

# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences



*Sixteenth Century Studies Conference 2003. Session 4: Urban Calvinism. Sixteenth Century Studies Society.*

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**Published on** H-German (December, 2003)

Jesse Spohnholz presented work from his dissertation research on the confessionally-mixed city of Wesel. This Lutheran Rhineland community accepted thousands of Calvinist refugees from the neighboring Netherlands during the early decades of the Dutch Revolt. Indeed, by the 1570s, Dutch immigrants made up as much as 40 per cent of the population. Spohnholz has tried to capture the practical strategies that people developed to deal with religious differences and to note the limits of compromise, how individuals found “an acceptable balance between their conscience and the demands for civic harmony.” Spohnholz’s thorough research through the city and church archives, in particular the tax, marriage, and Calvinist consistory records, has enabled him to develop some important conclusions regarding both the exile community and the process of assimilation and integration in this community with deep religious and social divisions. In Wesel, the refugees were generally Calvinists from larger urban centers with occupations offering greater mobility and higher financial liquidity: over 60 per cent of the immigrants were craft workers (mainly in the cloth trades), and an additional twenty per cent were merchants. The host Weselers, on the other hand, were mostly Lutherans with a less cosmopolitan outlook than the exiles. Moreover, language differences marked a further separation between the two groups, as exiles mainly spoke a dialect of vlaams (or brabant nederlands), which would distinguish them immediately from the Middle Low German spoken in Wesel. Despite these differences, Wesel’s time as a refugee center was not dominated by violence and intolerance, and Spohnholz turned his analysis to the compromises that facilitated this civic peace. Although there were some clusters of exile households, tax lists indicate that the refugees lived mainly side by side with the locals, even as they criticized each

other’s religious beliefs. Some local Lutherans harshly criticized the inclusion of Calvinist immigrants in the local church services, sometimes to the point of refusing to participate in services with them. The Calvinist refugees, for their part, often questioned the Lutheran conception of the Eucharist, their allegedly lax church discipline, and the elaborate rituals in the local churches. Wesel’s refugees were required to attend the local church; they were, however, also allowed to set up their own Calvinist consistory, to regulate pure doctrine and discipline within the exile community. By investigating candle use in the two local church buildings, Spohnholz was able to show varying devotional practices within the Lutheran parishes of Wesel. One Wesel church had more ornamentation and ritualistic sacraments, and some Calvinists could be more comfortable in the other local church. Several cases before the local authorities suggest that some Calvinist exiles were willing to conform to the local law mandating attendance at the local church, as long as they could select the actual church building they attended. Although attending church outside their parish got people expelled from Wesel in the 1550s and 1560s, it became rather common by the 1570s. The magistrate determined that allowing this concession was acceptable to avoid larger criticisms and conflicts from less accommodating Calvinist exiles. One strategy of the city’s officials to reduce confessional tensions was to refuse to acknowledge official confessional divisions at all. Indeed, Wesel’s Lutheran churches served as the sole places for weddings and funerals of Lutherans, Calvinists, as well as Mennonites and Catholics. Spohnholz has identified some fascinating confessional differences in the marriage and funeral ceremonies which reflect the existence of divided religious cultures. Yet, as long as the practices (such as the tolling of church bells at funerals) were practiced (or

not) within certain limits of public expressions, Wesel's local leaders allowed unofficial practical modifications to the city's official legislation. <p> Tim Fehler's paper turned to Emden, another German town that was dramatically influenced by Dutch refugees, so much so that its confessional outlook became Calvinist throughout the second half of the sixteenth century. In what will be the first stage in a comparative study of lotteries in Protestant German and Dutch cities in the early modern period, Fehler addressed the relationship between Calvinist teaching on gambling and Emden's Calvinist city authorities use of lotteries to raise money. Shortly after the Emden Revolution of 1595 in which the city, under the encouragement of the Calvinist ministers, gained independence from its Lutheran territorial rulers, the town sponsored a lottery to replenish its military supplies. The lottery was successful and popular with a large number of the city's inhabitants, several thousand of whom wrote personal poems or mottos in the surviving book that recorded the purchase of lots. Many of the sayings directly connected the lottery with religious beliefs: for instance, "God gives, God takes away, if God gives a lot, let it come my way, I purchase 5 lots" or "God's foreknowledge must occur, purchase 3 lots." This was not the first lottery in Emden. The transformation of Emden's dissolved Franciscan monastery into a civic hospital was financed in part by a civic lottery in 1561; and later lotteries were held to benefit the town's poor relief institutions. Nevertheless, the 1595 lottery was apparently unique in that it was not directly connected with a charitable endeavor. <p> After a brief look at John Calvin's discussion of luck and providence, the paper turned to an analysis of questions of gambling that arose before the church councils (or "consistory") of both Calvin's Geneva and of Emden. Not infrequently, individuals were reprimanded by the local Calvinist ministers and congregational elders to stop playing games for money. The reproofs threatened preclusion from participation in the congregation's communion if they failed to improve their behavior. Not only were there theological concerns relating to individual gambling; the issues of urban disorder and social discipline were prevalent in the consistory's dealing with gambling, as the Emden church officials appealed to the magistrates to help restrict the disorder (drinking, public parties, comedies, plays, and the like) that apparently attended lotteries in particular. The church council often complained that the city council did not do enough to prevent "tomfoolery and the performing of comedies," which the church leaders felt were all too common during lotteries. <p> The ministers' and theologians' dilemma regarding issues such as luck, predestination, gambling,

and disorderliness is especially conspicuous in the question of state-sponsored lottery, particularly to support a pious cause such as poor relief. This civic lottery occurred at a time of Calvinist ascendancy when Emden's consistory were particularly upset with the disorder that seemed to be associated with lotteries. The practical problems associated with gambling, especially wasting money and the fact that gambling often occurred in taverns mixing with alcohol abuses, seem to have animated the church leadership as much as the theological issues relating to predestination. Emden's 1595 "book of lots," with its rich collection of brief personal commentary by many of those purchasing lots, offers evidence that many lottery participants had internalized the Calvinist message of the preachers and claimed God's providence over the outcome of the lottery, many explicitly indicating that there is no such thing as luck, even as they purchased lots. <p> By looking at several Scottish cities, Andrew Spicer's paper attempted to tackle the issue of patronage of church art and architecture in Calvinist cities. Spicer identified two foundations for Calvin's disapproval of images: the command to detest idolatry and the rejection of pomp (arguing that Roman Catholics had squandered resources on ostentation). Calvin even rejected the contention that art could serve as a "Bible for the unlearned" by arguing, what benefit can images bring them except that they become anthropomorphizers? Thus, Calvinists felt that all they needed was a place to gather; church was to be an auditory rather than visual experience. <p> Because the Reformation, therefore, eradicated ecclesiastical patronage, church construction and maintenance typically became municipal undertakings, town projects under the magistrate. Spicer's study and photos of these Scottish cities investigated, for instance, the iconography of the windows of new Reformed churches, which now often included the city's coat of arms or stories from the town's mythology. Because the magistrate was now responsible for church maintenance, churches often became like any public/civic/municipal building in furnishing, decoration, and sometimes architecture as the Calvinist magistrates replaced religious iconography and images with civic imagery. <p> Barbara Pitkin's commentary pointed out how all three papers dealt with the delicate social balance to be found in urban centers undergoing religious change. In such cities there was an overwhelming concern to maintain social order. Pitkin went on to ask each presenter to comment further on the mix of ideology and practical concern, or on the force of religious ideas, among other factors, in their specific implementation in the towns and situations under question. Additionally, Pitkin asked Spohnholz about the

forms of confessional conflict that emerged and the evidence he had for them, and she asked Fehler about the late medieval context of lotteries and whether he could expand his analysis of the Calvinist Emden experience to include other confessional contexts. (Spohnholz replied by discussing both pamphlets and other more daily conflicts between Lutherans and Calvinists relating to the Eucharist. Fehler indicated that the direction of broader European context was a goal for his subsequent research building on the Emden case study.) Questions from the

audience included an inquiry into joint funeral celebrations, which in France and Germany could become confessional hot spots (Spohnholz assented that such conflicts often did arise around funerals, but not in Wesel), and comments that Fehler's investigation into gambling will need to look at the policing controls in place and perhaps the issue that earlier in the period the authorities did not have the force or resources to control such disorder.

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**Citation:** Timothy Fehler. Review of , *Sixteenth Century Studies Conference 2003. Session 4: Urban Calvinism*. H-German, H-Net Reviews. December, 2003.

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