H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Sixteenth Century Studies Conference 2003. Section 111: Reformed Education in Early Modern Europe: A Research Project of the Johannes a Lasco Library. Sixteenth Century Studies Society.

Reviewed by Henning Juergens

Published on H-German (January, 2004)

The panel was sponsored by the Johannes a Lasco Bibliothek, a research library in Emden, Northwest Germany, with a relatively newly-established scholarly research program (since 2001), focused on the "cultural outcomes of reformed Protestantism" (<cite>Kulturwirkungen des reformierten Protestantismus</cite>). The papers included in the panel stemmed from one of three research projects currently in progress at the library (the others deal with the Geneva Psalter and law and jurisprudence in Reformed Protestantism). The library will be including further projects in this general area in its research program and eventually offering stipends for researchers using the library's collections. In the area of the project on Reformed education in early modern Europe, a workshop and an international conference have already taken place. Papers from these two meetings are in press, and further meetings are planned. <p> In his paper, Hermann Selderhuis raised the question of the attractiveness of the theological faculty at the University of Heidelberg. Why was it so successful in the years immediately preceding the Thirty Years' War? Though all universities enjoyed a growth in numbers, Heidelberg was particularly attractive to foreign students. In 1564, 54% of students came from outside of the Palatinate, mostly from France, Switzerland and the Netherlands. The percentage of foreigners varied according to the confession of the Palatine elector–38% under the Calvinist Frederick III, 7.6% under the Lutheran Ludwig VI. In 1584, the second Calvinist period began–by the end of this period, at least a third to one half of foreigners came from Hungary, Poland, Bohemia and Silesia. Selderhuis discarded the attractiveness of the Palatine climate or the beauty of its women as attractions for students that caused them to come to Heidelberg instead of Zurich, Geneva or Leiden. These factors included the irenical and ecumenical theology of the faculty, the humanistic training program followed there, the disciplined quality of student life, the international reputation of the professors, the open scholarly atmosphere, and the famous library. <p> These factors worked together to attract students, and obviously some of them were related (the choice of professors like Grynaeus and Pareus, for example, influenced the curriculum). Because many of the professors followed Melanchthon theologically, they stressed similarities between the Protestant confessions rather than separating factors, and supported the use of catechisms in the territory that did not mention the differences between the Protestant confessions. Professors like Rennecherus stressed not only the utility of Hebrew (it was the language to be spoken in heaven), but also the ease of learning it. Professors like Georg Sohn, also a student of Melanchthon, stressed in their lectures the need for open scholarly interaction between students and professors in order to advance the cause of faith–students should dispute earnestly in a spirit of inquiry rather than one of wrath. Professors as renowned as Jan de Gruyetere received calls to other institutions, but they stayed at Heidelberg, thus increasing its reputation through their loyalty. Parents supporting their children were attracted by the disciplined dormitories where students lived–crammed schedules not only made the dormitories a second college within the university, they also prevented students from sinking into dissolution by making rigorous demands that would horrify modern university students. Finally, the collections of the Palatine Library (before their transposition to Rome during the Thirty Years' War) were justly famous and competed with the collections at Oxford. This collection

and its open use policy under de Gruyutere also encouraged professors to stay. The attraction of the university was summarized by Selderhuis in the following way: "parents think it's a safe place, students think it's a great place." <p> Stefan Ehrenpreis moved the discussion of Reformed education from the university to the schools, treating the question of the role of the Reformed confession in forming European ideas and practices around elementary education, specifically asking whether the move toward education can specifically be related to the confessionalizing impulse, as research by Howard Hotson, Robert Kingdon, Karin Maag and Willem Nijhoff has suggested. Despite the propagation of new educational ideals by the first reformers, Protestant education was initially confined to a very limited number of humanist gymnasia in urban centers or institutions like the Saxon princely schools. At the end of the sixteenth century, Protestant scholars like Georg Mylius tried to convince Protestant parents not to send their children to Jesuit schools, which were widely considered more modern and successful. The polemics that resulted from the dynamic of confessionalization led to the development of specifically confessional ideals of learning that were related more strongly to the content of education than to its practice. In fact, Catholics and Protestants exchanged educational models during the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Secondary and post-secondary education was governed most heavily by confessional ideals; on the local level, elementary education was governed within the parish, where pastors and parents took charge. <p> Ehrenpreis suggested that four major points can be found according to which Reformed education was unique. First, the Reformed church was the first to stress, from its very beginnings, that education is a public affair (in contrast to the Lutheran emphasis on the educational role of the head of the household). While this ideal started in the gymnasia of the urban centers, local elites also pushed the public agenda in elementary schooling at the parish level. This ideal was effective not only in states like the Dutch Republic where Calvinism was the official religion, but also in areas were Calvinists were in the minority, such as northwest Germany, Transsylvania and the Rhineland. Elementary schools were to be used to change the entire society, from the ground up. Second, Reformed education, though similar to the other confessions in its emphasis on training the obedient subject, added a focus on nature and science related to the Reformed concept of reason. Systems of universal knowledge like Ramism (used by Alsted and Comenius) were to serve as the basis of all forms of learning, and incorporated an innovative visual didactic element related to the focus on science. Thirdly, the Reformed tradition focused on texts as the main media of learning, but were not caught up in traditionalism or inflexibility. Reformed pedagogy excluded symbolic representations of reality as found in emblematics or theater. Finally, Reformed pedagogy was remarkable consistent between different Calvinist communities in places as diverse as Poland, Hungary, and southern Germany. Many followed aspects of the Geneva model. The major challenge to this model lay in the need to educate broad segments of the population, not merely elites. <p> In his comment, Robert Kingdon, who has participated in several of the events resulting from research projects at the a Lasco Library, emphasized the central role of catechism instruction in Reformed schools particularly. The panel was well-attended and was followed by a lively discussion with numerous questions and contributions relating to both papers. <p>

Citation: Henning Juergens. Review of , *Sixteenth Century Studies Conference 2003. Section 111: Reformed Education in Early Modern Europe: A Research Project of the Johannes a Lasco Library.* H-German, H-Net Reviews. January, 2004.

URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=15284