

Illustrated Religious Texts in the North of Europe, 1500–1800. Feike Dietz, Adam Morton, Lien Roggen, Els Stronks, and Marc Van Vaeck, eds. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014. xviii + 282 pp. \$119.95.

In January 2012, the Universities of Leuven and Utrecht organized a conference addressing “Crosscurrents in Illustrated Religious Texts in the North of Europe, 1500–1800.” Selected papers from this conference provided the point of departure for

an interesting collection of essays, which reexamines the role and function of religious images in the post-Reformation period. Focusing on “the book as object, a point at which various vectors of early modern society . . . met” (6), it examines “the crosscurrents of exchange in the realm of illustrated religious literature, within and beyond confessional and national borders, against the background of recent insights into the importance of sensual and emotional aspects of early modern culture” (6).

The volume comprises eleven contributions by scholars whose backgrounds include history, literature, cultural studies, and art history. Following the editor’s introduction, these chapters — only some of which can be addressed individually here — are organized into two sections. Part 1, “Crosscurrents in Ideologies and Motives” (chapters 1 to 5), opens with an illuminating text by Alexandra Walsham, who singles out major developments in recent research concerning early modern religious images and sheds light on questions and themes that keep recurring throughout the essays. Walter S. Melion illustrates how religious images could move between confessional spheres by discussing Karel van Mander’s *The Nativity Broadcast by Prophets of the Incarnation* (1588) and its different theological readings. Adam Morton’s insightful contribution examines the impact of Protestant theology on early modern visual culture by analyzing the various religious and cultural registers coalescing in the production and reception of prints such as *The Common Weales Canker Wormes* (ca. 1625). In part 2, “Forms of Exchange and Mobility” (chapters 6 to 11), Amanda K. Herrin illuminates the migration of religious images across confessional and political boundaries by investigating the origin, selection, and adaptation of preexisting prints used by Claes Jansz. Visscher to illustrate his *Theatrum Biblicum* (1643). Feike Dietz, introducing a previously unknown edition of the Dutch religious emblem book *Levendige herts-theologie* (1661), highlights the significance of international exchange for the migration of images. By contrast, Erin Lambert analyzes the complex relations between Catholic and Protestant communities coexisting within the narrow geographical boundaries of the German city of Bautzen as reflected by a woodcut enclosed in a hymnal edited by the Catholic priest Johann Leisentrit (1567).

The very broad geographical and chronological scope of the volume is relativized to a certain extent by the contents of the chapters. Geographically, most contributors prioritize either the Low Countries or England. The German States receive less attention, sources from Switzerland and France are discussed at some points, and one chapter looks beyond the geographical focus of the volume by examining the voyage of a Jesuit printing press from Europe to Japan (chapter 4 by Mia M. Mochizuki). Chronologically, the chapters almost exclusively discuss materials and developments of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While each author provides extensive references to historical sources and secondary literature, no general bibliography is included in the volume, which, however, offers a detailed list of figures and an index nominum. Numerous figures in black and white illustrate the texts, which greatly facilitates the understanding of the respective argumentations.

The volume’s contributors successfully highlight international and interconfessional mechanisms of exchange traversing early modern visual and religious culture from

a variety of viewpoints. They demonstrate the validity of the multiperspective approach emphasized by the editors and provide interesting insights into recent and ongoing research aiming at a more comprehensive understanding of the production, use, and perception of illustrated religious literature, especially of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Considering the publication's stated topographical and chronological framework, one would perhaps have welcomed a greater portion of contributions discussing sources from the German States as well as the inclusion of chapters focusing specifically on eighteenth-century sources and developments. Nonetheless, the volume presents any scholar interested in the subject with a range of valuable approaches to important aspects of the vast and complex field of study that is the early modern illustrated religious text.

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