


political relations. Much emphasis is placed on the ability of social network analysis (SNA) to reveal relationships between individuals, although some of the “graphs” offering visualizations of these relationships have to be consulted online, rather than being available in the book itself (on SNA, see also Cornell Jackson, “Using Social Network Analysis to Reveal Unseen Relationships in Medieval Scotland,” *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* 32, no. 2 [2017]: 336–43). For Chick, such analysis shows that although the town government became more oligarchic after the Dissolution, in everyday life there was “continued interaction between top-level civic officials and middling status inhabitants” (94), although given that these interactions included cases of debt and conveyancing, it is hard to imagine that anyone would ever have thought otherwise. Chick’s characterization of town–abbey relations as distant relies partly on the lack of bequests to Reading abbey by the townspeople. Yet, he himself also notes that wills can hide important aspects of lifetime piety, citing the example the Ludlow Palmers’ guild, which included at least sixty-three Reading residents as members but which did not receive a single bequest in the surviving wills of the town’s testators. Finally, given Chick’s portrayal of town–abbey relations, it is a pity that the book did not offer a more detailed engagement with the contrasting account offered in Peter Rixon’s University of Oxford DPhil. thesis (“The Town of Reading, c. 1200–c. 1542), which, he tells us, anticipated by a decade Clark’s view of such relationships as being “cooperative” in nature.

Nevertheless, despite criticisms that can inevitably be made of specific points within Chick’s study, urban historians will learn much from its detailed account of economic, political, and religious change in late medieval Reading and from the frequent comparisons and contrasts that it makes with other English urban communities, which help to locate the town within the wider development of urban society. The book’s use of SNA is likely to open up similar studies of other towns, it includes useful discussions of the strengths and weaknesses of the surviving sources, and it suggests a number of new directions for future research.

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David J. Davis. *Experiencing God in Late Medieval and Early Modern England*

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. Pp. 240. \$100.00 (cloth).

Kerilyn Harkaway-Krieger 

Gordon College

Email: k.harkaway-krieger@gordon.edu

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In *Experiencing God in Late Medieval and Early Modern England*, David Davis has done something that many scholars (historians and literary critics alike) think should happen, but less frequently undertake—a study of religion, and in particular religious experience, that spans the artificial divide between the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period, between Catholic England and Protestant England. Davis sets out to explore how a shared discourse on religious experiences—focused on the recurrence of *raptus*, *rapture*, and *rapt* in descriptions of such experiences—reveals shared assumptions about divine revelation and God’s interaction with finite, embodied human beings. Divine encounters “involved the communion between God and human beings” and were “also an epistemic experience that expanded human understanding, giving insight that could not have been gained otherwise” (2).

Experiencing God is capacious in its chronological and generic scope. Davis considers mainly popular religious texts from the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, sticking with these examples because they most likely capture what the widest swath of people thought about religious experience. He also considers a range of genres, beginning with devotional treatises and visionary accounts from the later Middle Ages (including English translations of continental sources), sermons, biblical commentaries, and works of Protestant theology, religious poetry, images from the Book of Common Prayer, and philosophical treatments of revelation. The breadth of these sources, and the integrated nature of Davis's ensuing claims, make *Experiencing God* a multifaceted and stimulating study of interest to scholars in several fields.

Experiencing God is divided into three parts. In part one, "The Discourse of Experiencing God," Davis attempts to survey efficiently and comprehensively the various loci where experiences of God appeared, devoting chapters to contemplation in late medieval treatises and visionary accounts, discussions of revelation in Protestant doctrine and homiletics, and, finally, prayer-book images. Davis convincingly shows how *raptus* as an identifying descriptor of revelation spans the artificial designations of "later Middle Ages" and "early modern England." Chapter 1, "*Raptus* in Contemplative Devotion," considers examples from the explosion of vernacular materials in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (including Walter Hilton, Julian of Norwich, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, and *The Prick of Conscience*), connecting these Middle English texts' representations of rapture and revelation with Reformers' discussions in chapter 2. But the discussion of images in chapter 3 only considers sixteenth-century images (drawn mostly from editions of *The Book of Common Prayer*). This analysis is welcome, as few scholars other than Davis himself have seriously examined Protestant pictorial representations. But images played a substantial role in medieval devotion, including in the materials laity were purchasing and using privately (as well as public images in churches and civic spaces), and there are certainly many representations of *raptus*—biblical characters or saints communing with God. While chapters 1 and 2 tightly connect late medieval and early Protestant sources, chapter 3 does not.

Part two, "*Raptus* as Prayer and Poetry," considers descriptions of rapture experiences in first-person accounts of devotion and in the effusion of devotional poetry from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Chapter 4, "Prayer and Devotion after the Reformation," helpfully gathers first-person narratives of religious experience by Anglican and Puritan writers; this gathering reveals some surprising consistency among later medieval and post-Reformation accounts. Intense encounters with the divine are consistently described as ineffable and as full of divine "favors" (described metaphorically in various sensory terms, such as "sweetness"). The chapter 5 on "Language of Angels: The Poetics of Divine Ravishment" discusses the expected names (John Donne and, to a lesser extent, George Herbert), but Davis cites a broad range of poets (Quarles, Spenser, Vaughn, Traherne)—testament to the popularity and reach of religious verse.

Part three surveys "Challenges to the Culture of Divine Revelation"; in these final two chapters, Davis examines how the seventeenth century saw increasing suspicion regarding first-person accounts of divine revelation. While the depth and specificity of this suspicion did vary, there is a marked increase in English resistance to such intense, first-person encounters, at least insofar as they are encouraged or shared with the broader public. This resistance came from both within the church, as churchmen responded to more radical Protestant sects (such as the Quakers), and from philosophical treatments of miracles and religious experience.

Davis's attention to the discourse of *raptus* following the Reformation helps construct a more nuanced story about devotion and devotional language, attending to the shared ground found in both Catholic and Protestant (medieval and early modern) descriptions of what it is like to experience God—one is taken out of oneself, one loses track of time, one experiences ineffable delights. But the medieval texts, and the "mystical" texts of the Counter-Reformation (I'm thinking particularly of Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, and

the works of other Carmelite nuns following Teresa's reform) do embrace and even perform this ineffable, apophatic discourse in ways that the Reformed texts do not. Based on Davis's examples, Protestant accounts of *raptus* in England seem quite directly to relate instances of being ineffably "drawn out of oneself," even as these accounts rely overtly on analogy to record such experiences. But those texts loosely called "mystical" in the Middle Ages and on into the Counter Reformation often *perform* this ineffability in curious and creative ways, as scholars of mysticism from Michel de Certeau on have pointed out. Davis's work helps us to see both through lines (of continuity), but also implicitly allows us to note how Reformation discourses of divine encounter do differ.

Experiencing God contains breadth in its chronological and generic range and depth in Davis's excellent and concise analysis in each chapter. Scholars of history, English literature, and religious studies working in both the late medieval and early modern periods will find his interpretations worth their time and attention.

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Rowan Dorin. **No Return: Jews, Christian Usurers, and the Spread of Mass Expulsion in Medieval Europe**

Histories of Economic Life. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023. Pp. 392. \$49.95 (cloth).

Nora Berend

University of Cambridge
Email: nb213@cam.ac.uk

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This book investigates the expulsion of Christian moneylenders as well as Jewish communities from later medieval Europe. Based on rich archival research, facilitated by the rise of digitized repositories online, it seeks to shift the explanatory frameworks for expulsion. Showing both secular and ecclesiastical involvement, Rowan Dorin argues that the paradigm that focuses on either the rise of a European "persecuting society" or, on the contrary, only on local context cannot explain the expulsions. The innovative comparative approach also allows the author to question explanatory frameworks for expulsion that are based on the study of Jewish expulsions alone, and therefore emphasize the role of the religious divide. Dorin charts the development of arguments from the twelfth century on to expel moneylenders, and shows that from the beginning of the thirteenth to the mid-fourteenth century, the expulsion of foreign usurers occurred in parallel with expulsions of Jews. In this way, he argues, during the high and later Middle Ages, mass expulsion, which used to be extremely rare, became characteristic of European politics.

The book includes a careful analysis of legal arguments about the expulsion of usurers, as well as case studies of expulsions especially from England and France. It demonstrates the cumulative effect of precedents and examines expulsion as a technique of government. Efforts by English and French kings to move Jews into larger urban settlements, suppressing small communities, could contribute to the development of the idea that expulsion was justified. Moreover, there was no linear emergence of the new practice: ideas were expressed, forgotten, then rediscovered and spread by students of law. Thus, a wide variety of events and legal thinking contributed to the normalization of expulsion.