

*The Catholic Church and the Dutch Bible. From the Council of Trent to the Jansenist controversy (1564–1733)*. By Els Agten. (Church History and Religious Culture, 80.) Pp. xv + 474 incl. 6 colour ills and 39 tables. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2020. €165. 978 90 04 42001 4; 1572 4107  
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Whether laypeople should be allowed to read the Bible in the vernacular was a question which sharply divided Catholics and Protestants, but which caused significant rifts among Catholics as well. In her book, a revision of her 2014 doctoral dissertation, Els Agten analyses the stance of the Catholic Church on vernacular bible reading, studies the opinion of ten ‘stakeholders’ on this matter and examines and compares three Dutch bible translations. She does so in five long chapters, the first of which is introductory in nature and describes the most significant and relevant politico-religious developments pertaining to the early modern Low Countries. These include the emergence of an independent and officially Protestant state, the Dutch Republic, in the north, and a firmly Catholic state, the Southern or Spanish Netherlands, in the south. Of specific relevance is the influence of Jansenism, that protean current within early modern Catholicism which attributed great importance to vernacular bible reading by laypeople and was influential both in the Northern and Southern Netherlands. The debate between Jansenists and anti-Jansenists over the use of vernacular Bibles forms the backbone of the book.

The second chapter examines the Council of Trent’s famous *regula quarta*, which stipulated the strict conditions under which vernacular bible reading was to be permitted, in relation to book censorship within the Catholic Church more widely. It also contains a thorough analysis of the actual implementation of the *regula quarta* in the Low Countries. The second part of the chapter comprises an analysis of the translation activities of the Jansenists of Port-Royal, including their *Le Nouveau Testament de Mons*, an important translation that would exert significant influence on one of the Dutch bible translations that is studied later in the book. Three polemicists and clergymen from the Southern Netherlands – Cornelius Hazart, Martinus Harney and Martinus Steyaert – and their ideas regarding bible translations and vernacular bible reading are studied in the third chapter. Interestingly, the latter two migrated to the anti-Jansenist camp after having entertained links to leading Jansenists or having embraced some of their ideas. A detailed analysis of the relevant publications of each of these authors shows their interventions in and contributions to the debate about vernacular bible reading. While partly differing in terms of their arguments, strategy and style, ultimately all of them defended an orthodox position and stuck to the *regula quarta*.

Three Dutch bible translations published by Aegidius de Witte (1696), Andreas van der Schuur and Hendrick van Rhijn (1732) and Philippus Laurentius Verhulst (1717) are subjected to a detailed analysis in the fourth and fifth chapters. The fourth chapter comprises a biographical overview of the four translators and an analysis of their ideas regarding vernacular bible reading and/or the *regula quarta*. As such, there is a useful thematic overlap between the third and fourth chapters, yet the comparison between these Jansenist and anti-Jansenist authors could have been developed more fully. The fifth chapter is comparative in nature and juxtaposes a number of bible verses as they appear in each of the three translations in order to shed light on the debates between Catholics and

Protestants and the ‘Jansenist character of the Bible translations’ (p. 352). This cross-confessional comparison has been aided by the inclusion of a number of tables which list particular verses from the three Dutch translations as well as their counterparts in the Vulgate and other translations such as the Dutch ‘Statenvertaling’ (the translation commissioned by the Dutch state). Agten argues that while all the authors of the aforementioned three Dutch translations can be placed within the Jansenist camp, ideas that were traditionally associated with Jansenism were most pronounced in the De Witte translation, which heavily relied on the *Le Nouveau Testament de Mons*.

Mainly focusing on clergymen and sources which originated in an ecclesiastical context, this book is primarily a work of church history. It is unpretentiously presented as a ‘philological analysis’ with the main aim being ‘to study the impact of Jansenism and anti-Jansenism on the ideas regarding vernacular Bible reading and Bible production in a restricted area, namely the Low Countries’ (p. 2). As such, the book certainly delivers. Its main strength lies in the fact that it is based on thorough research and provides a detailed and nuanced analysis and comparison of the textual output of each of the book’s ‘stakeholders’. The textual *corpus* is situated within the larger contexts of book censorship, debates on the *regula quarta* and vernacular bible reading, and Jansenism, but this could have been done more fully and effectively. While these topics clearly are linked, an overarching argument which ties them all together and positions the book in relation to the relevant historiographical subfields is absent. Indeed, somewhat surprisingly, the interaction with the existing secondary literature is rather limited throughout the book. The closest Agten comes to formulating a larger argument is her suggestion that ‘the well-established dichotomy between Jansenist and anti-Jansenist might be overcome by instead distinguishing between defenders and opponents of vernacular Bible reading, respectively’ (p. 2). However, in the conclusion of the book she rightly mentions that we should not simply replace one dichotomy with another because divergent opinions on one topic did not rule out agreement on another (p. 391). As such her work provides another, but nevertheless useful reminder of the difficulties of applying labels to and classifying people within the larger context of the Jansenist controversy.

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*Ideal und Praxis – Bischöfe und Bischofsamt im Heiligen Römischen Reich, 1570–1620.*

Edited by Peter Walter, Wolfgang Weiss and Markus Wriedt. (Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte, 174.) Pp. xii + 373 incl. frontispiece, 27 ills and 2 tables. Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2020. €69. 978 3 402 11609 8; 0171 3469

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This fascinating collection of essays documents a conference (associated with an exhibition) held in 2017 to mark the four-hundredth anniversary of the death of Julius Echter of Mespelbrunn (18 March 1545–9 September 1617), prince-bishop of Würzburg, 1573–1627. The twelve substantive essays, complemented