

practice. Not so, he says: the king sought not religious uniformity, but simply that both the kirk and the Church of England recognize his supremacy over the church—a goal that he had met in Scotland by 1610 with the restoration of diocesan episcopacy, including by 1612 the requirement that every licenced minister must affirm the king as ‘supreme governour’ in matters spiritual as well as civic. Jacobean Britain was thus a multiple monarchy that ‘accommodated a plurality of Protestantisms’ (p. 212)—a felicitous expression. There are two problems with this view, however. First, Jacobean Scottish episcopacy was in practice far from ‘restored’, being still of the ‘reduced’ sort, with bishops sitting as moderators of presbyteries and in practice having much less control over even ordination and excommunication than the lower courts, from sessions to synods. James could manipulate General Assemblies to achieve the letter of the law he desired; however, enforcement of conformity was quite another matter in a church where so much power resided in the parish community. Despite James’ wishes, Scotland’s was never an erastian Reformation—as Charles would learn at great cost. The argument is further undermined by the ‘popish’ vestments and images James required for his 1617 visit to Scotland, his attempted imposition of kneeling for Communion in the Perth Articles of 1618, and in his last years his promotion of Arminian and ceremonialist bishops in England—known and worrisome to Scots, for good reason. While these actions paled in comparison with the Caroline programme, James cannot be completely exonerated from paving the way for the religious changes that would lead to war.

*University of Pennsylvania*

Margo Todd

Laurence Lux-Sterritt, *English Benedictine Nuns in Exile in the Seventeenth Century*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017, 291 pp., £90.00, ISBN: 978-1-5261-1005-3

*English Benedictine Nuns in Exile in the Seventeenth Century* begins with some useful and orienting lists, including five pages worth of ‘Nuns Cited’, which gives each woman’s name in religion, surname, dates of birth, death, and profession, organized in order of their *Who were the nuns?* Project ID (<https://wwtn.history.qmul.ac.uk/>). These are followed by descriptions of each of the seven Benedictine convents under discussion—Brussels, Ghent, Pontoise, Dunkirk, Ypres, Cambrai, and Paris—as well as notes about the main archives used in the writing of the book.

The Introduction sets the stage for the remainder of the volume with an opening quotation from the proceedings of the Council of Trent in 1563, regarding the stricter enclosure of nuns. Lux-Sterritt explains

how the very Tridentine reforms that insisted upon nuns' 'death to the world', in order that they might devote themselves entirely to God, probably contributed to their relative absence from modern scholarship. Through her extensive use of convent archival material—including translations, devotional literature, prayers, obituary notices, chronicles, annals, epigraphs, and various forms of governance literature, such as 'Statutes' and 'Constitutions' (documents which regulated everyday life in convents) as well as printed works—Lux-Sterritt elucidates the many ways in which the Benedictine nuns, despite *clausura*, were engaged with the political and theological questions of their time. She aims to 'offer some insight into the lived experience' (p. 9) of the nuns by focusing on two distinct areas: the interfaces between convents and the world, and the 'the rapport of spiritual individuals with their bodies' (p. 12). The book explores how these two aspects played out in the opposing 'Bakerite' and Ignation factions, meaning those nuns who adhered to the teachings of the Cambrai spiritual director Augustine Baker (1575–1641), and those who relied on the Ignation *Spiritual Exercises*, Jesuit advisors and confessors for their spiritual guidance. The introduction gives a clear summary of the scholarship in the field of English convent studies.

The first four chapters focus on enclosure and the ideal of death to the world as it was represented in prescriptive literature written for the nuns, and in their own extensive writings. As Claire Walker, Caroline Bowden and others have already observed, the ideal of enclosure did not often align with the material needs and circumstances of the convents in exile nor, I might add, with any convent ever. Nuns needed to cultivate benefactors, attract new postulants, negotiate with their neighbours, and the clerical hierarchy. They employed artisans, gardeners, builders, physicians, as well as confessors, and spiritual advisors. Yet metaphorical death to the world was a frequent topic in the nuns' own writings and tracts and sermons written for them. It entailed a mortification of the senses and a minimization of the nuns' affections for other people, and themselves. In tying these observations to a history of the senses, Lux-Sterritt avers that 'the corporal shell which they sought to subjugate was, at times, the very locus of their spiritual bliss' (p. 14). Throughout the volume she meditates on this paradox at the heart of post-Tridentine convent life.

Chapters 1 through 4, 'The contemplative ideal of dying to the world', 'When spiritual and secular families overlap', 'The secular concerns of contemplatives', and 'The missionary spirit of enclosed nuns' cover familiar territory previously explored by scholars such as Claire Walker in *Gender and Politics in Early Modern Europe: English Convents in France and the Low Countries* (2003), and Caroline Bowden in her numerous articles, editions, and book chapters. Lux-Sterritt makes ample mention of both. She adds interesting details drawn from both

print and manuscript sources, attending to well-known names such as Gertrude More of Cambrai, while also incorporating many anonymous voices, which adds weight to her exploration of corporate identity and spiritual practice. Lux-Sterritt also draws upon letters, devotional miscellanies, and convent accounts, through which she gives a detailed picture of the financial burdens shouldered by the convents, which ultimately kept them engaged with the world.

Chapters 4 through 8 focus on the paradox of attempting to tame the emotions and the senses, while understanding that they were the doors through which nuns hoped to experience religious connection to God and Christ's suffering. Lux-Sterritt fruitfully examines the different ways in which nuns in the Bakerite and Ignation factions harnessed or mortified their senses in attempts to apprehend the divine. This is one of the most comprehensive analyses of the competing spiritualities in the English Benedictine convents. Chapter 8, 'Illness, death and beyond; the body as witness', explores these differences as they manifested in obituary documents and epitaphs, observing that while they could be formulaic, there were important differences in these forms across the Benedictine houses. Obituaries at Ghent and Paris were more fulsome than those produced at the other communities, and while six of the seven houses consistently included descriptions of each nun's last illness—which were often used to underscore how her virtues were refined and perfected in the lead up to her death—the Brussels obituaries exclude those details.

At times, the prose is cyclical, returning to themes and specific examples rehearsed earlier, even deploying some of the same language on more than one occasion. A clearer structure to the text would have helped the reader. So, too, in this final chapter and elsewhere in the book, a more objective authorial distance would have better served the sources. Glowing generalizations about the convents undercut some of the arguments made elsewhere about the variety and complexity of the nuns' lives; the longstanding differences between those who adhered to Baker's teachings, and those who preferred Jesuit methods; and the prescriptions against special friendships and attachments studied in the first half of the book. For example, Lux-Sterritt writes: 'For nuns, death was never lonely. They died surrounded by those who loved them, and who never left their side, but held vigils day and night' (p. 218). Earlier, Lux-Sterritt writes of intra-convent conflicts, which included physical as well as psychological intimidation. Some 'rebel' nuns at Brussels were refused burial in their convent after their death, as a way of excluding them from the convent family, and extending the consequences of their rebellion beyond their lifetimes (p. 237). Lux-Sterritt's description also excludes instances of nuns who died unexpectedly, for whom communities generally felt intense anxiety, because the deceased would not have enjoyed the final rites of confession and unction.

Lux-Sterritt discusses the obituary of the Ghent Abbess, Lucy Knatchbull, which states:

when her Eyes were dead [closed] she moved her lips in prayer, consumating her combat, with intire victory over her wicked enemy; Going Triumphantly, as we piously believe, like a Martir of love to heaven there to Receive a Laurell of honour from the Great king of martirs

Lux-Sterritt writes: ‘She drew her very last breath in a mortal combat for God, *therefore becoming a martyr*, a fearless defender of the faith’ (p. 233, emphasis added). Where the nuns are careful not to presume that Knatchbull *is* a martyr, but rather *like* a martyr, Lux-Sterritt collapses this ambiguity, transforming their ‘pious belief’ into what reads like a statement of fact. This troubles the careful wording that the nuns themselves used when describing their hopes that their Abbess attained heaven.

These concerns aside, this book would serve as a useful introduction to both the secondary scholarship and the archival sources for early modern English convents in exile, particularly Benedictine sources. Lux-Sterritt provides an up-to-date overview of the field and makes accessible many of the core concepts underpinning a way of life that was unusual within the early modern English context. The book is probably best suited to graduate level study and higher, and may be of particular interest to early modern historians and theologians who are not already familiar with convent studies.

*Pembroke College, Oxford*

Victoria Van Hyning

*The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theology, 1600-1800*, eds. Ulrich L. Lehner, Richard A. Muller and A. G. Roeber, Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. xv + 668, \$150.00, ISBN 9780199937943

Numerous academic publishers now produce some version of the same genre. We have Cambridge Companions, Ashgate Research Companions, Brill Companions, Blackwell Companions and Blackwell Handbooks, Oxford Handbooks. I could add guides and *encyclopediae*. Why this current fascination with introductions and summaries? Market demand? If so, has not the market been saturated? Does the publisher’s desire for introductory companions prevent scholars from original research? I have read, reviewed, consulted, and contributed to some of these editions. I have found some very disappointing and indeed irritating because the lack of an editorial vision resulted in an idiosyncratic collection of themes and subjects, or because length restraints resulted in a fatuous superficiality. And, of course, there is every editor’s nightmare: the sudden disappearance