using Augustine’s letters and sermons. Acknowledging the large gap in evidence between the writings of Cyprian and Augustine, Rebillard notes that surprisingly little had changed by Augustine’s time in terms of external markers of Christianess. Augustine complains that Christians continued to visit temples and participate in banquets. For Rebillard, these are examples of instances in which other identities remained more salient than Christian ones. Christians might visit temples or attend banquets of their patrons because they saw it as a social obligation, not a religious conflict.

Rebillard concludes that, while Christianess was not always the most salient identity, this does necessarily contradict the existence of strong group identity. Rather, all category memberships were activated only intermittently (85, 93). In treating Christianess as any other form of identity, Rebillard removes some of the anachronistic privilege that this identity sometimes receives in scholarship and allows for the possibility of a more nuanced understanding of the role Christianity played in people’s lives. Although different in scope and style, Rebillard’s work serves as a good companion to Brent Shaw’s Sacred Violence (2011). Rebillard’s concentration on the individual can be applied to Shaw’s examination of the discrepancy between violent rhetoric and actual violence to help explain the reasons why individuals made the choices that they did, whether influenced by Christianity or not. Although it was not his focus here, Rebillard’s approach may also be profitably applied to those underrepresented in the sources such as women and the lower classes.

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In a slightly revised version of her doctoral thesis, Claire S. Smith sets out to identify the recipients and users of 1 Corinthians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus as “learning communities.” To do this, Smith scours each letter for “teaching vocabulary” that points to a deep-rooted interested in learning in all of these groups. Smith’s word study is expansive, and in many ways impressive (55 words in 9 semantic fields), but Smith limits herself by refusing to subject her newly asserted “learning communities” to socio-historical or socio-scientific analysis and comparison. So while Smith’s description is vast, it is not thick, insofar as it isolates 1 Cor., 1 and 2 Tim., and Titus from the worlds in which they emerged. Smith’s book features a large amount of Greek, and her study of “learning words” requires that readers possess a relatively thorough familiarity with ancient Greek.

Smith begins with an introductory chapter stating her main purpose: to establish that the communities behind 1 Cor., 1 and 2 Tim., and Titus were “‘learning communities’ in which educational activities fundamentally shaped individual and community life, and where the goals of, and relationships within the communities dialectically impacted educational activities” (1). Smith begins with a brief but thorough review of the scholastic community theory originally proposed by E. A. Judge (3-6). After her review of Judge, Smith moves on to address various responses, both complimentary and critical, to Judge’s thesis. Smith notes that many of the scholars who follow Judge take up a socio-historical, or social scientific methods. She isolates her
study from others that followed Judge, stating that here she is not concerned with sociological questions, only whether the communities betrayed in these four letters “might be considered ‘scholastic’, and if so, how” (13). Before concluding her introduction, Smith argues that 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are authentic letters of Paul.

Smith’s next chapter addresses the methods employed in her book. First, she is operating on the argument that “‘teaching’ activities might be considered a constitutive element of a ‘scholastic community,’ and that the scholastic nature of the communities portrayed might be explored through the vocabulary of ‘teaching’” (31). Smith goes on to outline her methodology for identifying the aforementioned teaching vocabulary. Recognizing that word studies are susceptible to a number of methodological problems (such as a reliance on etymology, subjective decision making in the identification of the meaning of words, and more listed on page 32), Smith is careful to spell out her methods clearly. Following biblical scholar James Barr, and linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, Smith builds her arsenal of words based on semantic fields: groupings of words related with varying degrees of looseness to a similar function or referent. Smith focuses on words that emphasize teaching and learning, and concludes her methodology section claiming that her approach will produce “a text-based picture of the practices of teaching within the Pauline communities portrayed…” (emphasis hers, 52).

The next nine chapters (323 pages) provide a detailed study of 55 teaching words from 9 semantic groups: “core-teaching” words, including didaskō and cognates; “speaking” words, including legō and logos; “traditioning” words, such as paradidōmi, and graphō; “announcing” words, such as kērussō, and euangelion; “revealing” words, such as phaneroō, and apokaluptō; “worshipping” words, such as prophēteuō; “commanding” words, such as parakaleō; “correcting” words, such as paideuō and its cognates; and “remembering” words, such as mimneskomai.

In the analysis of each word, Smith provides a rationalization for why it is a teaching/learning word, and looks at how it functions in its location in 1 Cor., 1 and 2 Tim., and Titus. Smith concludes that her word study confirms her initial thesis, and that the model of education she reveals is of a ‘community’, rather than ‘schooling’ variety (386). She also notes that while her word-study “did not seek to make comparisons with other sociological models from antiquity” (393), this was to her benefit as she claims it may be that comparative studies are “insufficient for understanding the social formation and nature of early Christian communities” (393).

In many respects, this book is a valuable resource for anyone interested in the scholastic aspects of 1 Cor., 1 and 2 Tim., and Titus. Smith’s word study, if not exhaustive, is extremely thorough and provides a wealth of data and analysis on teaching and learning vocabulary present in the four letters she examines. Unfortunately, Smith’s oft-repeated refusal to engage in socio-historical or social-scientific analysis severely limits her ability to draw conclusions from her study of the four letters. To begin with, Smith cannot help but make socio-historical claims insofar as she concludes that “[t]he community dimension of these scholastic activities is evident at many points, and may be summarised as a dialectic process through which the community was shaped by teaching activities, and, reciprocally, the teaching activities were shaped by the community” (379). This conclusion is, at best, a simplistic mirror reading of her sources that assumes the content of the letters reflects the social site to which they are addressed. At worst, this analysis seeks to insulate “Christianity” or the “believing community” (379) from the world around it. In fact, the latter may be the case given Smith’s assertion that comparative
studies may not be capable of describing the social formations of early Christianity. This is an unfortunate slip back to a brand of scholarship that sought to isolate early Christians from the world around them.

Ultimately, while Smith’s book provides a thorough, and indeed helpful catalogue of teaching and learning words present in 1 Cor., 1 and 2 Tim., and Titus, the author’s refusal to engage socio-historical or social scientific questions deals a fatal blow to the book being anything other than the aforementioned helpful catalogue.

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Recent writing on early modern culture has shifted from examining the impact of the Reformation as a break from the late medieval to the early modern age toward emphasizing elements of continuity and processes of adaptation. This book—which presents the proceedings of an interdisciplinary symposium on the theme of “Religion and Modes of Cultural Meditation” in the early modern world hosted by the Centre for Research on Religion (CREOR) of McGill University in March 2012—is a valuable contribution in that direction.

The papers comprising the volume address various intersections of religious themes with other spheres of human activity in the early modern period (1450-1700). At the heart of the book lies the theme of mediation, which assumes the form of various questions, ranging from how religious cultures mediate between the past and the present, and how cultural products—whether in literature, art, or music—serve to mediate religious concepts, to how the divine is mediated in and through its creation. The centrality of mediation is further reflected in the interdisciplinary character of the book.

In the first of four essays on “Mysticism, Hierarchy, and the Sacraments,” Joshua Hollmann argues that Nicholas of Cusa’s controversial shift of support from the council of Basil to the papacy reflects the importance of Neoplatonic concepts of mediation and hierarchy in his thought. Rebecca Coughlin (Ch. 2) shows how Ignatius of Loyola’s conception of the unity of contemplation and action in the Spiritual Exercises reveals the influence of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. Shaun Ross (Ch. 3) contends that the Eucharistic imagery in John Donne’s so-called “secular” poetry cannot be simply interpreted as a literary artefact, but rather uses various theological models of participation in the Eucharist to express the presence-making function of poetry. Cheryl Petreman (Ch. 4) examines how host desecration narratives from the 12th through the 17th centuries were part of a Catholic campaign to convince the laity that Christ is actually present in the consecrated host.

Against linear and progressivist narratives of the emergence of the “secular” space of the picture gallery, Tomasz Grusiecki—in the first of three essays on “Images and Iconoclasm”—focuses on 17th-century Polish-Lithuanian visual culture with a view to show that the epistemological status of the image in early modernity was not entirely contingent upon its place of display. Olenka Horbatsch (Ch. 6) compares earlier representations of the relic of St. Veronica’s veil in northern Europe with images of Moses holding the Tablets of Laws in the 17th-century Dutch Republic to illustrate the continuity between Catholic and Protestant visual practices. Eric M. Parker