



Leon van den Broeke, Hans Krabbendam, Dirk Mouw (eds.), *Transatlantic Pieties: Dutch Clergy in Colonial America* (The Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America, No. 76; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012, xviii + 342 pp., ISBN 978 0 8028 6972 2).

In recent years, historians have given renewed attention to European missionary endeavors, Protestant as well as Catholic, that made Christianity a genuinely global religion in the early modern period. This scholarship has moved away from the confessional perspectives of older denominational treatments to focus on cross-cultural encounters that transformed both missionaries and prospective converts. The Reformed dominees who comprise the subject of this volume should probably not be considered missionaries, since most displayed little interest (and even less success) in converting Native Americans and enslaved Africans. Nevertheless these essays, taken as a whole, capture the influences of frontier settlements and the adaptations they necessitated on Dutch Reformed pastors who followed a call to North America from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries.

*Transatlantic Pieties* consists of fourteen essays (plus an introduction) devoted to mini-biographies of Reformed pastors who labored among Dutch, English, French colonists, and their descendants, in primarily what was New Netherland, until conquered by the English in 1664. Following a chronological format, the editors grouped the essays into historical periods that correspond to stages in the development of the Reformed Church in North America. Thus, 'Pioneers' contains essays on three of the earliest ministers; 'Stabilizers' covers three pastors who negotiated schisms during the transition to English rule; 'Diversifiers' treats three divisive dominees in the seventeenth century; 'Mediators' focuses on three clergy who navigated enlightenment and revolution in the eighteenth century; and 'Successors' discusses two leaders in shaping a Reformed legacy in the nineteenth century. The volume has no central argument or thesis and most of the essays are straightforward biographies that stand on their own.

Several motifs, however, do emerge that shed light on Dutch clerical culture in North America and the Netherlands. One important theme calls attention to the connections between pastors in the Americas and the Reformed Church in the Netherlands, despite the ocean that separated them. The Amsterdam consistory, later

the classis, had responsibility for overseeing the churches in North America. They depended on the Amsterdam church district to recruit and to approve ministers for overseas mission, to clarify points of theological and ecclesiological disputes, and to provide political support with colonial authorities. Overseas pastors often crossed the Atlantic several times for temporary returns to the patria. As a result, the Dutch Reformed character of the American churches remained central to their theology and their identity. Almost all, if not all, ministers were grounded in the Voetian theology and theocratic polity that defined Dutch Reformed pietism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

A second general pattern in the essays underscores the dedication, ability, and strong sense of vocation among pastors who labored in difficult circumstances and lived close to the edge of financial destitution. Jos van der Linde shows how Henricus Selijns (1636-1701) skillfully steered the Brooklyn congregation through the tumultuous Leisler rebellion that lasted from 1689 to 1691. Joyce D. Goodfriend describes the means by which the gifted and hardworking Archibald Laidlie (1727-1779) revived the congregation in New York City and navigated linguistic divisions in the church. Yet a third theme calls attention to the colorful character of pastors who defied the stereotype of the dry, austere, and unblemished Calvinist dominee. Willem Frijhoff recalls that Bastian Jans Krol (1596-1674) was guilty of premarital sex with a wife of his on two occasions. In an essay on Everardus Bogardus (1607-1647), Frijhoff relates that the *predikant* battled the bottle and his temper and lost on both counts. Laurentius vanden Bosch (c. 1660?-1696), in Evan Haefeli's essay, gained notoriety for swearing profusely, getting drunk, molesting women, beating his wife, and denouncing anyone who dared call him to account. Most Reformed ministers in these essays fell between these two extremes, but almost all of them endured financial hardship, immigrated because of the tight ecclesiastical job market in the Netherlands, moved frequently, quarreled regularly, and possessed an outsized appreciation of their own importance.

Several essays warrant special attention. Frijhoff does a masterful job explaining the complex personality of Bogardus; Van der Linde's essay on Selijns offers clear insight into the stresses that the Glorious Revolution wrought on Dutch congregations; Goodfriend's treatment of Laidlie illustrates how ministers could self-fashion according to their environment; and Haefeli provides an entertaining rollick with the wacky Vanden Bosch. One common problem that most authors faced was the spotty and meager documentation about their subjects. Edward William Kennedy lacked any sources for the last twenty five years of Giulam Bertholf's (1656-1727) ministry in New Jersey and New York. Similarly, the absence of sources compelled Leon van den Broeke to speculate on the reasons that Rudolphus van Varick (1645-1694) left his pastorate at the small village of Hem (in North Holland) rather quickly for a post in America. To their credit, the authors are forthright about the limitations of their sources, though the sparse documentation often raises more questions than they answer. *Transatlantic Pieties* will prove most useful

to those interested in the Dutch Reformed influence in North America in the early modern period.

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