

**Feike Dietz, Adam Morton, Lien Roggen, Els Stronks and Marc Van Vaeck, eds,**  
*Illustrated Religious Texts in the North of Europe, 1500–1800.* Farnham; Burlington:  
 Ashgate, 2014. Pp. 300. Hb, \$119.95.

This book offers a well-balanced and inspiring collection of essays for scholars interested in the interaction between image and word in early modern culture. It draws upon recent historiography revising the old clichés of Catholics monopolizing the “Image” and Protestants destroying it in order to safeguard the “Word.” Instead, this collection demonstrates that—in varying degrees according to place and time—both Catholics and Protestants were deeply concerned with visual programs, and that more often than not, images could cross confessional and geographical boundaries. While the book is divided by the editors in two sections, with the first part covering broader crosscurrents in the use and production of religious illustrated texts, and the second part dealing with specific case studies, this review regroups the essays along historiographical, geographical, and thematic lines.

Both the introduction and the two contributions of Alexandra Walsham and Lee Palmer Wandel give an excellent state-of-the-art, while identifying conceptual challenges for further research. Walsham provides a critical overview of assumptions regarding confessional groups and the use and production of religious images in the early modern age. Offering an impressive review of recent, mainly Anglo-Saxon historiography, she stresses the enduring potential for cross-confessional circulation of images, the continuity and persistence of late medieval iconography, and the contingency of change over time. Walsham equally discusses images crossing different media and audiences, placing the “reformation of the eye” against the backdrop of the shift from Aristotelian to mechanical theories of seeing. Palmer Wandel continues with a discussion of the function of catechisms across confessions, giving particular attention to the catechisms of the Jesuit (and later saint) Peter Canisius. Drawing on these insights, she compares the catechisms of Canisius and Calvin to conclude that for both, the “book” and the “codex” were inscribed in the process of teaching believers how their church defined revelation. Hence, the first three chapters convincingly argue for a cross-confessional and interdisciplinary study of illustrated religious texts.

Geographically, the “North of Europe” is discussed through the examples of the Dutch Republic, the Habsburg Netherlands, the Holy Roman Empire, and England. In particular, clichés about the tolerant print market of the Dutch Republic are deconstructed throughout the edition. As in earlier work, editor Els Stronks underlines that printing religious images was a restricted phenomenon in the Dutch Republic, despite the many “spaces” for cross-confessional

encounters, dialogue, and strife there. Feike Dietz adds to these findings, by showing how by the end of the seventeenth century, the market of “religious love emblems” could only grow through “foreign” stimuli. The case discussed is a “newly discovered” edition of *Levendige Herts-theologie* (1661), published by Christoffel Luyken in Amsterdam, adapting a German template from Christian Hoburg, which imitated the Jesuit-inspired *Cor Jesu amanti sacrum* by Wierix. The contributions by Dirk Imhof and Walter Melion show how the Habsburg Low Countries proved fertile ground for the production and worldwide circulation of illustrated religious prints, demonstrating once again the provinces’ function as a transregional and international hub. In a stimulating contribution, David J. Davis unravels the challenges of portraying God visually in the English Reformation, stressing that there was a longer continuity and persistence of pre-Reformation themes than has been hitherto accepted. While the geographic scope is thus well-defined, it is a pity that some of the authors omit references to Rome and the Mediterranean world, which will leave readers interested in broader Baroque visual culture puzzled.

Four chapters discuss specific images or prints, but with different purposes. Erin Lambert analyzes the visual culture of the bi-confessional Hymnal, a market town in the Holy Roman Empire near the borders of Poland and Bohemia, starting with a 1567 woodcut printed by Hans Wolrab. At first sight, it depicts Catholics and Protestants in one single church service, but as the author unravels, the iconographic program hinted that Heaven would be reserved for Catholics only. As such, confessional boundaries were pragmatically fluid in daily life, but theologically clear in printed images. Also Adam Morton studies the imprints of *The Common Weales Canker Worms* (c.1625), a Protestant estates satire in the wake of the “Spanish Match,” mocking the complots of the Spanish count of Gondomar and the Jesuits. He argues that this was a generic visual proverb illustrating anti-Catholicism, not a specific political pamphlet reflecting upon concrete events. Still, Walter Melion warns for making too sharp boundaries between confessions, by analyzing Karel van Mander’s *The Nativity Broadcast by Prophets of the Incarnations* (1588) to show that its Christological program accommodated expectations and teachings from Catholics, Calvinists, and Mennonites alike. Equally Amanda Herrin takes the example of the Amsterdam print maker Claes Jansz. Visscher’s *Theatrum biblicum* (1643) to discuss the hermeneutical fluidity of religious prints in early modern bibles. She shows how Visscher did more than reprinting the older *Thesaurus sacrarum historiarum* of Gerard De Jode (Antwerp, 1579, reprinted 1585), by aiming to revise and emulate it, and crossing the confessional boundaries between Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Calvinism.

Scholars interested in Jesuit history will particularly be pleased by the contributions by Mia Mochizuki and Dirk Imhof. Mia Mochizuki recalls, in an entertaining way, how in 1583 Alessandro Valignano, S.J., decided to ship a complete printing press to Nagasaki. Landing first in Goa and Macau, the press arrived on Japanese soil on 21 July 1590, but was returned to Macao by 1614. Due to limited resources, prints from the Japanese press imitated existing iconography and local titles, but eventually the Society's acculturation policies failed in making the printing press viable. On the base of surviving correspondence and archival evidence, Dirk Imhof discusses the delicate relationship between Thomas Saily, S.J., the head almoner (chief of the so-called *missio castrensis*) of the Spanish troops in the southern Habsburg Netherlands, and the Plantin Press in Antwerp. Saily took great care in designing and writing prayer books for soldiers, but at each stage of the production process, he was forced to downsize his plans. The chapter by Feike Dietz, discussing emblem books on religious love in the Dutch Republic shows how these publications draw heavily on late sixteenth-century Jesuit traditions and iconography in the Low Countries, instantiating the Calvinist appropriation of Catholic models, while the aforementioned chapter by Lee Palmer Wandel develops the Jesuit contribution to the making of early modern catechisms.

One can sense from the pages that all the contributors aim to revise old stereotypes about visual culture in the early modern confessional strife between Catholics and Protestants. While all the chapters help to deconstruct these tropes, a new interpretational equilibrium seems somehow missing. Even if it is important to stress the cross-confessional and transregional nature of religious images in the early modern age, one can only hope that these scholars now will map the intensity, the quantity, and the directions of these exchanges in early modern Europe—and (who knows) beyond.

*Violet Soen*

KU Leuven

*violet.soen@arts.kuleuven.be*

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