

*Pragmatic Toleration: The Politics of Religious Heterodoxy in Early Reformation Antwerp, 1515–1555.* Victoria Christman.

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Victoria Christman's new book offers valuable insights into the burgeoning literature on the practices of toleration in early modern Europe. Her focus on trials for religious heterodoxy overseen by Antwerp's magistrates shows how informal, accidental, and contingent factors limited the repression of dissent, with the result that heterodoxy remained vibrant even in a regime of intolerance. Her research is based on archival and printed sources relating to a series of court cases from the late 1520s to the late 1540s. While chapter 1 provides the legal and institutional framework, the heart of the argument lies in five chapters examining different sets of trials. Chapter 2 centers on the prosecution of a group of heterodox dissenters in the late 1520s. Jurisdictional wrangling and confusions explain how these blatant heretics remained unpunished for so long and received relatively mild penalties even when they were convicted. Chapter 3 offers the counterexamples of the trials of Anabaptists, who saw none of that lenience, largely

because of their association with the Münsterite rebels of 1535. The following three chapters return to magistrates' policies of permissiveness and foot dragging in the prosecution of heterodox workers in the printing industry (chapter 4), members of the city's Chambers of Rhetoric (chapter 5), and New Christians who had fled from Iberia in the 1530s and 1540s (chapter 6).

There are three key historiographical discussions to which *Pragmatic Toleration* contributes. The first are studies of Antwerp. Examining the period immediately after, Guido Marnef shows how the politics of religious heterodoxy led to a dramatic showdown between magistrates, underground dissenters, and the central government in Brussels from the mid-1550s to the late 1570s. Marie Juliette Marinus has described the slow process of imposing a uniform Counter-Reformation from 1585 into the seventeenth century. In all three accounts, Antwerp's magistrates defended local autonomy and proved hesitant to act harshly against religious dissenters. But over time the central government had increased success in forcing magistrates to accept policies that promoted a repressive monoconfessionalism. In this sense, the example of Antwerp challenges triumphalist narratives of the gradual rise of toleration. Christman's book can also be read alongside recent studies that have shown that daily, often unofficial practices of toleration were more common during the confessional era than once appreciated. By casting her glance to the period before confessional boundaries were well defined, Christman shows that people were developing practices of toleration from the first years of the Reformation. Read this way, her book offers a positive assessment of the Reformation's role in promoting practices of religious toleration, despite its challenge to Whiggish historiography already mentioned.

*Pragmatic Toleration* also speaks to intellectual histories of toleration. After magistrates' pleas for lenience toward New Christians based on economic reasons had failed, they developed biblically based defenses of toleration — including some that look similar to those made by later champions of tolerance. In this case, however, arguments for toleration did not reflect principled beliefs (they continued to prosecute Anabaptists unmercifully, after all), but were only a strategy within a specific context. Against these three backdrops, Christman effectively shows the nonlinearity of the history of religious toleration. The back and forth of tolerance and intolerance rested on local, contingent factors and cannot be seen in anticipation of some kind of Hegelian teleology toward progress or confessionalization.

In Christman's treatment, magistrates were primarily interested in preserving their jurisdictional autonomy and protecting wealthy residents from interference. I wonder whether Christman underestimates the extent to which their worldviews and sense of community played a part as well. This not to say that magistrates were sympathetic to Protestantism per se (a supposition Christman disproves). But their unwillingness to act harshly against heterodox printers, publishers, and authors suggests that magistrates valued a culture of intellectual debate and exchange in which many probably participated. Perhaps their brand of Catholicism was less threatened by differences of opinion than that promoted by Charles V or his queens regent.

Especially for its central focus on trials as sites of inquiry, Christman's *Pragmatic Toleration* makes an excellent contribution to the flourishing discussion of religious toleration in post-Reformation Europe.

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