

# Calvinist and Catholic cities – urban architecture and ritual in confessional Europe

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Urban history, at least in Germany, has mainly concentrated on the Medieval and Reformation cities on the one hand and Industrial and Contemporary cities on the other. However, recent debates among Early Modernists have produced the view that ‘confessionalization’, that is the formation of three or four modern church systems based on specific confessions of faith, was one of the most influential factors in producing the fundamental changes that occurred between 1550 and 1650 in Europe. This had a huge effect on the cities of Europe and their inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> This paper compares Catholic and Protestant cities in Europe around 1600 with regard to their specific architecture and their religious and civic rituals. Rites and other religious functions or institutions have always been an important part of urban life. Lewis Mumford refers to religious funeral rites in his magisterial analysis of urban life in a universal perspective: ‘The city of the dead antedates the city of the living. In one sense, indeed the city of the dead is the forerunner, almost the core, of every living city.’<sup>2</sup> In Europe, the relationship between the Church and the towns or cities was especially close and, in a sense, fundamental because of the medieval history of the European towns and the structure and profile of pre-modern European societies in general. We start with a brief overview of these preconditions for urban life during Europe’s confessional period, and then go on to take a closer look at the confessional city itself.

## Historical and structural preconditions

The ecclesiastical institutions were an important factor in both continuity and growth in urban life from antiquity through to the Middle Ages.<sup>3</sup> This was not

only the case for Italian cities, but also for urban settlements north of the Alps. From the very beginning, the Church tailored its diocesan system to the urban system. The bishop's seat and the cathedral chapter had to be in a city. The same was true for the canon chapters, which often formed the nucleus for urban development as is seen, for example, around the Chapters of the Holy Virgin in Chartres and in Aix-la-Chapelle. *Pilgrimage* also boosted urbanization. During the high and late Middle Ages, in particular, numerous European towns became pilgrimage centres – Rome, of course, Toulouse with its famous Apostles' graves, Santiago de Compostela with the grave of St. James and many other pilgrimage towns of regional importance. In the late Middle Ages and early modern times, the mendicant friars and sisters settled in the towns, as did the Jesuits. Earlier, the older orders, such as the Benedictines and Cluniac monks, built their monasteries mostly or, as the Cistercians did, exclusively in the countryside.

Because of the urban character of the Church's organization, the numerous waves of European urbanization were always influenced by the Church and by religion. For about 2000 years, the parish church lay at the heart of a town, generally supplemented by numerous other types of churches and ecclesiastical institutions. This is born out by the large brick churches dedicated to Saint Mary or Saint Nicholas (the patron Saint of merchants) in the medieval Hanseatic towns: from Bruges in the west, through Bremen, Hamburg and Lübeck in the centre to Danzig, Reval and Königsberg in the east of Europe. The same holds for baroque or neo-classical churches, such as St. Paul's in the centre of London, as well as for those impressive examples of 19th and early 20th century church architecture, such as the Wilhelmine Dom in Berlin or New St. Bavo's in Haarlem. These last two churches are not only parish churches but also symbols of the triumphant confessional impact on urban society and society in general, as well as evidence of the Prussian Protestantism of the Kaiserreich and the Catholic revival in the Netherlands, respectively. The symbiotic relationship between Church and city ended only recently, at least with regard to 'Christian' urban society, which, today, is considerably de-Christianized and a-religious. In certain respects, the religious traditions of Old European civic life have been taken over by Islam. The impact of this on modern urban European civic society remains to be seen.

Up to the 20th century in western Latin European history, the Church significantly influenced urban and civic life, giving an important stimulus to the expansion and development of towns and cities. It cannot be denied that this was often the result of tension and conflict between the ecclesiastical and civil arenas, with regard to politics and culture, as well as to social and economic developments. It would be misleading, however, to interpret these tensions in pre-modern Church-Civic relationships as indicating a general anti-urban and anti-burgher stance of the Church or to argue that the Church and religion obstructed dynamism or social change. Quite the opposite is true. These conflicts

were related to the specific dualistic character of the relationship between Church and State in Latin Europe in contrast to Greek Orthodox Europe at the time. This special relationship was one of the most important factors contributing to the specific dynamism and the fundamental changes that were characteristic of European history in general and were most manifest in the development of urban life. The rise of political autonomy and the development of a civic community with its own legitimacy was supported and shaped by the structural dualism between the ecclesiastical and the civil sections of urban society.<sup>4</sup> In the towns, the special structures and dynamism of this dualistic Church–State model met with secular social and cultural structures that were also geared towards change. Here, the spiritual and bureaucratic elites of the Church were confronted with competition from the rising non-clerical elites and intellectuals. This resulted in a dynamic process of cooperation and conflict between clerics and laity in which civic and ecclesiastical institutions strengthened and complemented one another and festivals and rituals emerged which were both religious and civic.

The dualistic relationship between Church and State had a huge impact on urban society and influenced the burghers' everyday lives greatly in ways that, today, we can hardly imagine. This is apparent in the topography and architecture of the towns.<sup>5</sup> The cities differed fundamentally from villages in that there was a greater variety of ecclesiastical institutions and religious spirituality. A late-medieval metropolis such as Prague or Cologne had a whole variety of ecclesiastical institutions of which the parish church was not necessarily the most prominent. In 1350 in Cologne, there were more than 100 ecclesiastical institutions. First, the 11 chapter or collegiate churches (of which the cathedral chapters were most prominent), each endowed with up to 12 benefices for canons. Then there were 20 settlements of the great orders, 19 parishes and about two dozen independent chapels, headed by a rector, as well as more than 20 chapels in hospitals, collegiate buildings or in the urban houses of the rural ecclesiastical institutions. Finally, there were also 62 houses for the so-called semi-religious, of whom the Beguines and their male counterparts, the Beguards, are the best known.

It is true that there was radical 'anticlericalism' in pre-reformation towns. However, this was in no way an anti-ecclesiastical or even an anti-religious movement. The late-medieval civic communities always saw themselves as holy communities. Thus, the role of the Church and the clergy in religious life, spiritual welfare and performing rituals was never disputed in any way. On the whole, the spirituality of the Church met the burghers' needs. The mendicant churches and convents, in particular, became strongholds of civic piety and mentality, as is attested by the thousands of donations and epitaphs made by burghers. This is splendidly documented in the great Mendicant churches of Venice and Florence, but also in German, French, Burgundian and in Frisian cities or towns. In the present context, this aspect cannot be discussed in more detail. Instead, I will

describe the key processes and turning points in the development of the Church–Town relationship that had implications for urbanization and civic mentality in the long term.

Five distinct steps in this process can be identified. First, there was the political emancipation of the civic communities from their ecclesiastical overlords – the bishops and abbots as well as religious institutions such as the monasteries and chapters. This was mainly a phenomenon of the high Middle Ages, but it also occurred in some towns during the Reformation and the early modern period. Second was the communalization of church and religion together with the monopolization of church government by town or state, starting in the late Middle Ages when town councillors or distinguished burgher families gained increasing influence over the church and the religious life of their towns. This was achieved through the appointment of civic rectors or administrators over hospitals and similar institutions; through civic foundations for the poor, the sick, the elderly and orphans, through burgher donations of altars or church patronage with the right to appoint the priest or the pastor and through the organization of processions and ecclesiastical festivals.

Third, the political emancipation and communalization took place during the Reformation along with the processes of Protestant and Catholic Confessionalization, which will be discussed in more detail later. Fourth, there was the diversification of religion and ecclesiastical life during the 17th and 18th centuries and the break-up of the homogeneous urban church system, which was not intentional but occurred in most European towns because of the simple fact that total religious or confessional unity was difficult to establish.<sup>6</sup> Fifth, the decline of religious unity of the town and the subsequent secularization of civic life and society formed the foundation for modern pluralism. This was not a contradiction but was, in fact, the outcome of the specific European type of Church–Town relationship.

### **Church and town in confessional Europe – a closer view**

In the process of change described above, confessionalization<sup>7</sup> had the greatest impact on the development of the relationship between the Church and the city in pre-modern times. This is a revisionist view in the sense that it challenges the widely held interpretation based on Max Weber's theory, which attributes the rise of modernity and of cultural change almost exclusively to Calvinism. In contrast, I have argued that the fundamental change from pre-modern to modern society was rooted not so much in the Reformation itself, but in the subsequent process of 'confessionalization'. The term 'confessionalization' refers to the three modern church systems that were founded on specific confessions of faith, thus generating specific confessional cultures and mentalities. These were the Lutheran system,

based on the *Confessio Augustana*; the Reformed or Calvinist system, based on the *Confessio Helvetica, Gallica, Belgica* or *Neerlandica* as well as on the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt, and the Tridentine Catholicism system based on the *Professio Fidei*. Tridentine Catholicism was as much an early modern new church as were the Lutheran or Calvinist churches. Lutheran, Calvinist and Catholic confessionalization not only affected religion and the respective theologies, it also signified fundamental change with far-reaching effects on European politics, society and culture, propelling Europe into modernity.

This issue will now be explored by looking at urban society in Europe and by comparing the early modern confessional cultures: Protestant (mainly Calvinist) and Catholic, with respect to their impact on urban life and civic consciousness.

## Topography and architecture

### *Protestant towns*

Urban topography and architecture changed considerably in the wake of confessionalization – interestingly not so much in the Protestant but more in the Catholic towns and cities. The Reformation resulted in a radical change: it eliminated all theological and legal justification for the immunity of the clergy or ecclesiastical institutions. Consequently, the topography of Protestant cities was no longer marked with architectural symbols or areas of ecclesiastical immunity, a feature that was so typical of medieval as well as early modern Catholic cities. Moreover, the religious topography and architecture in Protestant cities changed very little as there was virtually no building activity. This contrasts with late medieval towns, when the citizens pulled down hundreds of Romanesque cathedrals and replaced them with new Gothic style buildings in order to celebrate their ideal of *civitas terrestris* and *civitas celestis*. The Protestants only altered the interiors of existing churches through iconoclastic<sup>8</sup> and other such ‘purifying’ activities. In contrast to the Calvinist churches, the Lutheran churches were decorated with pictures and wall paintings that conformed to the new doctrine and its focus on the Bible.

In Protestant cities during the 16th and 17th centuries, new churches were only built when a city expanded demographically, as was often the case in the Low Countries and in other commercialized and industrialized regions. Another reason was if something destroyed the medieval church building; for example, the fire that destroyed St. Paul’s Cathedral in London. In these cases, architectural design reflected the requirements of the new doctrine. This produced beautiful baroque hall-shaped preachers’ churches (‘Predigerkirchen’) such as the Wester Kerk in Amsterdam and the Neue Kirche in Calvinist Emden (see Figure 1). They were



**Figure 1.** Neue Kirche, Emden.

constructed like auditoriums with the sole purpose of preaching and hearing the Word. In general, public building activities in Protestant cities were not concentrated on churches but on orphanages and workhouses or hospitals and old people's homes. However, in most Protestant towns, these institutions, although only loosely connected with the Church, were often installed in the secularized old ecclesiastical buildings of the Middle Ages. These buildings existed in great numbers without an ecclesiastical function because, in the Protestant cities, only parish churches remained in use for religious purposes. Moreover, universities, schools, archives and libraries moved into the abandoned ecclesiastical buildings. In Protestant towns, many of the social and educational institutions were housed in ecclesiastical buildings and were thus associated with these religious buildings for centuries, long after they became the secular institutions of the town or the state. Let me give some examples, the first Protestant university, founded in 1527 by Landgrave Philip of Hesse at Marburg, moved into a secularized Dominican convent, as Trinity College did in Dublin some years later. The Stift at Tübingen became a training college for the Lutheran clergy and the cultural elite of the Duchy of Württemberg and has occupied the medieval convent of the Augustinians until today. In Danzig (Gdansk), the urban Latin school moved in

1558 into a Franciscan convent that had been closed two years earlier. In Zurich, the church of the Dominicans was divided horizontally into five floors for storage and was later used as the city archive.

These changes in use but not in the architectural appearance of ecclesiastical buildings were the result of the Protestant theology of *sola gratia*, which entailed the restriction of religious and ecclesiastical activities to divine service and pastoral care. The wide variety of churches, monasteries, convents, houses or communities of secular priests, semi-monastic orders, Beguines and Beguardes etc. in medieval times was reduced to only one church, the parish church, with one simple function – the Sunday service for the congregation of the parish. In Protestant cities, the Church now completely focused on the key areas of preaching, divine service, and pastoral care, and no longer took responsibility for peripheral areas such as education, poor relief, social welfare were left in the hands of urban or civic institutions and groups outside the Church.

This shift had far-reaching consequences for religious and civic everyday life and, to a certain extent, even for the image of the city and the identity of its burghers. The most obvious consequence was that, in Protestant cities, the inhabitants of a parish had to attend divine service in their parish church whatever social groups they belonged to or whichever specific forms of piety or theology they preferred. In contrast to the religious and ecclesiastical diversification of the medieval and Catholic cities, Protestant cities no longer offered different types of ecclesiastical institutions with different spiritualities for individuals or social groups to choose from.

### *Catholic towns*

It is obvious that the Catholic confessional culture would have had a quite different effect on urban topography and architecture than its Protestant counterpart. The Catholic ecclesiastical institutions remained distinct from the civic community even though their privileges were reduced. New ecclesiastical buildings were erected – convents, churches and schools of the new orders as well as hospitals and parochial, court or triumphal churches. For example, the Karlskirche in Vienna that was meant to serve as an urban monument to the triumph of San Carlo Borromeo over the heretics as well as the Catholic Habsburg's triumph over the Turks. Because these buildings were erected in the new Renaissance and Baroque architectural styles, the Catholic towns also took on a new appearance. At the same time, many of the existing Gothic or Romanesque churches were modernized in the Renaissance or Baroque style, at least on the inside: in Cologne, for example the St. Pantoleon and in Antwerp St. Paul's, the Cathedral and the St. Jan with many works by Peter Paul Rubens. In early modern Catholic cities, the Church was extremely visible. As Maria Bogucka observed in 16th to 18th century Poland,

in many Catholic cities the topographical and architectural focus shifted from the town hall – the centre of urban life in Medieval and Renaissance times – to the churches and the palaces of the nobility – the symbols of the new spirit of the baroque and classical era.

A most striking aspect, which had far-reaching consequences not only for the urban topography, was the tremendous building fervour of the Reform orders, mainly the Jesuits, but also especially in Austria, Bohemia and Hungary, the Capuchins (*Capucini Ordinis Fratrum Minorum*), the Carmelites and the Paulinians (*Ordo Fratrum St. Pauli*). When Prague became the urban centre of Catholic confessionalization in Bohemia after the defeat of the Protestant Estates at Biala Hora in 1620, substantial portions of the two cities were transformed by the many new buildings erected by these reform orders. At the same time, existing buildings were modified, such as the university and the Bethlehem chapel, both of which were taken over by the Jesuits. Likewise, the Lutherans' former main church, St. Loretto became a baroque stronghold of the triumphant *Beatae Mariae Virginis*. During the late 17th century, after the victories over the Turks, a similar process changed the topography and architecture of many of the Hungarian cities, with the result that the late-baroque style, 'Zopfstil' is still very apparent in cities like Győr, Tata or Székesfehérvár (Stuhlweissenburg). The Jesuits had their own specific architectural style, which was simultaneously triumphant and devote, clerical and civic, and most certainly modern. *Il Gesu*, erected in Rome in 1575, was an example of the rational and disciplined Renaissance architecture, which became a model for other Jesuit churches and convents in Munich, Cologne, Antwerp (Figure 2), Prague and dozens of cities and towns all over Europe. The status and impact of these buildings within the city is illustrated by the Jesuit Convent and the St. Carolus Kerk in Antwerp. These mighty buildings, erected between 1615 and 1621, dominated a huge area at the very centre of the city, bringing 17th-century urban modernity, in terms of architecture as well religious function, into the medieval surroundings. Because of these buildings, Catholic towns looked less medieval than most Protestant towns.

### **Confessional formation, discipline and ritual: towards an early modern civic mentality**

#### *Catholic towns*

It was not only the buildings that underwent modernization during Catholic confessionalization, religious functions also changed considerably in ways that were remarkably similar to the Protestant innovations. For example, the Jesuit St. Carolus Kerk in Antwerp, with its long, rectangular nave and huge galleries on either side, was as suitable for a large listening audience as the new Calvinist



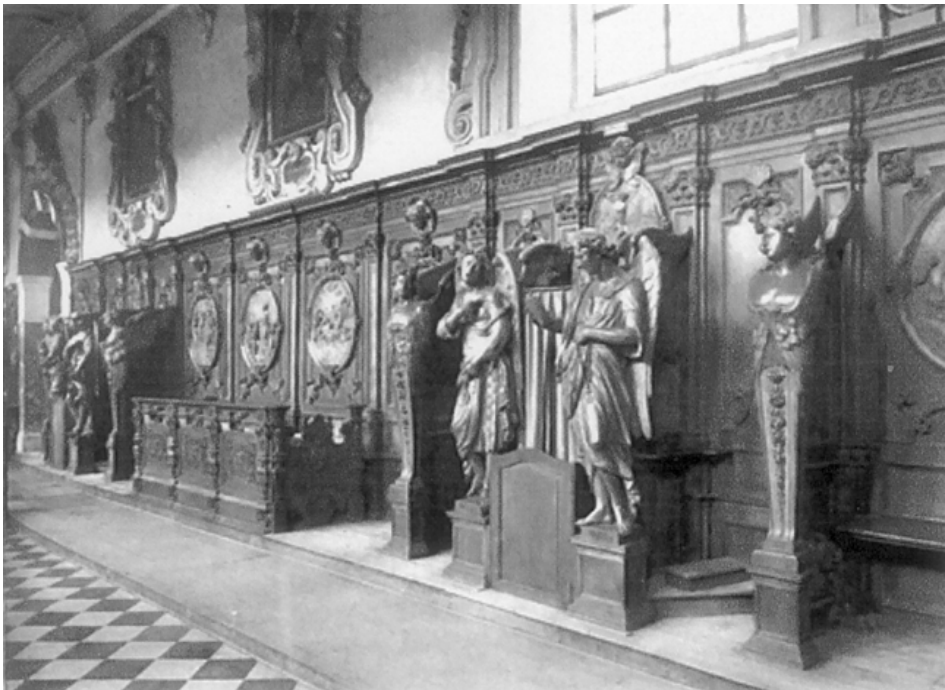
hall-churches in Holland and Northern Germany. At the same time, its 13 huge baroque twin-confessionals, each one with a long bench for queuing penitents, meant that it was well equipped to provide intensive pastoral care and allow close interaction between the priests and the congregation. In the nearby St. Paul's church of the Dominicans, there were even more impressive baroque confessionals (Figure 3). The installation of this type of church furniture in Catholic churches in Antwerp and towns all over the Southern Netherlands during the 17th century testifies to the fact that social disciplining and control of behaviour and morals was as common in Catholic towns as it was in Calvinist ones. Up to now, this has not been recognized, as historians interested in the impact of religion on early modern society have tended to focus nearly exclusively on Calvinist church discipline.

Another functional parallel between Calvinist and Catholic confessionalization is the social commitment of the burgher elites to the poor, the sick and the disabled. The Calvinist type of social care delivered by deacons is most discussed because it is so often recorded in many Dutch 17th century paintings of a specific type: the group-portraits of male and female deacons. There are hundreds of these paintings of the *Weeshuismoeders* and *Weeshuisvaders* in museums and churches in the Netherlands and North Germany (Figure 4). However, in terms of adaptation and modification of medieval traditions, the elite of Catholic cities expressed the very same social commitment, as is for example documented by several religious establishments and foundations of the Mayor of Antwerp, Nicolaas Rockox (1560–1640), a close friend of Rubens. Moreover, like the Dutch type of deacon portraits, Catholic Belgian baroque painters created similar paintings with the title 'Werken van Barmhertigheid',<sup>9</sup> for display in Catholic churches to stimulate social responsibility among the citizens (Figure 5).

Even with regard to public religious rituals<sup>10</sup> that seem exclusive to the Catholic world, there are several similarities. The rituals in the early modern Catholic Church were not merely vestigial remains of medieval culture. On the contrary, Catholic confessionalization meant, above all, formalization, regulation and unification as the late medieval system was transformed, became more elaborate and was adapted to suit the new cultural framework of the early modern cities. This is most apparent with regard to a very important public ritual: the procession. This practice emerged during the Middle Ages but was rooted in ancient traditions. It expanded remarkably during the process of Catholic confessionalization. A dozen or even more of these spectacular events a year was quite common in a medium-sized city during the 17th and 18th centuries. They were performed either as particular processions of parishes and specific groups of inhabitants – for instance Jesuits, their students and confraternities – or as general processions for the whole civic community. Most important among the latter was the Corpus Christi procession, which became the central event in public religious life in many



**Figure 2.** St Carolus, Antwerp.



**Figure 3.** St Paul, Antwerp.



**Figure 4.** Portrait of Weeshuishuis moeders.

Catholic cities. Aix-la-Chapelle, for example (a city of almost 50,000 inhabitants), had several general processions beside the Corpus Christi procession. There was one on Ascension Day, organized by the Chapter of the Canons, another on Maundy Thursday, organized by the craft guilds and their brotherhoods, one on Good Friday, organized by the Franciscans, and another on the first of September in commemoration of the victory over the Protestants in the early 17th century organized by the magistrate. In addition, there were occasionally special processions of penance and prayers against epidemics (usually on St. Rochus day) or against war and threats to the commonwealth, both spiritual and real.

The expansion in the number of processions coincided with a radical redefinition and reorganization of the procession-rituals. Generally speaking, the whole event became controlled and supervised by the ecclesiastic and civic elites. Elements of traditional popular festivals were suppressed, especially those



**Figure 5.** Werken van Barmhertigheid, Antwerp St. Paul Church.

celebrating agrarian traditions and, consequently, processions became more urbanized. Structure and proceedings were organized in a rational and disciplined way. The procession was divided into different sections or blocks. Every participant, group or individual, had his or her place and distinct function. The way through the city was fixed, and there were places for specific rituals. The individuals and social groups were compelled to walk decently, disciplined and in spiritual contemplation. Compared with medieval times, processions changed from ‘uncontrolled walking of the individual or small groups to a disciplined, controlled spiritual exercise. This was corporal discipline, which could and should at the same time become spiritual and social discipline’.<sup>11</sup>

It has been argued, based on Max Weber’s thesis of the anti-civic structure of Catholicism, that during the process of Catholic urban confessionalization, processions became a matter for the clergy. ‘The cleric ... took the leading role’ and ‘a new definition of the proper relationship between clergy and laity’ stood in the centre of the reorganization. ‘Superimposed on the consciousness of the civic community was the clerical view of the ecclesiastical and civic history.’<sup>12</sup> There is doubtless some truth in this. However, this tendency towards clericalization is only half the truth, perhaps even less. In the previously mentioned imperial city of Aix-la-Chapelle, for example, the civic magistrate not the clergy was responsible for the Corpus Christi procession as well as the annual memorial procession commemorating the victory of Catholicism. Moreover, many of the incidental processions were organized by civic corporations or by the Marian Congregation, a burgher and not a clerical association. In

Aix-la-Chapelle, the Canon Cathedral Chapter repeatedly tried to take control of all those religious rituals, but the magistrates and the burghers always defended their rights, even if this entailed severe conflicts with the clergy. The magistrates also looked after and paid for the baldachin that protected the Host. On procession day, a statute of urban liberty was published by the city council: a kind of habeas corpus act for 24 hours that was publicly announced in the streets by heralds. Even the doors of the city jail were opened when the procession passed by to give the inmates their liberty for one day in order to take part in the procession.<sup>13</sup>

There is no doubt that, from the middle of the 17th century onwards, processions were no longer exclusively organized by the clergy but were urban and civic events in almost all Catholic cities. These processions had at least two functions for Catholic urban communities. First, they displayed the social status and administrative power that an individual or social group held within urban society. There was always a strict hierarchical sequence in the procession, depending on the office and reputation within the civic community. At the Corpus Christi procession at Aix-la-Chapelle, for example, the two Mayors occupied the most sacred place and then came the clergyman carrying the Host covered by the baldachin, which was carried by six officials of the city's treasury. Representing the city, the mayors wore their most precious official robes. Next were the representatives of the magistrates' court (Schöffentuhl), a body of the highest dignitaries that had been in competition with the town council since the Middle Ages. The largest part of the procession comprised the trade guilds, also in strictly hierarchical order depending on the reputation and age of the respective guild. The guild-masters led the way followed by the ordinary masters, the youngest master carrying the candle, and then came the journeymen and apprentices. Next were the other burgher corporations, among them the religious brotherhoods, sodalities, fraternities and students. The place of the religious orders and congregations depended on their legal position within the town and, increasingly, also on their reputation among the burghers. In addition, the poor, the beggars and even criminals had a place in the procession so that this event integrated even those on the fringes of society into the urban community, at least symbolically. Originally an exclusively male domain, the processions became increasingly accessible to women, although this was usually only achieved after bitter conflict.<sup>14</sup> The magistrates' authority to exclude people from the procession and specific groups or individual's decision to refuse to take part (as the clergy and some civic bodies did once following a row with the magistrate) were powerful manifestations of the struggle for political power and social reputation within the city.

Second, the processions offered the town and its inhabitants a chance to demonstrate, at least once a year, that the terrestrial community was modelled on

the *civitas celestis*, the heavenly Jerusalem. This had an individual and a collective side. It gave both the individual citizen and the community the assurance of God's grace and of the possibility of salvation provided that the city continued to orient itself towards the ideal of the Holy Commonwealth. Catholics knew, just as well as Protestants, that reality could not, and did not, measure up to this ideal. Especially in the city, where there were all manner of ways to commit sin, it was difficult to lead a holy life. In Catholic towns, processions were an important outlet to deal with this situation. Processions were used to demonstrate that, in spite of all the sins committed, the ideal of the holy commonwealth was still valid. They offered the individual as well as the town community an opportunity for purification and reconciliation with God. Thus, processions were truly civic events both in the spiritual sense in representing the dignity of the urban commonwealth and its civic community, but also in the pragmatic sense through demonstrating every member of the urban community's dependence on the integrity of the town. It is clear that processions contributed to religious and social integration in urban society, including its social fringes.<sup>15</sup>

#### *Protestant towns*

Protestant towns or cities had neither processions nor daily masses, nor religious institutions such as the Marian congregations. Nevertheless, the relationship between Church and city, between *civitas terrestris* and *civitas celestis* was also fundamental to Protestant cities. In fact, Protestant reformers believed that this relationship had been irretrievably damaged by the Medieval Church and could only be restored by the Reformation. It is now generally accepted that the European Reformation was an urban event. For generations, Protestant cities saw themselves as a Holy Commonwealth and, just as their Catholic counterparts, they developed specific rituals to demonstrate this connection and keep it intact while preserving civic spirituality and theology. Although very different to Catholic cities in terms of attitudes to religious service, religious duty and vows, ritual was definitely a major part of everyday life in Calvinist cities in the form of private prayer and Bible readings in the home supervised by the *pater* and the *mater familias*.

Nevertheless, Calvinist cities also developed public rituals that were organized by the consistory aimed at ensuring the purity of the city with regard to theological teaching and Christian morals: that is, the Word and the people's behaviour. However, they did not have a sacred group, such as the clergy in the Catholic cities, to perform the rituals but they did have preachers – or 'praedicanen' – and lay elders from the urban middle-class. This was not a sacred but, nevertheless, a specific social group within the city, distinct from the other burghers with regard to power, influence, mentality and reputation as well as behaviour, clothing and

symbolic representation. This is documented in the above-mentioned collective portraits of elders, deacons etc. Calvinist rituals directed by the consistory were public or semi-public, periodical or incidental. Most Calvinist cities were divided into districts or neighbourhoods, each under the surveillance of a member of the consistory. These elders or pastors visited the families and households within their districts at regular intervals in order to ensure that everyone was behaving according to the Calvinist standards of private and civic life and, if not, to admonish where necessary. Similarly, the deacons also regularly visited the households to collect alms for the poor. Although we do not know much about how these visits were conducted, it seems likely that there was some kind of religious ritual activity – prayers, admonition, perhaps reading the Bible together. This was definitely the case at the weekly meetings of the consistories, where offenders against the moral and religious standards of the holy city had to face the disciplinary procedures of this institution, which regarded itself as the core of the urban Christian community.<sup>16</sup>

At the centre of all Calvinist rituals was the Lord's Supper.<sup>17</sup> Communion normally took place only four or five times a year, that is, far less often than in Lutheran or Catholic towns. The Lord's Supper was not merely symbolic, it was considered a physical representation of the holiness of the city. Particularly during the 16th and 17th centuries, the purity of the town, an essential precondition for the salvation of every individual within the city, was achieved through the Communion of those citizens who were considered worthy enough to participate in the Lord's Supper. This had many consequences. When the Lord's Supper was announced, everyone in the town had to ask her or himself whether they were worthy of participating or whether they should abstain from participation because they had committed a sin or a crime. In the same way, everybody had to check the moral standards of his or her neighbours. Another precondition for participation in the Lord's Supper was to be in a state of grace, not damnation, which was even more difficult to achieve. It demanded that the devout Christian had to live in harmony with others, not only within the family and household, but also in the neighbourhood and in the entire city. In my view, this was the absolute culmination of Old European civic religion. During the 16th century, Calvinist urban communities were convinced that even one single participant at the Lord's Supper who wished harm to another inhabitant of the city would violate the city's grace, even worse, prevent the entire city from receiving God's grace. Such a violation, whether clandestine or publicly known, would inevitably bring God's wrath upon the city.

Calvinist religious communalism often tended towards an eschatological view. This meant that it believed in the final fight between the children of Christ and the children of the Antichrist: the people of light and the people of darkness. This view was current in the city of Emden, in the 1580s and early 1590s. Emden

regarded itself a godly city under attack from the Spanish Antichrist, who occupied the neighbouring provinces of the Netherlands at that time. A similar eschatological mentality emerged, as late as the beginning of the 18th century, in Utrecht. Here, the Calvinist community was shocked when an act of homosexuality was detected close to the Cathedral at the very heart of the old ecclesiastical district of the city. Homosexuality was regarded as a 'sin against nature and salvation' that would endanger the well-being of the whole city and the salvation of each inhabitant. Consequently, offenders were punished harshly and cruelly in order to purify and purge the city of sin.

The Calvinists developed a sophisticated system of checking the worthiness of every participant at the Lord's Supper in order to avoid the danger of violating the city's state of grace. Calvinist congregations in the midst of the Catholics in the cities of Nîmes, Lyons and other Huguenot cities, used a system of tokens to identify who was worthy enough to be present. The consistory was in charge of handing out these tokens to members who had been proved to be without sin. These tokens then had to be handed over to the elders and pastors who supervised access to the Lord's Supper.

Communion was an opportunity for offenders to give penance and to be reconciled with the people they had offended by their un-Christian behaviour – husband or wife, parents, children and family, neighbours or even the entire congregation. This reconciliation with the Christian congregation meant reintegration into the godly city. As long as the offender remained stubborn and did not repent, he or she had to remain isolated from the ecclesiastical community, in serious cases also from the civic community. If necessary, a ban was declared or – in the words of the consistories – 'published', that is, publicly announced from the pulpit during Sunday service. Normally, the name of the offender was declared, only in special circumstances was the ban 'published' anonymously.

Calvinist ideas of the close connection between salvation and the secular well-being of the city: of violating God's order and reconciliation with God by penance, were expressed through the initiation of specific Protestant ceremonies and rituals, which were the functional equivalents of the annual or incidental processions in the Catholic cities. For example, when the city was under extreme pressure – politically or through epidemics, drought, famine or bad harvests – the Calvinist consistories announced a special day of penance and prayer – *kerkelijke boetedagen* in Dutch, *Buss- und Betttag* in German.<sup>18</sup> These days of prayer and penance soon became central elements in the religious as well as the civic identity of the Calvinist cities. In contrast to the Catholic Church, which had traditionally fixed days for penance and fasting, the Protestant Church's days were set by each individual city or congregation in accordance with specific, mostly, local purposes. Consequently, the character of religious rites was far more civic in nature than in the Catholic cities.



For many Protestant, and especially Calvinist cities, these days of religious self-assurance, of penance and prayer soon became a kind of ‘*lieu de mémoire*’ (Pierre Nora). By means of such days, the Protestant city of the 16th and 17th centuries proclaimed its religious and cultural identity as well as assuring its relationship to God, just as the medieval city and the early modern Catholic city did with its annual processions.

### Concluding remarks

In conclusion, we concede that the Catholic, the Calvinist, and Lutheran cities and towns of confessional Europe displayed considerably differences in terms of ecclesiastical and religious life as well as religious and civic architecture and topography. However, there were also striking similarities and a great deal of functional equivalencies that were to have an impact on the development of early modern cities and their burgher societies. Thus, future research should focus on the question of whether these differences were merely an expression of phenotype or whether they were rooted in the genotype – to use biological terminology. If rooted in genotype, did this produce contrasting middle-class urban societies with distinct political, social, mental, cultural and economic structures, each with their own specific potential for modernization? Was early modern urban history in Europe divided into a traditional, semi-feudal or Old European Catholic urban society on the one hand and a modern, middle-class or semi-bourgeois Protestant society on the other, as adherents of Weber and Marx claim? We admit that our conclusions do not cover everything, economic factors were not considered at all. Nevertheless, if our cultural evidence is valid, at least two generalizations are legitimate. First, in 16th and 17th century Europe, the Catholic city was more rational, and the Protestant city relied more on ritual than is generally assumed. Secondly, the route to modern bourgeois society was facilitated not only by civic Calvinism,<sup>18</sup> but also by civic Lutheranism and civic Catholicism.

### Notes and references

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2. L. Mumford (1974) *The City in History. Its Origins, its Transformation, and its Prospects* (Harmondsworth: Penguin), p. 15.
  3. Op. cit., p. 307; E. Ennen (1953) *Frühgeschichte der europäischen Stadt* (Bonn Roehrscheid), esp. p. 223ff; idem. (1987) *Die europäische Stadt des Mittelalters* 4th edn. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck), p. 45f; E. Isenmann (1988) *Die deutsche Stadt im Spätmittelalter 1250–1500* (Stuttgart: Klett), pp. 216–219.
  4. Cf. in more detail H. Schilling (2001) Confessionalism and the rise of religious and cultural frontiers in early modern Europe, in: E. Andor and I. G. Tóth (eds) *Frontiers of Faith. Religious Exchange and the Constitution of Religious Identities 1400–1750* (Budapest: CEU/ESF), pp. 21–35, here p. 22ff.
  5. C. R. Friedrichs (1995) *The Early Modern City 1450–1750* (London/New York Longman), p. 67f; Isenmann note 3, pp. 210–215; F. Rapp (1971) *L'église et la vie religieuse en occident à la fin du moyenage* (Paris: PUF) and numerous new editions.
  6. While it turned out that confessional unity could not be enforced, bi- or multi-confessionalism was either established through legal arrangements, as in most of the German imperial cities, or due to economic reasons, as in the commercial centres: Amsterdam is a case in point as is the Polish Leszno, the multi-religious patrimonial town of the noble family of Leszcynski.
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  8. B. Scribner (ed.) (1990) *Bilder und Bildersturm im Spätmittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Wolfenbütteler Forschungen, 46); L. Palmer Wandel (1995) *Voracious Idols and Violent Hands. Iconoclasm in Reformation Zurich, Strasbourg, and Basel* (Cambridge: UP); P. MacCrewm (1978) *Calvinist Preaching and the Iconoclasm in the Netherlands 1544–1569* (Cambridge: UP); N. Schnitzler (1996) *Ikonoklasmus – Bildersturm. Theologischer Bilderstreit und ikonoklastisches Handeln während des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts* (München: Fink).

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11. Werner Frietap (1991) *Volks- und Eldenfronnuj keil inder Früken Neuseit. Marienwall-fahrten im Fürslibistium Münsle* (Paderborn: Solöningh), p. 101.
12. R. Po-chia Hsia (1984) *Society and Religion in Münster, 1535–1618* (New Haven: Yale UP), p. 163f, 171.
13. A. Brecher (1957) *Die kirchliche Reform in Stadt und Reich. Aachen von der Mitte des 16. bis zum Anfang des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Münsteritschendorf), pp. 142, 146.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 146
15. The identity of terrestrial and celestial cities symbolized by processions is also represented in dozens of pictures from the early modern period displaying the public image of Catholic towns and their inhabitants. This is demonstrated in research by the American historian Richard Kagan on the changing images of European and South American cities. The Bolivian silver town of Potosi is one of the most impressive examples: an early depiction of the town is dominated by the silver mountain and a procession on its way up the hill to the statue of the Virgin Mary, the patron of Potosi. In a later version, the silver mountain and the town at its foot have been integrated into the outlines of the Virgin: the mountain, the town and its inhabitants are synonymous with Mary: they

- have become the Holy Virgin. Cf. R. L. Kagan (1996) *Urbs and civitas*. Paper delivered at the Renaissance conference, Tours, papers are in print, edited by Gérard Chaix.
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  18. This is the title of an English collection of my articles, H. Schilling (1991) *Civic Calvinism in Northwestern Germany and the Netherlands* (Kirksville/Mo: The 16th Century Journal Publisher).

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