

**Carsten Brall (Hg.), Konfessionelle Theologie und Migration. Die Antwerpener Gemeinde Augsburgischer Konfession im 16. Jahrhundert. Abteilung für Abendländische Religionsgeschichte, Göttingen (V&R) 2017, 402 S., 2 Abb. (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz, 249), ISBN 978-3-525-56721-0, EUR 80,00.**

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Shortly after his arrival in Antwerp in autumn 1566, Matthias Flacius Illyricus wrote to Nikolaus Gallus in Regensburg: »I find here many difficulties, dangers and unrest. We [the Lutherans] and the Calvinists had each six preachers. [...] The city is full of soldiers [...]. The Sacramentarians rule in most places. I fear much that similar unrest, such as the one in France, might result here; then the local Calvinists are similarly infected with the spirit of indignation.<sup>1</sup>«

This quote reflects the ambiguities and insecurities experienced by the inhabitants of Antwerp, among them also the members of the growing Protestant population. The monograph under review here delves into this period of major changes on the political and religious scene not only in this centre for trade on the Schelde River but also in the Low Countries in general during the so-called Wonder Year. This period lasted less than a year, including parts of 1566 and 1567, before Spanish troops occupied the city and most Protestants were under pressure to leave Antwerp.

In his slightly revised PhD Dissertation from 2015 at the University of Mainz under the guidance of Irene Dingel, Carsten Brall examines in «Confessional Theology and Migration: The Lutheran Church of the Augsburg Confession in Antwerp in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century» the largest Lutheran congregation in the Netherlands at the time. He does this through investigating the dynamics and patterns of migration and its outcomes in relation to the Antwerp congregation.

The first part of the book is chronologically structured, beginning with an overview of the processes of demarcation in this confessionally heterogeneous city and later focusing on the founding of its Lutheran church. The pre- and early history of the local Protestant congregations also receives attention. Part two examines the theology and the theologians at the church in Antwerp. Part three, which is also the longest part, relates the events and reasons that led to the emigration of Lutherans from Antwerp and follows them – as well as the development of their



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<sup>1</sup> Letter to Nikolaus Gallus in Regensburg from October 26, 1566. Regensburg Stadtarchiv, Ecclestastica I, 18, 10, p. 11308 (English translation mine).

theology – in their chosen destinations that include Woerden, Wesel, Cologne, Aachen and Frankfurt.

Here the question may be posed why Brall did not include Amsterdam, when it is well known that there were commercial and social connections between the two cities, and a number of Antwerp merchants and citizens belonging to the Lutheran congregation did move to Amsterdam after 1567. The book also contains two illustrations by the contemporary Flemish painter and engraver Frans Hogenberg as well as two excursions about these images. One of them highlights the practice of the so-called hedge preaching – gathering outside the city walls of Antwerp for religious observances. A further excursus is about the Spanish preacher Cassiodor de Reina.

The author dedicates a considerably large part of the book to the analysis of theological texts, which those more interested in (church) history may find too arduous at times. Theological documents such as the Antwerp Confession of 1566, the Antwerp Church Order (Agenda), first published in 1567 as well as further theological publications for use at church and at home feature prominently. He also highlights some of the divergent theological streams within Lutheranism and how their struggles within the circle of the Wittenberg Reformation impacted a local community.

In addition to Flacius, Cyriakus Spangenberg and four other German theologians constituted the advisory group, which had been asked to provide guidance and leadership. Some of the contemporary theological controversies were also taking place in Antwerp, including the Flacian controversy concerning original sin. The Holy Communion was also a point of division: just as elsewhere in Europe, it was a topic of dispute between the Lutherans and the Reformed. Additionally, the role of the personal confession and its relationship to the Eucharist caused heated debates among the Lutherans in Antwerp.

Brall's book complements previously published works about the Protestants of Antwerp, most importantly the monograph by Guido Marnef, »Antwerp in the Age of Reformation. Underground Protestantism in a Commercial Metropolis, 1550–1577«. Marnef's work, published in 1996 by the John Hopkins University Press, focuses primarily on the social, economic, and organizational structures of the newly emerged Protestant congregations (Calvinist, Lutheran and Anabaptist) in Antwerp beginning with 1550, while also mapping their respective Europe-wide confessional networks.

Overall, Brall's work is a useful contribution to the theological and confessional history of the period of the second-generation Protestant reformers, offering on the one hand an invaluable look at the microhistory of the Antwerp Lutheran congregation as it was trying to balance intra- and interconfessional differences within emerging Lutheranism. Furthermore, it places the developments in Antwerp within the larger European context of confessionalization and of religiously motivated migration – a topic receiving increasingly more attention from scholars examining cross-border phenomena. The volume contains a separate conclusion, a detailed bibliography and an index of places and persons, making it particularly user-friendly.



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