



*Reformation in the Low Countries, 1500–1620*. Christine Kooi.  
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Christine Kooi's *Reformation in the Low Countries, 1500–1620* is a synthesis of fifty years of scholarship in Reformation processes in the sixteenth-century Low Countries. Both Catholic and Protestant developments are given a prominent place in the book. Such a multifaceted synthesis on the Netherlandish Reformation has not been written until now. As the author explains in the introduction, historiography was first hindered by sectarianism, which means that religious groups have often constructed Reformation history from their own perspective. Second, nationalism, and particularly the emergence of the two separate states that are nowadays the kingdoms of Belgium and the Netherlands, has resulted in different national historiographies instead of one common narrative. Third, localism and the many microhistories written made it challenging to synthesize Reformation processes in a coherent way. Finally, the Dutch Revolt itself led researchers to focus mainly on political developments in the sixteenth-century Low Countries.

In contrast to all this, Kooi gives the Reformation its own trajectory and narrative, with a specific focus on the whole of the Low Countries, although this narrative remains “constructed and thus to a certain degree artificial” (11). Despite this self-critical remark, Kooi convincingly explores the multilayered history of Reformation processes, while focusing on the religious, economic, social, political, and cultural dynamics of the period, and the complex interactions between all these. On the reasons why she chose the specific case of the Low Countries, Kooi writes: “In many ways it was a microcosm of all of Europe in that era” (44), thus inviting the reader to consider the book in the broader context of sixteenth-century European history.

The Reformation processes are presented in five main chapters, taking the reader on a journey from the fifteenth-century movements led by the Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life to the foundation of two distinct political and religious entities around the year 1620. The first chapter sketches the context of late medieval Christendom, arguing that the Low Countries fully participated and engaged in religiosity and cloister life like other European countries. The second chapter explains how an international economy, as well as extensive trade routes, made the diffusion of ideas from pluriform dissident groups of reformers, such as Evangelicals and Anabaptists, possible. Chapter 3 focuses on the confessional turn that took place around 1550 and created parallel streams or directions of reform. Kooi consecutively discusses the reform led by Calvin that was established in the French-speaking regions; the Anabaptists and Mennonites; and the Catholic reform that was supported by the Habsburg family. Despite a certain degree of religious coexistence, the Dutch Revolt inevitably caused war. The fourth chapter therefore pays attention to the religious dimensions of this war. In chapter 5, the main outcomes of the war are explained as the emergence of

two separate states: the Dutch Republic, which publicly adopted the Protestant identity (but remained tolerant to other religions), and the Habsburg State, which re-embraced Catholicism.

By all means, Christine Kooi's book constitutes the long-awaited overview of scholarship in Reformation studies. What stands out is the way Kooi colors her larger narrative by zooming in on individuals and specific cases. These shifts of perspectives never happen abruptly, but in an elegant flow that completely absorbs the reader. Another strength of the book is the way that Kooi succeeds in integrating research from other disciplines in her narrative. For example, Kooi argues in chapter 3 that Protestant identity was partly created by books, especially by some well-known martyrologies. Insights taken from book history and early modern print culture thus fit seamlessly into the bigger picture (94).

Most of the research cited by Kooi is anglophone or Dutch. The most important studies in the field of Reformation studies are indeed written in English or Dutch, but more recent studies in French could have been interesting to include as well, if only to bring together research traditions that often remain separate. However, this is only a small detail; the major francophone studies are certainly mentioned.

In conclusion, Christine Kooi's monograph is undoubtedly a valuable contribution to the field of Reformation studies. Despite significant research on the topic, a thorough and nuanced overview of scholarship was previously missing. Kooi's book provides a well-organized presentation of the multifaceted Reformation processes, written in a vivid style and accompanied by a detailed but concise analysis of scholarship. Counting approximately two hundred pages, *Reformation in the Low Countries* is a highly recommended read for both scholars and students interested in sixteenth-century Netherlandish and European history.

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*The Great Western Schism, 1378–1417: Performing Legitimacy, Performing Unity.* Joëlle Rollo-Koster.

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Joëlle Rollo-Koster invites the reader to look at the Great Western Schism, when two and then three papacies competed for preeminent obedience for almost forty years, through lenses different than the standards. The author builds on her prolific prior work concerning the topic's performative aspects and lived experience, notably in *Raiding Saint Peter* (2008) and *Avignon and Its Papacy* (2015).

It is easy to read the schism in clinical legal terms, but the schism was far more than an institutional struggle. It was fundamentally emotional and dramatic, even frightening