
Although traditional survey courses of sixteenth-century church history often focus on developments in Germany, England, France and Switzerland, the Netherlands (northern and southern) are frequently short-changed. Professor Templin (emeritus professor at the Iliff School of Theology) does his best to counter this tendency by presenting this book. His approach combines introductory chapters, which set the stage for readers with less specific knowledge of how the Reformation played out in the Low Countries, with deeper looks at various influential written works from the area and time period.

The book begins with very basic introductory chapters. An atmosphere of religious dissent characterized the 1520’s. Teachings and ideas of *humanitas*, *libertas* and *simplicitas* bubbled vigorously together in the public consciousness, encouraged by books, sermons and the Chambers of Rhetoric. Geographical and political factors played their part. The complicated history of the various provinces of the northern and southern Netherlands, and how they came under the control of the Burgundian authorities and eventually Charles V, is briefly explained. Imperial control over the region was tighter than in “the city-states of Switzerland or the principalities of Saxony” (pp. xxiii–xxiv) and there was no one unifying leader for the religious dissent which was welling up throughout north and south. Humanism was a motivating force, as were new ideas about the sacraments and discontent about Roman Catholic abuses.

Erasmus and Luther were both major influences in the Netherlands during this time period. Templin continues his overview by describing how and when Luther’s works were introduced into the region, in what languages they appeared, where they were printed, and how they were banned and burned in Leuven and Cologne. He talks about the “Edicts against Blasphemy” of Charles V, and about Luther’s life and struggles with the emperor. The initial sympathy of Erasmus for Luther is examined in some of their correspondence, as well as their later disagreements. The overview also discusses Erasmus’s work in Louvain at the *Collegium Trilingue*, his disagreements with the Louvain theologians and departure from the university city in 1521. The establishment of the inquisition in the Netherlands shortly thereafter (1522) and description of the first resulting martyrs end the introductory chapters. Erasmus’s desire to remain in the Roman Catholic church, of course, contrasted with Luther and his followers’ eventual need to establish a new ecclesiastical entity. Eventually, the Roman and Lutheran confessions became so polarized that the “middle
ground” had almost disappeared. “The gulf between the two confessions had become so deep by the time of Erasmus’s death (1536) that the island in the middle where the humanists might choose to stand was for the most part non-existent” (p. xxvii).

Quite a few individuals with their stories are corralled together in the chapter ‘Some humanist scholars and dissenters.’ Very little is known about some of them. Many were Augustinians, or had been influenced by the Dominican Wouter in Utrecht or Delft. Others were printers.

The chapters which specifically address written works of this period follow and comprise the bulk of the book. The “Lamentations of Peter” (anonymously written before 1521, and Templin presents a detailed discussion of dating issues) is an amusing story in which Peter and the other apostles and early church fathers bemoan the state of the contemporary church and resolve to appear to Luther and commission him to speak out for the truth. Templin appears to present his own translation of parts of this work here. ‘A New Interpretation of the Eucharist’ discusses Cornelis Hoen, the question of the influence upon Hoen of earlier Devotio Moderna-theologian Wessel Gansfort, and the famous travels of Johannes Rode and his associate Saganus in 1523 and 1524 to visit Zwingli and Bucer and to acquaint them with Hoen’s thought. Templin goes into detail in discussing Hoen’s figurative/metaphorical Eucharistic language and comparing it with the thought of Wycliffe and Hus, in which he follows the ideas of Bart J. Spruyt. De Libertate Christiana, written by John Pupper of Goch, created danger for Antwerp city secretary, Cornelis Grapheus, who had arranged for the printing of the controversial work. He endured imprisonment in Brussels, despite his recantation of the ideas in the books, which he had earlier seemed to advocate. Eventually, with the support of Erasmus, he was released and reestablished as the secretary; thereafter he remained a loyal Catholic. The “Gospel of Matthew” with commentary was translated in Dutch by Johannes van Pelt in 1522; the Summa der Godliker Schriften (originally Oeconomica Christiana) (1523) was printed by Leiden printer Jan Seversz. Both books were specifically banned by Charles V’s edict of 1524, and Seversz was likewise banned for a time from Leiden. Woerden priest Jan de Bakker (Johannes Pistorius), evidently influenced by humanist and Lutheran ideas, took a wife and taught reforming ideas. Eventually he was questioned by the inquisitors and executed in The Hague in 1525. Before his death he was questioned by Willem Gnapheus (himself also suspected by the inquisitors), who wrote down Pistorius’s theological views and story of his trial. Gnapheus, who wrote several books which are discussed in this chapter, eventually fled from the Netherlands. Templin ends the book with a general chapter describing