

David Kromhout and Adri Offenbergh, *Hugo Grotius' Remonstrantie of 1615. Facsimile, Transliteration, Modern Translations and Analysis*, Leiden / Boston, Brill, 2019. xx, 222 pp. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004397446>.

In March 1615 the States of Holland commissioned Reinier Pauw and Hugo Grotius, pensionaries of Amsterdam and Rotterdam respectively, to draft an ordinance according to which the Jews could be admitted to live in various places in Holland. Under Emperor Charles V, new Jewish settlements had been forbidden. Those statutes were still on the books when at the very end of the sixteenth century 'Portuguese' merchant families, of Jewish descent but converted under pressure to Catholicism, arrived in force in the now officially Protestant Dutch Republic and returned to the Jewish religion. They settled mainly in Amsterdam, but Alkmaar, Haarlem and Rotterdam tried to lure Jewish merchants to their cities as well with special privileges that would allow them to practice their religion. In Hoorn, however, three ex-Mennonites who had converted to Judaism were threatened by the draconic punishments stipulated in the older anti-Jewish legislation. To prevent such inconsistencies, the two pensionaries were to draft uniform regulations for the entire province of Holland. In December 1619, however, after a silence of several years, the States permitted local authorities to decide for themselves whether or not to admit Jews and under which conditions.

When in 1864 the descendants of Grotius brought a collection of his personal papers to auction, among these were found several documents that related to this episode in the history of Dutch Jewry. At a later date they were acquired for the famous library of Ets Haim, where they are kept to this day. The most extensive of these, titled *Remonstrantie nopen de ordre dije in de landen van Hollandt ende Westvrieslandt dijent gestelt op de Joden*, has now been published in a new edition, with a facsimile of the original document, full transliteration, translations into contemporary Dutch and English, a modern introduction and annotation. This new edition replaces the one published by Jaap Meijer in 1949. It is a complex text that fully deserves the attention of researchers from a variety of disciplines. In an elaborate prologue, it discusses the arguments for regulated admission; in 49 articles it lays out the conditions under which Jews can be admitted without endangering the Christian religion and public order; and in a third part these articles are defended with extensive reference to authoritative legal sources, mainly from the Roman *Codex Iuris Civilis*. It can be regarded as a window into the mindset of the Dutch intellectual elite, not only regarding the Jews, but also on the relation between religion and public order in general. In the words of David Kromhout: it offers 'a

prismaic view of social and cultural tendencies and crossroads of the beginning of the seventeenth century in the Dutch Republic, which combined pragmatic mercantilism with dominant Calvinism and profound humanist learning' (this edition, p. 56).

The present edition, apart from being a really beautiful book, in some respects is an improvement upon Meijer's. In his introduction David Kromhout respectfully lays to rest a number of myths surrounding the arrival and initial organisation of the Jewish community in Amsterdam, with the help of the results of more recent research. Yet it has a number of weaknesses, too. A much more incisive revisionism in the appraisal of this text would have been appropriate, especially as regards the ascription of authorship to Grotius. Kromhout himself seems uneasy about this. In a footnote he acknowledges the lack of evidence (p. 6, n. 3), and notes that the first part of the *Remonstrantie* reads like a *Fremdkörper* in the work of Grotius (p. 30), but at the same time he doggedly continues in the footsteps of the auctioneer Nijhoff in his auction catalogue of 1864 and of his predecessor Meijer. The latter decisively excluded Pauw from joint authorship, despite the joint commission of the two pensionaries, because he was a Calvinist — which seems a little bit peevish in speaking about a man who was twice Grand Pensionary of Holland. This summary depreciation of Pauw has led several authors on a fruitless search for another regulation that could safely be attributed to him, and is not questioned here.

It is, however, highly unlikely that Grotius, or Pauw, would present the States with a piece that reflected a personal opinion only. Reports to administrative bodies usually were the work of committees, who would consult with others behind the scenes, making the final result a collaborative effort. Perhaps the *Remonstrantie* is in this sense the ordinance for which Pauw and Grotius were committed, but that is not a given, and in my opinion unlikely. Taken as a whole, it is somewhat 'academic'. Meijer in his edition printed a much more to the point, also undated and unsigned concept-resolution from the collection auctioned in 1864 that would be a much likelier candidate (Meijer, pp. 95–98, 135–137). It explicitly refers to previous consultation of and approval from the *Hoge Raad* (High Council, an advisory board on the highest level of jurisdiction for Holland and Zeeland). Obviously the matter was discussed more widely, and what changed hands in the auction of 1864 may well have been parts of the work file, and the *Remonstrantie* one of a collection of preparatory texts from diverse persons or colleges, collected by Pauw and Grotius in the execution of their commission (see Meijer, pp. 70–71, 96), rather than his or their original work.

As the term 'remonstrantie' implies a complaint or a request for redress, the *Remonstrantie* may well have predated the commission of the States of Holland