

Thomas Fuchs argumentiert anhand der Briefsammlungen des 16. Jahrhunderts der Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig dafür, dass nachlassgebundene Überlieferung nicht zufällig geschieht, sondern von jenen Menschen abhängt, die mit ihren Entscheidungen dazu beigetragen haben.

Esther Wipfler bietet in ihrem Beitrag einen Einblick in das noch unerforschte Feld von Briefen und Zetteln in Porträts des 16. Jahrhunderts. Sie hebt dabei hervor, dass die im Bild lesbar an Personen adressierten Briefe den Bildbetrachterinnen und -betrachtern die Verbundenheit der Adressaten mit der dargestellten Person vor Augen führen.

Auf die konfessionsübergreifende Bedeutung von Musik geht *Johannes Schilling* in seinem Beitrag zu einem Brief Martin Luthers an den Musiker Ludwig Senfl ein.

David Mache, Zürich

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Riccarda Suitner. Venice and the Radical Reformation: Italian Anabaptism and Antitrinitarianism in European Context, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2024 (Ref0500 Academic Studies 101), 272 p. – ISBN 978-3-525-50019-4.

Riccarda Suitner has made a truly remarkable contribution to European Anabaptist studies with her recent volume. In an extensively researched and contextually detailed analysis of emerging Venetian Anabaptist groups in the 1500s, Suitner encapsulates both the “extreme fluidity” (117) of early Italian Anabaptism and the complex networks and theological concerns that connected Anabaptist conventicles.

To some extent, the volume traces a chronological narrative that names the 1540s and 1550s as the “high point” (13) of local Anabaptist movements before subsequent persecution and migration. The narrative gives special attention to the Venetian Council of 1550 and its attempt to reach doctrinal uniformity. However, Suitner is not entirely beholden to a chronological account. Instead, she chooses to allow her discussion to be driven by the primary sources at her disposal, particularly inquisitorial trial transcripts from multiple decades as well as chronicles, theologi-

cal treatises, and further sources. Accordingly, Suitner initially surveys a range of social, economic, and confessional aspects that appear to contribute to the emergence of Anabaptist conversions and sympathizers, as reflected in the first-hand accounts (27–94).

Some of the aspects that Suitner observes – the prevalence of anticlerical tendencies, the rejection of infant baptism, and the path of individuals through Erasmian or Lutheran to Anabaptist viewpoints – will sound very familiar to scholars of Anabaptism in other European settings. However, Suitner’s portrayal focuses far more on the uniquely distinguishing characteristics of Venetian Anabaptists. Her opening survey is superbly contextualized, incorporating intriguing, localized details such as the networking role of German trading houses (45–48), the early circulation of Italian vernacular Bibles (55), and polemical usages of “masked Christ” phrasing that recall Carnival imagery (87–89). Likewise, Suitner’s consideration of the Council of 1550 strongly emphasizes the more distinctive doctrines of Venetian conventicles including varied Antitrinitarian hypotheses and assorted views of “soul sleeping” (94–135). She makes important observations on the nature of Anabaptist articles of faith as well, noting that while the Venetian Anabaptists were not isolated in their discussions (and that the Council may have been influenced by Schleithem or similar endeavors), there is also evidence to suggest that the Council was focusing specifically on the most controversial, localized topics (105f.).

The two chapters that follow the discussion of the Council explore further, sometimes surprising networks through which Anabaptist and Antitrinitarian notions spread. In her third chapter, Suitner argues for the prominence of radical ideas at the University of Padua, naming it as a center of medical experimentation, reexamined Aristotelianism, and religious dissent (156). By way of the routes of influential physicians (figures such as Michel Servet and Agostino Doni), as well as through a much larger hypothesis of the circulation of ideas in Switzerland, Transylvania, Poland, and other regions (168, 182), Suitner describes a widening trajectory of theological theories in which the efforts of the Paduan medical faculty to reinterpret Aristotelian psychology coupled uniquely with developing ideas of soul sleeping, mortalism, and Antitrinitarianism.

In her fourth and final chapter, Suitner turns to yet another intriguing hypothesis of the mobility of ideas, namely that of a “link between the Radical Reformation and Jewish religion” (190). She explores the likelihood of Valdesian influence in terms of ideas of salvific grace, the non-existence of hell, and more (arguing simultaneously for Jewish influence upon Juan de Valdes and his circle), and then briefly considers links with the Venetian ghetto, Jewish students at Padua, and reflections of “pro-Judaism” in trial transcripts (194–210). Much of what Suitner suggests regarding geographical proximity and “theological affinities” (216) between Anabaptists and Jews is difficult to clarify or prove, and some of what Suitner proposes is unsubstantiated (as she acknowledges). Even so, the chapter provides several directions – perhaps most notably the meaning of repeated accusations of reformers as “Judaising” (189f.) – that could be beneficially explored in future studies. Suitner ends with a brief epilogue that restates her conviction of early Anabaptist activity in Venice and the related need for ongoing reappraisal of prior historiographical narratives.

Overall, Suitner’s work displays a thoroughly contextualized and creative examination of the Venetian Anabaptist and Antitrinitarian groups. The interpretation of trial transcripts is done with care and precision, and the inclusion of several manuscript page copies within the volume helps to illustrate both the challenges and the exciting possibilities inherent in interpreting primary source narratives. Equally impressive is Suitner’s consistent consideration of mobility and migration. Each of her chapters reflects the presence of convoluted networks of trade and travel, ranging from individual teachers, book printers, physicians, and reformers to larger scale migrations that help to reveal connections between the Venetian/Italian groups and those of Swiss, German, and Moravian origin. Admittedly, some pieces of Suitner’s project run into difficulties due to the attempt to weave together such numerous (and sometimes inconsistent) records. For instance, a few of the arguments for lines of influence between Swiss, Moravian, and Venetian thought, along with the indication that geographically disparate emergences of Antitrinitarian theories are likely to be related, may be overstated (or simply difficult to show with the sources available). It is also the case that a few comparative comments made in passing, such as that the “confessional

eclecticism” of Italian Anabaptism was “fairly unusual” in Europe (39), appear to be forcing the argument of Italian Anabaptism’s individuality unnecessarily. And as mentioned above, the discussion of “affinities” between Anabaptist and Jewish theology is much less substantiated and less persuasive than the rest of the volume. However, these points are reflective of the immensity of the project that Suitner takes on. Even as she moves constantly back and forth between arguments for Venetian Anabaptists’ isolation and connection, and between their theological uniqueness and their recipient influence of other groups’ ideas, she remains an observant advocate for the importance of the Venetian Anabaptists within the larger Reformation.

As Suitner clearly states from the outset, “This book aims to present the Republic of Venice as one of the strongholds of sixteenth-century Anabaptism, and Venetian Anabaptism as fully belonging to the main branches of European Anabaptism” (18). Suitner succeeds at this aim. Within Anabaptist studies, her work is a far-reaching illumination of less recognized early conventicles, a substantiated argument to recognize the prevalence of Antitrinitarian views, and a stimulating reminder that the known portrait of European Anabaptism is not yet complete.

Breanna J. Nickel, Goshen

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Bruce Gordon. Zwingli. God’s Armed Prophet. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2021, 349 S. – ISBN 978-0-300-23597-5.

Es ist nicht übertrieben, den Verfasser als einen der besten Kenner der Schweizer Reformationsgeschichte und ihrer Quellen zu bezeichnen, was ganz besonders für die Zürcher Reformation zutrifft. Seit seiner Dissertation, die 1992 unter dem Titel *Clerical Discipline and the Rural Reformation. The Synod in Zürich, 1532 – 1580* in der Reihe *Zürcher Beiträge zur Reformationsgeschichte* erschienen ist, hat er sich mit zahlreichen Forschungsbeiträgen in Fachkreisen international einen Namen gemacht. Gordon versteht es aber auch, eine breitere interessierte Leserschaft anzusprechen. Es gelingt ihm ausgezeichnet, grundlegendes Wissen über