneous than our own, it was not monolithic” (50). Her essay makes a significant correction to Leo Steinberg’s well-known thesis about the portrayal of Christ’s masculine sex, implying that Steinberg was reading too much into the artistic use of nudity, especially in the depiction of babies.

Art historians’ interpretations of medieval and Renaissance art are often hampered by an imperfect or even incorrect understanding of theology. The authors in this volume are, by contrast, quite attentive to and knowledgeable about theological and religious factors in Counter-Reformation art, while avoiding the error (tempting to the theologian) of thinking that they were the direct or sole determinant of style. Even in these essays, however, there are occasional lapses. For example, many Catholic theologians would take exception to the dichotomies between “true” and “symbolic” and between faith and reason in Talvacchia’s statement that “the belief that the body and blood of Christ are truly, rather than symbolically, present in the consecrated Eucharist is irrational, and comes down to a matter of faith” (53).

The title of the volume might lead one to expect a wide-ranging examination of Catholicism and the arts over a significant period. In fact, the topics of the essays are generally limited to Italy in the late cinquecento, with some reference to the early baroque. The focus is almost exclusively on the visual arts and church architecture and the spirituality connected with them. Apart from a few pages on Orlando di Lasso in connection with an altarpiece, there is no consideration of music.

Such detailed scholarship in a relatively limited field will make this volume a treasure for specialists in Renaissance visual art and church history. The seventy-six illustrations (all black and white) are excellent. The bibliography alone would justify acquisition by college and university libraries, and a number of the essays—one on Carlo Borromeo’s perception of the dangers of women in church, for example—could be of interest to scholars and students in fields other than art.

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