Els Stronks. *Negotiating Differences: Word, Image and Religion in the Dutch Republic.*
Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions 155. Leiden: Brill, 2011. xx + 342 pp. $136. ISBN: 978–90–04–20423–2.

Els Stronks's new book examines illustrated religious literature in the Dutch Republic as a window into the nature of religious pluralism in the Netherlands. *Negotiating Differences* is both informative and superbly illustrated. While the early Reformation saw the creation of sharp lines of differentiation between Protestants and Catholics on the question of the efficacy of images for edification, Stronks skillfully charts increasing hybridization and mutual influence in iconographical traditions. Her book contributes to the growing body of scholarship which appreciates that Protestants' break from Catholicism was not quite as clear-cut as scholars sometimes claim.

The first two chapters introduce Stronks's scholarly questions, methodology, and the scope of her research, and lay out the Reformed critique of Catholic iconography. The rest of the book, which centers around books printed in the province of Holland, chronologically lays out patterns in the shifting nature of illustrated religious literature. Part 2, "Boundaries," centers on the competing traditions of iconography in the seventeenth century. Dutch Catholics, taking the lead from their coreligionists in the Spanish Netherlands, printed illustrated Bibles and religious emblem books, which offered complicated allegorical depictions that were aimed at emotionally drawing the reader towards God. Anabaptists developed their own distinctive tradition of allegorical images,

https://doi.org/10.1086/669439 Published online by Cambridge University Press

drawing on the motif of pilgrimage. Reformed Protestants initially published religious literature without pictures, which they deemed inherently "deceptive and ambiguous in nature" (78). They gradually adopted the Catholic practice of including pictures in printed Bibles, but only if they literally depicted the events that the texts purported to describe, and they remained aloof from allegorical, emblematic images. In the late seventeenth century, we see signs of a coming confessional hybridization; some Reformed pietists began incorporating elements of Catholic iconography into their works in the form of emblematic scenes on their title pages. Part 3, "Transformations," demonstrates the increasing hybridization in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Many Reformed Protestant authors (especially the more liberal Cocceians) began publishing their own allegorical emblem books, influenced by English Puritans, Anabaptists, and the Catholic emblematic tradition. By the end of the eighteenth century, allegorical moralizing picture books were becoming a predominant form of Protestant literature, primarily used to educate children.

The literary approach of *Negotiating Differences* generally supports conclusions made by historians of the Dutch Republic. Scholars no longer portray Dutch religious pluralism as an endemic part of the national character, but rather the result of complicated interactions that often shared similarities with forms of uneasy coexistence that were developing elsewhere in post-Reformation Europe. Stronks also agrees that understanding Dutch pluralism demands recognizing the fluidity of confessional boundaries. Still, the book contains a few methodological shortcomings. First, Stronks claims that the books she studied acted both as responses to and representations of identities. That is an undisputable statement. Yet it raises questions about how she can use any individual book as either an expression of some kind of shared religious identity or an effort by an author to transform readers' views. A similar problem exists with her claim that books both reflect and direct religious change, except this claim is not necessarily true. Obscure, unread, or misunderstood books, after all, do not necessarily change anything, or do so in ways the author never intended. Yet Stronks sometimes conflates intention and effect (e.g., 64, 184). She also suggests that Reformed adoption of Catholic practices was a self-conscious process of negotiation that helps explain pluralism. But it need not have been so. One might well be influenced by one's mortal enemies without recognizing it. This is one reason why historians sometimes distinguish between manifest and latent histories — to avoid conflating the nature of an action with the actor's understanding of that action. These critiques aside, I recommend this book for scholars of Dutch English, French, and German literature looking for a model for how to deal with the relationship between text and image. It also provides useful examples for historians of the Dutch Republic seeking to understand the changing print culture of the early modern period.

JESSE SPOHNHOLZ
Washington State University

https://doi.org/10.1086/669439 Published online by Cambridge University Press