

quotations both in the body of the text and in long content footnotes. These inclusions provide the reader with historical evidence to consider, and, as Waite hopes, guide the reader to other possible research which can still be undertaken in the field. At the risk of being churlish, I think there are times when these lengthy direct quotations almost seem excessive, as they can not infrequently take up nearly a full page, which when combined with equally lengthy content footnotes, can make the text unnecessarily choppy, as is the case where Waite includes a lengthy title of a publication in the body of the text only to reproduce it in an equally lengthy footnote on the same page.

This book serves as a fine contribution to our understanding of English and Anabaptist religious history, the development and erosion of religious authority and the uneven expansion of religious diversity on the eve of the Enlightenment. The close reading of polemical literature also provides Waite with an opportunity to consider what might be learned as it applies to our current situation, where issues such as polarisation, hate literature and indirect and direct violence abound. These connections between the polemical literature of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England and our situation seem pregnant with possibility for understanding our own time, and learning lessons that might make the earlier period relevant for our time. Waite does not develop these possibilities at any length, and rightly so, since to do so requires much more work; work that would give an account of differences between the two eras and show the significance of the developments in religious practices and political realities; work that needs to be done before direct causal lines and analogies are asserted as plausible. Waite's book inspires the possibility that such work ought to be pursued while taking seriously English polemics of 1531 to 1660 on their own terms.

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*Navigating reformed identity in the rural Dutch republic. Communities, belief, and piety.* By Kyle J. Dieleman. Pp. 263. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2023. €117. 978 94 6372 762 4  
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Kyle J. Dieleman sets out to study the establishment of a Reformed Protestant confessional identity as well as the 'lived religious experience' of members of Reformed congregations in the Dutch countryside. By doing so, Dieleman aims to add to the historiography on the Dutch Reformed Church which, as he rightly asserts, has focused mainly, albeit not exclusively, on urban churches and congregations. The six case studies that are central in this book – Arnemuiden, Huissen, IJzendijke, Serooskerke, Sluis and Wemeldinge – include places that were formally cities (such as Arnemuiden) but which had a small population, thus markedly differing from more populous urban centres such as Amsterdam and Utrecht. The size of these places is of key importance: the book's central premise is that 'lived religious experience as a whole was complicated by the small size and geographical isolation of rural communities in the early modern Low Countries' (p. 41).

Divided into five chapters, the first one compares various national, provincial and local church orders. The church order drafted by Wemeldinge's consistory, which borrowed elements from other church orders, is, according to Dieleman, a clear indication of the agency of local churches and 'underscores the emphatically local nature of religious formation and experience in Wemeldinge' (p. 81). While local variation and agency are recurring themes in the book, the former in particular could have been brought to the fore by comparing the content of these different church orders instead of mainly having an eye for the structural differences between them.

The second chapter focuses on the election of deacons and elders. After an examination of the significance of these offices in the works of several Reformed Protestant theologians, the election process in the countryside is contrasted with its urban counterpart. One conclusion from Dieleman's analysis is that in rural congregations these offices were often held by a small number of people, simply reflecting the fact that the pool of suitable candidates tended to be limited due to the communities' size. While its conclusion is not surprising, it emphasises the close ties between members of small communities in the countryside, thereby nicely setting up the third and fourth chapters that study the establishment of confessional identities and intra-confessional conflicts respectively. This is done by examining a number of case studies derived from the *acta* of consistories and classes, the main body of primary sources on which this book rests. Among other things, Dieleman shows the religious plurality of rural communities, the ways in which consistories tried to deal with full members (*lidmaten*) who wandered off the right path, the competing demands placed on people who simultaneously held public and ecclesiastical offices, and the rivalries within local Reformed congregations.

Arguably the fifth and last chapter, which focuses on Sabbath observance, does the best job in highlighting the particularities of rural Reformed churches. After studying the comments on Sabbath observance in two catechisms, again underscoring the variety within Dutch Reformed Protestantism, Dieleman shows how the practice of Sabbath observance differed in rural and urban communities. Based on the discrepancy between complaints about Sabbath desecration in the records of provincial synods and classes and the relative lack thereof in the consistorial *acta* of rural congregations, he concludes that 'rural churches simply had more lax attitudes towards Sabbath observance' (p. 219). Such diverging attitudes might well have been the result of the specific demands of living and working in the countryside. At any rate, the willingness of rural churches to tolerate a less scrupulous Sabbath observance shows, according to Dieleman, their 'religious agency' (p. 207). He rightfully concludes that 'there was a complicated set of negotiations in which religious identity was not simply the adoption of theological principles, which themselves were diverse' but rather the appropriation and adaptation of such principles so as to fit the 'idiosyncratic lives of Dutch Reformed Christians' (p. 222).

While Dieleman's focus on rural Reformed Protestant churches is commendable, unfortunately his book suffers from various shortcomings. First, his almost exclusive reliance on ecclesiastical archives, the *acta* of consistories and classes in particular, means that the institutional view of the Reformed Church is privileged.

Dieleman's reflection in the introduction shows that he is aware of this issue, but one wonders why he did not opt to incorporate other archival sources to complement his analysis (even though, admittedly, these are likely to be scarcer in small rural communities than in populous cities). Second, it is regrettable that the consistorial records for each of the villages central to this study have not been mined more systematically so as to detect patterns that, possibly, could be compared and contrasted with the patterns discerned in urban congregations. Even if the study of the *acta* of urban consistories was simply not possible within the scope of this project, a more sustained interaction with the relevant secondary literature on urban congregations would have been helpful in highlighting the differences and similarities between urban and rural Reformed communities (although at times this has been done, for instance on pp. 118–19, 179–82, 190, 215). The analysis of the *acta* is also marred by the absence of a clear temporal scope – several remarks towards the end of the book (pp. 211, 220) suggest that the end of the Synod of Dordt (1618–19) functioned as some sort of cut-off point – as a result of which developments over time are not tracked, traced and examined.

A more thorough comparative approach in which the six case studies were compared with each other as well as with urban congregations would have increased the book's analytic muscle and further increased its scholarly value by bringing out the specificities of rural congregations to a greater extent. As it stands, the many examples drawn from consistorial and classical *acta* are often presented in a contextual vacuum. For example, no information is given about the presence and (numerical) strength of other confessions in each of the case studies. To what extent was Wemeldinge's church order, with its emphasis on Sabbath observance and education, a direct response to the activities of rival confessions? Despite these imperfections, Dieleman's book does show the importance of focusing on religious developments in the countryside (which is lacking in the historiography on early modern Dutch Catholicism as well) and is likely to stimulate future research on this topic.

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*Moi, Louis Gaufridy, ayant soufflé plus de mille femmes. Une confession de sorcier au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle.* By Thibaut Maus de Rolley. Pp. 380. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2023. €23.90 (paper). 978 2 251 45454 2

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Loudun remains the most famous of the seventeenth-century French convent possession cases, culminating in the conviction and execution of the priest Urbain Grandier in 1634. The story of Grandier and Jeanne des Anges, who led the accusations that he had sent devils to possess the Ursuline convent, inspired a novel by Aldous Huxley (*The devils of Loudun*, London 1952) and a landmark documentary history by Michel de Certeau (*La Possession de Loudun*, Paris 1978), not to mention plays, films and even an opera. Thibaut Maus de Rolley's book turns to the less well-remembered precedent, set two decades before, in Aix-en-Provence in 1611. Like Loudun, the Aix possession centred on the relations between an Ursuline – a